



Complaints Handling Procedure

1.0 Introduction

This procedure supports the Saint Ignatius College Geelong (SICG) Complaints Handling Policy approved by the SICG Board at their meeting of 24th July 2013.

2.0 Procedure

In some circumstances it may be deemed appropriate by the Principal that a complaint is referred immediately to either the Principal or Deputy Principal. The Principal has the discretion to determine that, if appropriate, one of the Deputy Principals may investigate a matter on his behalf.

The process for other complaints is as follows:

Steps to follow:

Step 1 Tell the person

In many circumstances, the most appropriate step to take first is to tell the person who is the cause of the complaint how you feel. If the complaint is about their behaviour, tell them that it is offensive, hurtful or not acceptable. If the complaint is about a work decision, tell them why you think it is discriminatory, harassment or not acceptable. Telling the person will give them a chance to stop or change what they are doing or explain why.

Step 2 Raise with the Appropriate Person

In the event that the Step 1 does not achieve a satisfactory outcome, the matter should then be raised with the Appropriate Person in order to seek resolution.

If there is a good reason why it is inappropriate for the Appropriate Person to deal with your complaint, the complaint will, with your consent, be referred to another Appropriate Person or the Principal.

For example, the complaint may be about the Appropriate Person or a personal friend of the Appropriate Person.

- For a parent with a complaint about a student or a member of staff, the concern is to be discussed with the following Appropriate People in this order, if the matter remains unresolved:
 - Subject Teacher
 - Homeroom Teacher
 - Year Level Co-ordinator / Learning Area Leader.
- For a student with a complaint about another student or a member of staff, the concern is to be discussed with the following Appropriate People in this order, if the matter remains unresolved:
 - Subject Teacher
 - Homeroom Teacher
 - Year Level Co-ordinator.
- For a member of staff with a complaint about a student or parent, the concern is to be discussed with the following Appropriate People in this order, if the matter remains unresolved:
 - Homeroom Teacher
 - Year Level Co-ordinator.



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- For a member of staff with a complaint about another member of staff, the concern is to be discussed with one of the following Appropriate People:
 - The Deputy Principal - Paul Lewis (for teaching staff)
 - Business Manager - David Fitzgerald (for non-teaching staff)
- For a parent, student or member of staff with a complaint about the Principal, the concern should be raised with another appropriate person eg. The President of the Canonical Administrators or the Board Chairperson.

Step 3 Deciding to make a Formal Complaint

In the event that after Steps 1 and 2 the matter remains unresolved the person making the complaint may then choose to lodge a formal complaint.

A formal complaint requires the complaint to be put in writing.

The person making the complaint contacts the SICG Designated Person (listed in Section 7 of this procedure). The Designated Person has been trained to be the first point of contact for a formal complaint. The Designated Person will explain the procedure of making a formal complaint.

If the person making the complaint is unable to approach the Designated Person directly or is not satisfied with her or his initial response or reaction, you may then raise your concern with the Principal.

If the complaint is against the Principal and the person making the complaint has been unable to resolve the matter in an informal way, you should seek redress with the President of the Canonical Administrators. Contact details are available from the College Reception.

3.0 Process for a Formal Complaint

- (i) Once you have made a formal complaint to SICG Designated Person, that person will consider whether there are any reasons why he/she should not proceed to deal with the complaint. For example, the person you have a complaint about may be the Designated Person or a personal friend of the Designated Person.
- (ii) If there is a good reason why it is inappropriate for the Designated Person to deal with the complaint, the complaint will, with your consent, be referred to another Designated Person or the Principal.
- (iii) Once a Designated Person has decided to proceed, they will interview you and during this interview:
 - a. Explain the process
 - b. Advise what will happen if the complaint is upheld
 - c. Advise what will happen if the complaint is not supported by the evidence
 - d. Advise where you can seek further assistance, if you are not happy with the way the complaint is dealt with
 - e. Accept your written record of the complaint, including what action you would like taken
 - f. request the names of two witnesses who are willing to be interviewed by the Designated Person.

The importance of confidentiality will be stressed and the person making the complaint will be reminded of the consequences if there is a breach of confidentiality (e.g. possible defamation action, initiation of a complaint for harassment).



3.0 *Process for a Formal Complaint (continued)*

- (iv) The Designated Person will meet with the person who is the subject of the complaint to:
- inform them verbally of the formal complaint lodged against them
 - provide them with a copy of the written formal complaint and
 - inform them that they are required to respond to the formal complaint, in writing, within 5 working days, and
 - request the names of two witnesses who are willing to be interviewed by the Designated Person.

The person who is the subject of the complaint may choose to nominate a support person. The support person cannot play an active role in any meetings but would be there to provide advice and support to the person who is the subject of the complaint throughout the process.

The importance of confidentiality will be stressed and person who is the subject of the complaint will be reminded of the consequences if there is a breach of confidentiality (e.g. possible defamation action, initiation of a complaint for harassment).

- (v) Upon receipt from the person who is the subject of the complaint of their written response to the formal complaint the Designated Person will then interview the nominated witnesses. These interviews will be conducted separately and impartially. The Designated Person will make a written record of each interview.

The importance of confidentiality will be stressed and the witnesses will be reminded of the consequences if there is a breach of confidentiality (e.g. possible defamation action, initiation of a complaint for harassment).

- (vi) The Designated Person will make a determination regarding the formal complaint.

The Designated Person will then:

- meet with the person making the complaint to inform them of the outcome of their formal complaint and the action that will be taken. A written copy will be provided.
- meet with the person who is the subject of the complaint to inform them of the outcome of the formal complaint and the action that will be taken. A written copy will be provided.
- be responsible for implementing the action plan e.g. an apology, a mediation meeting.
- review the effectiveness of the outcome in the timeframe defined in the action plan.

4.0 *Outcomes of a Formal Complaint*

4.1 *Upheld*

If the complaint is upheld, or sustained, the following are possible outcomes depending on the nature of the complaint:

- a mediated agreement between the parties
- a verbal apology
- a written apology
- any other action as deemed appropriate by the Designated Person.



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4.0 *Outcomes of a Formal Complaint (continued)*

4.2 *Not Upheld*

If a complaint is not upheld, or sustained, (e.g. there is insufficient evidence) but some issues come out of the investigation that require follow up then one or more of the following may be arranged:

- relevant training for staff
- monitoring of behaviour of employees
- individual counselling
- mediation at the local level.

4.3 *No basis*

If the complaint is found to be without any basis or if there is evidence that the complaint was made with the main purpose or intent of causing distress to the person who is the subject of the complaint, the following options will be considered and, where appropriate, implemented:

- counselling for the person making the complaint
- a written apology from the person making the complaint to the person who is the subject of the complaint
- an official warning for the person making the complaint
- referral for disciplinary action for the person making the complaint.

5.0 *Appeals*

There are two avenues of appeal if a person feels that the complaints procedure has not been followed or that the outcome is unacceptable to them.

5.1 *At school level*

Either the person making the complaint or the person who is the subject of the complaint may appeal to the Principal. If the Principal has been involved in investigating the complaint or is the person named as the source of the grievance, there is a right of appeal to the President of the Canonical Administrators.

The person conducting the appeal will consider the way the complaint was handled and the outcome.

If the Principal/President of the Canonical Administrators believes that:

- the complaint was handled properly; or
- the outcome was appropriate, he/she will take no further action

If the Principal/President of the Canonical Administrators believes that:

- the complaint was not handled properly; or
- the outcome was inappropriate; he/she will organise for the complaint to be reviewed

5.2 *To an external agency*

If you are not happy with the way your complaint has been dealt with by SICG, you may wish to contact an external agency having jurisdiction for further advice and assistance.

The agencies that would most likely have jurisdiction or be able to offer advice or assistance are:

- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
- Equal Opportunity Commission of Victoria
- Catholic Education Office, Melbourne - 03 9267 0228
The Manager - Student Wellbeing for all general wellbeing matters (student or staff) or;
The Duty Officer for General Complaints
- The Independent Education Union



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6.0 *Record Keeping*

Records of complaints, interviews and other documentation relating to a complaint must be kept at Saint Ignatius College in a separate complaints file. If the complaint is about a person, documents are placed in a restricted access file. If it is determined there are serious ongoing management or care issues relating to a complaint, there will be a cross reference to the restricted file on the staff member's employment file or the student's enrolment file.

7.0 *SICG Designated Persons*

The following people are the Designated Persons regarding a Formal Complaint. If there is a good reason why it is inappropriate for the Designated Person to deal with a complaint, the complaint will, with your consent, be referred to another Designated Person or the Principal.

Staff

The Designated Persons for staff are:

- The Deputy Principal - Paul Lewis (for teaching staff)
- Business Manager - David Fitzgerald (for non-teaching staff)

The Designated Person for the College Chaplain and Student Wellbeing Officers is:

- The Deputy Principal - Paul Lewis

Students

The Designated Persons for students are:

- | | |
|----------------|--------------------------------------|
| Years 7 to 9 | The Deputy Principal - Kerry Sidaway |
| Years 10 to 12 | The Deputy Principal - Paul Lewis |

Parents

The Designated Person for parents is the Principal - Michael Exton

8.0 *Approval and review of the Procedure*

→ *Consultation*

The following parties were consulted in the development of the SICG Complaints Handling Procedure:

- Staff – over several months, formally and informally
- SICG Leadership Team – at several meetings
- Parents – at a PFA meeting
- Students – at a meeting with Senior Student leaders
- SICG Board - at several Board meeting

→ *Approval*

This draft procedure was approved at the SICG Leadership Team meeting on 28th October 2013.

→ *Review*

This procedure is to be reviewed biennially.
The next review is due to occur in October 2015.