

POLICY – Management of Complaints 1.8

RATIONALE:

- ◊ Mission / Parable of the Good Samaritan / College Objectives
- ◊ Everyone has rights and responsibilities
- ◊ The responsibility to change behaviour or attitudes which interfere with teaching and learning is taken seriously.
- ◊ Everyone has a unique and valued dignity which deserves to be protected.
- ◊ Integrity, truth and love are major Gospel values which underpin all we are, all we say and all we do.

AIMS

- To set up, own and know the procedures to be taken in the event of anyone needing to make a complaint and/or to express a grievance against another person or situation.
- To enable access to fair and just treatment.
- To provide an atmosphere / culture where right relationships may flourish so that the mission of the College is able to be achieved.
- To protect and safeguard the sacred dignity of each person.

(i) POLICY STATEMENT

- ◊ The staff, students and parents of Mater Christi College believe that each person should be able to make a complaint and that each person has the responsibility to follow set procedures. Such procedures must recognize the need for justice for all, for openness, for a commitment to integrity, for apologies, for forgiveness and recognition of hurt that may occur.
- ◊ There is commitment to resolve difficulties through conciliation at the level closest to where the conflict arises.
- ◊ There is commitment to resolve difficulties with the direct involvement of the people concerned, that is without blaming unnamed persons or groups - (the anonymous "they" or "everyone").
- ◊ At times the issue may be immediately reported to the Police (criminal offences), Welfare (Mandatory Reporting Offences) or other relevant agencies. The Principal is to be informed of such reports. This would be where the recipient of the complaint forms a reasonable belief that such a report is appropriate and likely to achieve the aims of this Policy for all concerned.
- ◊ There is a commitment to the fact that recipients of complaints are not expected / allowed / able to promise absolute confidentiality. They, too, need (i) personal and professional support systems and advice, and (ii) they are required to act according to civil and church law. There is however, a commitment to respect and value privacy.
- ◊ Recognizing that no grievance or complaint is a replica of another, the procedures which follow may need to be adjusted to suit specific occasions.
- ◊ There is a commitment that complaints properly made will be acted upon.
- ◊ Complaints found to be deliberately vexatious will not be tolerated.
- ◊ The management of grievances / complaints is to interfere as little as possible with the learning and teaching role of the school.

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1996/97/98

Board Approved: April 1999

z: policies/management of complaints

Implementation of Policy 1.8 (Management of Complaints)

General Principles to facilitate resolution and/or management.

- Those making the complaint need to identify themselves.
- Complaints made in writing need to be signed.
- Complaints made about another person need to name that other person and state exactly what she/he has said, done or omitted.
- It is best that complaints be made directly to the person alleged to be at fault. A third person may be present eg A subject related issue needs to involve the subject teacher
A student related issue needs to involve the student
- Complaints about another person, adult or student, will be passed on to them. The nature of the complaint will determine who will do this and how.
- Other people will need to be informed (eg, Principal, Parent, Faculty Head, Police, Level Administrator).
- The person receiving the complaint needs to listen attentively. Taking notes is necessary so that both parties can review the notes to confirm accuracy.
- The one receiving the complaint needs to advise the one making the complaint of any direction perceived to be emerging, eg:
 - (i) Abuse complaints. The receiver needs to advise that she/he will need to take further action if a reasonable belief is formed that mandatory reporting is a likely outcome. Activate: Policy 2.5.1 Child Abuse and Neglect.
 - (ii) Criminal offence. The receiver may need to advise that he/she must go to the Police and/or that the Police will be informed. Legal advice may be advised.
 - (iii) About a Staff Member / Volunteer: That the staff member or volunteer worker will be informed of the complaint.
- All concerned need to have discussions in an open, constructive manner. It may be wise to delay discussion if anyone becomes angry and resume at a later date.
- Anonymous complaints ought not have undue time given to them. Resolving difficult issues is potentially successful in partnership and generally impossible “in-the-dark” and with vague references.
- The outcome of serious issues recorded is to be in writing. In the case of an adverse outcome the staff member / volunteer is to have the right of reply.
- Related Policies:

2.5.1	Child Abuse and Neglect
2.5	Sexual Harassment
3.4.1	Bullying
3.4.2	General Safety Issues
2.5.2	Interim Code of Practice for Responsible Intervention

ACTIONS which are advisable**A Complaint is WRITTEN**

- (i) Signed - response needed
- (ii) Not signed - Action taken depends on the nature of the complaint (eg, Are names given? Is litigation likely?)
- (iii) Pass on to appropriate person/s

B Complaint is via TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

- (i) Always listen
Ask for name of caller and of the alleged offender/s
Record as much detail as possible

Depending on the nature of the complaint, instigate next step.

- (ii) If the call is anonymous advise the caller that it is difficult to effect any action. However, listen and record as much detail as possible.
- (iii) Depending on the nature of the complaint pass on to appropriate person/s.

C Complaint is FACE-to-FACE

- (i) Listen carefully

Take notes - check back with the speaker for accuracy.

Try not to be defensive

Acknowledge the speaker's need to be heard

Advise

- that action will be taken
- that you (as hearer) will be speaking to someone else
- that you will need time but you or someone else will get back to them

- (ii) Depending on the nature of the complaint pass on to appropriate person/s.

Some responses:

- Phone back
- Write back, simply acknowledging receipt of a complaint and that it is being followed up by appropriate persons
- Always record detail, people at risk etc
- Advise about the existence of this policy
- Never promise total confidentiality
- Advise about other policies / requirements

eg, Mandatory reporting, Bullying procedures

- Check that the notes you've taken are accurate.

COMPLEX COMPLAINTS

These need more detailed attention.

It may be an advantage, in some cases, to offer an independent investigator.

Three examples

- (a) Allegation of professional negligence against staff.
- (b) Allegation of abuse by staff or student (Verbal, physical, sexual).
- (c) Allegation of criminal activity (staff or students).

a, b, c Seek immediate advice from appropriate senior personnel.

a, b, c Keep documentation

(c) Inform the Police and tell complaint maker you are doing this.

In each case seek advice from your immediate superior at the College who may need to contact BOS/CEO, Members of Company, Directors of Board, Congregational leaders, VCE Co-ordinator, Director of Studies, Police, welfare agencies. Senior staff will seek advice also from Deputy or Principal.

Arrange for contacting and informing parent / guardian.

At some point, early in the process, the student or staff member being complained about needs to be informed and appropriate action be taken / and support be given. Agencies for support include:

CEO Pastoral Care Unit

ACCESS Organisation

The Board (April 1999) meeting asked that Policy 1.8 and its implementation detail be circulated to Staff and Parents and that consideration be given to placing it in the Student Handbook.