



# ST MARY'S COLLEGE

EST. 1869

## COMMUNITY GRIEVANCES POLICY

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## 1. Purpose

- 1.1 St Mary's College (the College) is committed to ensuring a positive and safe learning environment characterised by respect and support; and which celebrates all students.
- 1.2 Part of this commitment involves ensuring the College community has access to processes that allow for grievances to be managed appropriately, promptly and fairly. The College is a working community and inevitably concerns, grievances, disputes or allegations of inappropriate or illegal behaviour may arise.
- 1.3 This policy provides clear and transparent information about how a parent, student or other member of the College community (other than a staff member) can raise grievances about the College, staff conduct, a student's education, safety or wellbeing, and about how such grievances will be managed and resolved.
- 1.4 The College takes all grievances received from staff, parents, students and other grievances from outside of the College, seriously. Our aim is to ensure that grievances are handled objectively and with sensitivity. In doing so, we will seek to identify both the specific and (where applicable) systemic issues raised by a grievance (thereby enabling future improvements to be identified and implemented).

## 2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all College Board members, staff, contractors, volunteers, visitors, parents/guardians, students and other members of the College community.
- 2.2 This policy does not apply to:
  - (a) Staff grievances, which should be raised in accordance with the College's Staff Grievances Policy.
  - (b) Concerns about harm or risk of harm to children and young people, reportable conduct, student safety and wellbeing, which will be addressed in accordance with the Child and Young Person Safe Environments Policy.
  - (c) Legal matters, including requests for compensation, payment and redress.
- 2.3 To the extent that there are any inconsistencies between this policy and the College's other grievance policies and appendices, other than the Child and Young Person Safe Environments Policy, this policy shall prevail.

## 3. Guiding Principles

- 3.1 When raising a grievance with the College, a member of the College community can expect to:
  - (a) Be treated with respect and courtesy.
  - (b) Have their grievance taken seriously, considered impartially (with consideration of any power imbalances), and dealt with on merit.
  - (c) Have their grievance dealt with in a confidential and timely manner.
  - (d) Have access to appropriate and easily understandable information regarding the grievance resolution process being followed by the College (including this policy).

- (e) Be supported by the College during the grievance handling process, with a focus on maintaining the emotional wellbeing of any students involved.
  - (f) Be kept informed of the progress and outcome of the grievance.
  - (g) Not be victimised, or subjected to reprisal, for raising grievances in good faith.
- 3.2 In return, the College expects that a member of the College community who raises a grievance will:
- (a) Treat others (including College staff, students and parents, both former and present) with respect and courtesy.
  - (b) Raise grievances in the appropriate forum, having regard to the below framework, and as soon as possible after the event giving rise to the grievance has occurred.
  - (c) Provide complete and factual information about the grievance.
  - (d) Ask for assistance or further information as needed.
  - (e) Act in good faith to achieve a reasonable outcome.
  - (f) Be understanding and accepting of any outcome reached, being mindful that the College must sometimes manage the interests of a number of individuals when making decisions, and may be privy to confidential information not known to the person raising the grievance.
- 3.3 The College's aim is for the prompt resolution of concerns, ideally without there being a need for a formal complaint to be made. As the Board appoints the Principal to manage the day-to-day operations of the College, a review by the Board Chair should be a last resort.
- 3.4 Timeframes listed in this policy are only a guide and can vary due to the nature of the grievance and surrounding circumstances. Where timeframes set out in this policy cannot be met, the College will strive to communicate with the affected parties about the status of the grievance, and the steps taken (or to be taken) to progress a resolution.
- 3.5 Please note the processes outlined in this policy are intended to be conciliatory, non-adversarial and non-legal.

#### 4. Framework

- 4.1 The College's framework for dealing with grievances involves a three-step process, namely:
- (a) **Stage 1** - A concern is raised with an appropriate representative of the College.
  - (b) **Stage 2** – A formal written complaint is made to the Principal.
  - (c) **Stage 3** - A review by the Board Chair is requested.
- 4.2 Further details about these Stages are set out in **Schedule 1**.
- 4.3 Common considerations when the College is managing grievances are set out in **Schedule 2**.

**5. Recommendations for initially raising concerns (Stage 1)**

- 5.1 At first instance, you should raise your concerns directly with the College. The College must be aware of a concern and of its substance in order to address it.
- 5.2 The College believes that a concern is often best resolved closest to its source. When a concern relates to a student, it is best raised with the relevant classroom teacher in the first instance.
- 5.3 However, depending on the nature and severity of an issue, and whether the classroom teacher has a conflict of interest, concerns may instead be raised directly with a senior staff member (e.g. a Year Level Coordinator, Sub School Director, or another member of the College Leadership Team). For guidance on who to contact at first instance, refer below.

Designated staff member		Nature of grievance
Reception to Year 6	Years 7 to 12	
Leader of Wellbeing Director of Junior School	Year Level Coordinator Middle or Senior School Director	Student-related matters
Director of Junior School	Middle or Senior School Director	Enrolment related matters
Director of Junior School	Learning Area Leader Director of Teaching and Learning	Curriculum matters and teaching matters
Deputy Principal		Staff related matters
Director of Business		Business operations or finance matters
Board Chair		Principal or a member of the Board matters

- 5.4 For details about how a student can directly raise grievances, please see the Student Grievances Policy.
- 5.5 The following considerations are relevant prior to, and when, raising a concern:
  - (a) Clearly identify the issue or problem prior to contacting the College.
  - (b) Decide whether the issue or problem is in the nature of a complaint, concern, enquiry or suggestion. This will help in finding a solution.
  - (c) Identify the party or parties involved.
  - (d) Consider the practical outcome you are trying to achieve (while being realistic and open to other outcomes and solutions).
  - (e) If there is more than one issue or problem, write a list so that you are adequately prepared and then decide which issue or problem matters most to you.
  - (f) Consider whether there are any interim measures you would like the College to consider whilst it makes enquiries about the issue or problem.
  - (g) Make an appointment to meet with the relevant staff member to discuss the concern - the best way to do this is to contact Reception to arrange a mutually convenient time for a telephone call or meeting. When contacting Reception, please identify yourself and the

student concerned, the subject of your concern, identify the person you would like to speak with, and provide a brief description of the issue you wish to speak about (for example 'homework', 'enrolment decision (including appeals)', 'wellbeing' or 'grounds maintenance').

- (h) Remain courteous and calm when conveying your concerns. The College is within its rights to terminate a conversation with the person raising the concern until such time that a courteous and calm conversation can continue.

**6. Related Documents**

- Child and Young Persons Safe Environments Policy
- SACCS Responding to Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Staff Grievances Policy
- Student Grievances Policy
- Whistleblower Policy

7. Revision Record						
Document title	Community Grievances Policy (2024)					
Document type	Policy					
Document date	March 2024					
Process owner	Principal					
Contact	Principal ☎ 8216 5700 ✉ principal@stmarys.sa.edu.au					
Approval authority	Board of Directors					
Review date	[Review every 5 years] 2029					
Policy Distribution	SharePoint	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	SEQTA Engage	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Website	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BoardPro <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Revision History	<b>Edition Number</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Description of change</b>			
	1.0	March 2024	Policy created and ratified by Board of Directors			
	2.0	July 2024	Reviewed and updated for DHS Compliance			

**Schedule 1 - Further details about the College’s Grievances Resolution Procedure**

	Details	Comment
<b>Stage 1: Raise the concern</b>		
Step 1	Identify the concern	Clarify your concern: “who, what, when, where, why, and how”. Identify the outcome you are trying to achieve by raising your concern.
Step 2	Raise the concern	<p>The College believes that a concern is often best resolved closest to its source and encourages concerns to be raised with the relevant classroom teacher in the first instance.</p> <p>Depending on the nature and severity of an issue, and whether the classroom teacher has a conflict of interest, concerns may instead be raised directly with a senior staff member (e.g. the Year Level Coordinator, Sub School Director, or another member of the College Leadership Team). However, that senior staff member may decide to delegate responsibility for dealing with the concern to another appropriate staff member.</p>
Step 3	Acknowledgement	<p>Once a concern is raised, the College will record (either by way of an electronic file note or written correspondence) the details of the concern including your name and contact details.</p> <p>The College’s focus will be on understanding the nature of the problem, the party or parties involved, and the nature of any agreeable solutions.</p>
Step 4	Outcome	<p>Where an agreeable solution is available, this will usually be communicated in writing to you (being usually within three (3) business days of the outcome being reached).</p> <p>Where a mutually agreed outcome between the College and the person raising the concern is not appropriate, or possible, the staff member handling the concern will make a decision that best aligns with the College’s procedures and legal obligations. This decision will be communicated in writing to you (being usually within three (3) business days of the outcome being reached), and the communication will be kept on the relevant student’s (and if appropriate, staff member’s) file.</p>

	Details	Comment
<b>Stage 2: Make a complaint</b>		
Step 1	Make a complaint	<p>If you are not satisfied with the way your concern has been handled, you may choose to make a formal written complaint. Complaints should ordinarily be made within one (1) calendar month of the initial concern first being raised with the College.</p> <p>A formal complaint should at first instance be addressed to Principal. If the complaint concerns the Principal, the complaint should be made to the Board Chair (see Stage 3), in which case the Board Chair will manage the process outlined below.</p> <p>You may lodge a formal written complaint to the Principal at <a href="mailto:principal@stmarys.sa.edu.au">principal@stmarys.sa.edu.au</a></p> <p>You may also telephone Reception on 8216 5700 to arrange a meeting. Please note that if phoning to arrange a meeting, Reception staff will take your details and endeavour to confirm a meeting time as soon as it is practicable to do so.</p>
Step 2	Acknowledge receipt	The Principal will acknowledge receipt of the formal written complaint as soon as practicable (being usually within three (3) business days).
Step 3	Review of complaint	<p>When dealing with a formal written complaint, the College's objective is to achieve a resolution by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarifying the substance of the complaint, and the steps taken by the College to address the initial concern.</li> <li>• Identifying whether the complaint raises an issue regarding non-compliance with the College's procedures.</li> <li>• Identifying whether the complaint raises an issue that would be more appropriately addressed under another policy or procedure, including the College's Child and Young Person Safe Environments Policy.</li> <li>• Communicating with you and relevant parent(s), student(s) and staff, in an attempt to resolve the issue by agreement (where practicable).</li> <li>• Failing agreement, investigating the complaint and deciding appropriate outcomes in accordance with procedural fairness and natural justice principles.</li> </ul> <p>The Principal may delegate parts of the complaint-management process, and seek the assistance of third parties, however any ultimate decision will still be made by the Principal.</p> <p>If the Principal or delegate arranges to speak with you, you may request to have someone else present as a support person. The support person can be a relative or a friend, but please note that the role of a support person is to provide you with support and not to act as an advocate.</p>
Step 4	Outcome	<p>The Principal or delegate will aim to communicate the outcome of a formal written complaint in writing within fifteen (15) business days where practicable.</p> <p>The Principal will promptly report any formal written complaints, and relevant outcomes, to the Board. This is part of the cyclical review and risk management process at the College.</p>



	Details	Comment
<b>Stage 3 – Request a Review</b>		
Step 1	Request a review by the Board Chair	<p>If you are not satisfied that your formal written complaint has been adequately resolved by the Principal, you may request a review by writing to the Board Chair via email at <a href="mailto:BoardChair@stmarys.sa.edu.au">BoardChair@stmarys.sa.edu.au</a></p> <p>Members of the College community who raise grievances with other Board members will be directed to follow the procedures set out in this policy (eg raising a complaint with the Principal or requesting a review by writing to the Board Chair).</p> <p>Requests for review must be made in writing within ten (10) business days of the date the Principal communicated the outcome of your complaint in writing. The grounds for the review, and in particular any concerns you have with the way the relevant complaint was dealt with, must be clearly identified in the request for review.</p>
Step 2	Review	<p>Please note that in accordance with good governance, the Board entrusts the Principal with the day-to-day management of the College, and in particular its staff and students. The Principal is accorded significant discretion regarding such matters.</p> <p>Accordingly, any review of the Principal's decision under this policy will be confined to the Board Chair deciding whether there is evidence that the College's procedures have not been followed, in a way likely to have meaningfully influenced the Principal's decision, or that the Principal unreasonably exercised their discretion.</p> <p>The Board Chair may delegate parts of the review, or seek the assistance of third parties, however any ultimate decision will still be made by the Board Chair.</p> <p>For the avoidance of doubt, the Board Chair will not delegate to the Principal a review of a decision they have already made. However, if the Board Chair is satisfied that a complaint has not been properly raised (or dealt) with by the Principal (and the Principal does not otherwise have a conflict of interest), the Board Chair may refer the matter to the Principal to make an initial decision (noting that decision would then create a right to request a review).</p>
Step 3	Outcome	<p>The Board Chair will aim to communicate the outcome of a request for review in writing within forty-five (45) business days where practicable.</p> <p>The Board Chair will promptly report any requests for review, and relevant outcomes, to the Board.</p>

## Schedule 2 - Relevant Considerations

### 1. Withdrawal of a Grievance

- 1.1 A grievance can be withdrawn at any stage during the processes outlined in this policy. A grievance can only be withdrawn by the person who made the complaint to the College.
- 1.2 Ideally, all grievances should be retracted in writing, however a dated notation on the College's systems, stating the grievance has been withdrawn verbally by the appropriate person can be made by a staff member at the College responsible for managing the grievance.
- 1.3 The College will notify affected parties if a grievance is withdrawn, where considered appropriate.
- 1.4 Regardless of a person's wish to withdraw a grievance, complaints that have disciplinary implications for a member of staff may still be followed up by the College.

### 2. Anonymous Grievances

- 2.1 The College is committed to dealing with grievances in accordance with the processes outlined in this policy. The College respects in some cases, complainants would prefer to remain anonymous and not put a name to their grievances.
- 2.2 The College treats grievances about the College, a staff member, a student's education, enrolment and/or a student's wellbeing with the utmost importance and will investigate such grievances raised to the fullest extent practicable. However, anonymity can make it difficult for the College to effectively resolve grievances (particularly where the College is being asked to accept an anonymous source's version of events) and are accordingly discouraged.

### 3. Previously Addressed, Stale or Vexatious Grievances

- 3.1 Grievances that have been previously addressed by the College or externally, or which were not raised with the College within a reasonable period (having regard to the nature of the relevant grievance), will not be considered in the absence of highly relevant new information and/or evidence coming to light.
- 3.2 The College does not tolerate vexatious grievances.

### 4. External Grievances and Redress

- 4.1 The College acknowledges that grievances relating to the College can also be made to an external body or be the subject of legal action. However, the College encourages its community to raise any grievances, and work to resolve such matters, in accordance with the procedures outlined in this policy.

### 5. Confidentiality

- 5.1 Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained by the College at all times when dealing with a grievance, with information only being provided to those who have a right or need to know.

## **6. Communication**

- 6.1 This policy is available to parents, students and the College community via the College's website. This policy (or aspects thereof) will also feature in communications to parents via SEQTA, the College newsletters and bulletins as required.