

Complaints and Disputes Resolution Policy and Procedures



**Santa
Sabina
College**

1.0 Policy Statement

- 1.1 The Complaint and Disputes Resolution Policy and Procedures document is to ensure that student, parent, employee, contractor and general community complaints are dealt with in a fair, effective and timely manner.
- 1.2 Santa Sabina College (the College) welcomes feedback from all members of the community and recognises the right of students, parents and employees to complain when they are dissatisfied with an action, inaction or decision made by the College.
- 1.3 This policy should be read in conjunction with the Santa Sabina Student Code of Conduct, Parent Code of Conduct, Staff Code of Conduct, Pastoral Care Guidelines and Enrolment Policy.

2.0 Whistleblowing Complaints

- 2.1 This procedure does not extend to complaints which are whistleblowing disclosures. The procedure for processing whistleblowing complaints is dealt with in the College's [Whistleblowing Policy](#) which can be found on the College website.
- 2.2 In summary a whistleblowing disclosure is a disclosure which:
 - is made by a board member, staff member, a person who supplies goods or services to the school, including a volunteer, an employer of a supplier or a relative of any of these people
 - involves alleged misconduct, an improper state of affairs or circumstances, or illegal activity
 - is made to a senior staff member, or officer of the school, the school's auditor or a person who the school has authorised to collect such disclosures.

3.0 Confidentiality

All parties involved in complaints handling are required to maintain appropriate confidentiality, including in relation to handling and storing records.

4.0 What is a complaint?

- 4.1 A complaint or grievance is an expression of dissatisfaction made to the College about an educational and/or operational matter relating to services provided by the school or the behaviour or decisions of a staff member, contractor or volunteer, including misconduct.

- 4.2 If a parent/carer or student has a concern about the conduct of a staff member, they should raise their concern with the school in accordance with section 5 of this policy.
- 4.3 If a complaint that concerns the behaviour of a staff member may constitute reportable conduct, the matter will be addressed in accordance with the school's Child Safeguarding Policy. Complainants are not required to assess whether their concern meets the threshold of reportable conduct before making a complaint. Any concern about a child's wellbeing may be reported under this policy.
- 4.4 Complaints may be made by a student or parent/carer.
- 4.5 The school will seek to resolve complaints informally where possible but acknowledges that in some cases a person may wish to make a formal complaint.

5.0 Raising a complaint

- 5.1 **Informal complaints** may be raised by a complainant directly with the person involved by emailing or calling them. If the complainant does not feel comfortable contacting the person directly or the matter is one where it may not be appropriate to do so, a complaint can be made to the relevant Head of Department (7-12), Director of Teaching and Learning, Director of Mission and Pastoral Care, Head of Gioia House (5-6) or Head of Primary (P-4).
- 5.2 In order for the process to have greatest chance of success, the parties involved should:
- adopt an open, non-defensive and unbiased communication process
 - focus on the issue or complaint and not the personalities
 - have a clear idea of what the issues are and the grounds on which the complaint was made
 - work cooperatively to determine how best to resolve the issue. Look for constructive solutions.
- 5.3 Any complaint about the misconduct of a staff member, contractor or volunteer should be raised directly with the Principal as our Head of Agency in the first instance.
- 5.4 Should the matter not be resolved through informal processes, the complainant may raise the matter formally with the school.
- 5.5 A **formal complaint** can be made in writing to the Principal via email at principal@ssc.nsw.edu.au.
- 5.6 Where a person wishes to make a formal complaint concerning the Principal the complaint should be made in writing to the Chair of the Board via email at board@ssc.nsw.edu.au. In this situation, the references in this policy relating to the role of the Principal should be read as references to the Chair of the Board.
- 5.7 A formal complaint must outline what the concerns are that are being raised and include details such as the circumstances of the complaint, the time of an

incident, who was involved, what the complainant heard, saw or experienced, if there were any other witnesses present.

- 5.8 The College will acknowledge receipt of a complaint in writing as soon as practicable.

6.0 Complaints Procedure

6.1 Assessing a formal complaint

The Principal generally will assess the complaint and determine:

- whether the complaint is one to be addressed under this policy or is a staff grievance or reportable conduct matter which are dealt with by the relevant policies
- the priority of the complaint in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the matter raised
- whether the school may be required to report the matter to the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian, Police, Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) Services should the complaint relate to possible unlawful conduct or other reportable matters.

6.2 Managing a formal complaint

6.2.1 The Principal will manage a formal complaint by:

- (a) advising the complainant of the likely steps that will be undertaken by the College in relation to the complaint. This may include:
 - consultation with members of the College Leadership Team or Board
 - informing the staff member that a complaint has been made against them
 - detailing negotiation/mediation options
 - facilitating resolution of an issue through an open and transparent process of dialogue, mediation and negotiation
 - preparing a written record of the issue, its resolution and actions taken
- (b) advising the relevant parties of the complaint and providing them with an opportunity to respond
- (c) collecting any additional information as part of an investigation necessary to assess the complaint
- (d) making a decision about how the complaint will be resolved (resolution decision)
- (e) advising the complainant and any other relevant parties as appropriate in writing, of the resolution decision of the Principal and any proposed action to be taken. This may include disciplinary outcomes for staff and students. The parties involved will be asked to support the resolution and sign agreement to this.

6.2.2 There may be circumstances where some of the steps outlined previously are not appropriate and the school will determine, on a

case by case basis, the most appropriate method of handling the complaint.

- 6.2.3 A complainant and the relevant parties who are the subject of the complaint may choose to have an appropriate support person present at any meeting with representatives of the College about the complaint. However, the College maintains the right to determine whether the person's preferred support person is appropriate and may not approve their attendance where they are determined by the Principal to be inappropriate.
- 6.2.4 If the Principal or Board decide a formal investigation process is required, an external investigator may be engaged to conduct interviews with all parties (including witnesses) reported and confidentiality protocols will be adhered to by all parties. Statements will be taken and cited as a 'true record' of the information provided.

7.0 Approval and Review

Authorised by: College Board
Authorisation date: 2021
Policy implementation date: June 2021
Version: 4
Policy Identifier: 210.4
Policy rescinded/replaced: 57.03 - Grievances and Disputes Guidelines for Students and Parents/Carers
Review Date: October 2024 or as determined by the College Principal when required
Notes: