



Marist College Kogarah

COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES POLICY

Marist College Kogarah has both a desire and a responsibility to ensure that high standards of conduct are maintained by staff and students at all times, and that complaints are managed and resolved fairly, efficiently, promptly and in accordance with relative legislation. In doing so, the Principal aims to ensure that all are aware of their rights and responsibilities.

The College's policy for dealing with complaints and grievances includes processes for raising and responding to matters of concern of students, parents and staff. Individuals involved in these processes will be offered procedural fairness, with all parties involved being dealt with fairly and justly.

The Sydney Catholic Schools (SCS) Resolution of Complaints Policy underpins the College's Complaints and Grievances Policy. The SCS Resolution of Complaints Policy can be accessed at: <https://goo.gl/5H52QW>

Students, parents or staff members have a responsibility to raise their concerns at the earliest possible time so that they do not become overwhelming for all parties involved. The greatest success in resolving concerns is when they are addressed as soon as they arise. Students, parents or staff members have a responsibility to maintain confidentiality in the best interests of those involved and to ensure a just outcome for any other person who may be involved.

Complaints and Grievances Resolution Procedures

1. Raising the complaint or grievance

Students, parents or staff members should first raise the complaint or grievance with the person of concern. Where possible, the complaint or grievances should be raised informally through a meeting or phone call, however complaint or grievances may be raised more formally through a letter addressed to the College. For issues that relate to student management, parents and/or students are encouraged to make contact with the relevant Year Coordinator. Should a parent wish to raise a concern that involves the conduct of a staff member of the College, the matter should be directed to the Principal in the first instance. Where the concern involves the conduct of the Principal, the matter should be directed to SCS.

A complainant may at any stage choose to take their complaint directly to an external agency such as SCS, Equal Opportunity Commission, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission or the Ombudsman. However, in most cases, a complaint or grievances should not be brought to this step unless every effort has been made to resolve it with the Principal OR if the concern is about the conduct of the Principal.

2. **Assessing the complaint or grievance**

The complaint or grievance is initially assessed to ensure the most appropriate person addresses the complaint or grievance. More serious matters should be directed to the Principal or Assistant Principal.

The person receiving the complaint or grievance will listen carefully and check understanding of all issues raised to ensure full understanding of the complaint or grievance.

All cases of serious misconduct (sexual offences, criminal charges, child protection matters, or other serious incidents) must be referred to the Principal who will inform the relevant external agencies.

The complaint or grievance will be investigated either informally or formally as requested. Formal complaints or grievances require formal interviews and written statements. Confidentiality is of the utmost importance to protect the rights of all parties involved.

3. **Responding to complaint or grievance**

The complaint or grievance is either dismissed or accepted based on the assessment procedures.

All complaints or grievances will be dealt with procedural fairness. The person who had an allegation made against them, has the right to:

- Know the allegations related to the complaint or grievance and any other information
- which will be taken into account in considering the matter.
- Know the process by which the matter will be considered.
- Respond to the allegations.
- Know how to seek a review of the decision made in response to the allegations.

In keeping with the guidelines of procedural fairness, the person conducting the investigation will not be the person responsible for decision-making. All parties involved reserve the right to an unbiased decision.

Every endeavour will be made to address all concerned within reasonable timeframes and under mutual agreement. The resolution of concerns is most successful when prompt responses are obtained.

Any person responding to a concern may have a support person present during meetings or interviews. The support person would normally act as an observer but may take a more active role with the mutual agreement of all parties. Support person must maintain confidentiality and other principles as set out in this procedure. The Principal is to be advised of the attendance of a support person before any meeting or interview. Similarly the Principal will advise of any other person he/she may invite to attend.

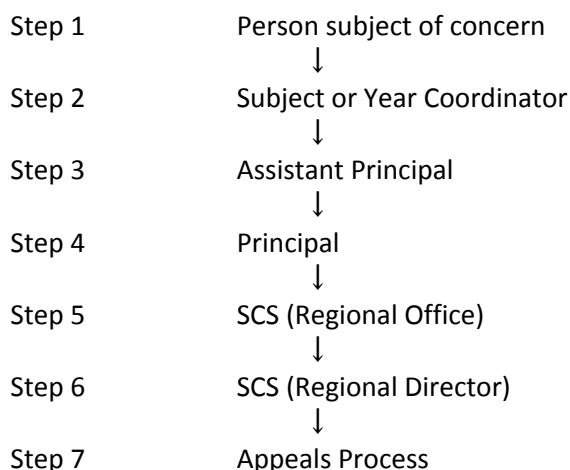
4. **Developing an appropriate solution or agreement**

The outcome of a complaint resolution process will be communicated to the students, parents or staff member in writing and there may be an agreement to review its effectiveness within an agreed timeframe.

For a formal complaint or grievance, responses may include verbal or written warnings, conciliation or counselling, as well as the involvement of SCS and other relevant officers. All parties involved will agree upon procedures to monitor the situation. Parties dissatisfied with the process can appeal to

the relevant external agencies.

Where the concern remains unresolved the student, parents or staff member may follow the pathway for resolving complaints or grievances as listed below



Where the student, parent or staff member considers that correct procedures have not been followed, or that an unreasonable outcome has eventuated, a written appeal outlining the relevant detail can be lodged with the Chair of the Sydney Archdiocesan Catholic Schools Board (SACS) addressed to the Head Office at Leichhardt. The Chair will appoint an independent person to undertake a review according to the *Pastoral Care of Students in Catholic Schools*.

If ultimately the student, parent or staff member is not happy with the way they are dealt with by the College or SCS, they may wish to go to an external agency or legal advocate for advice and assistance.

5. **Maintaining records/documentation**

It is important that all complaints or grievances, investigations and outcomes are fully documented and filed in the appropriate locations. Accurate and appropriate notes will be kept with due regard to the confidentiality of the concerned parties. Access to relevant records may be given to parties directly involved in the process or to others by mutual consent whilst adhering to the conditions of the Commonwealth Privacy Act. All matters must be treated with the utmost confidentiality and professional respect at all times.