

# Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure

Version 3.1

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# **1. Introduction**

## **1.1 Purpose and scope**

This procedure applies to William Carey Christian School in handling complaints made in respect of services provided by the School or against staff members, which includes employees, contractors and volunteers.

This procedure does not extend to personal grievances between parents, guardians or other members of the school community.

## **1.2 Whistleblowing complaints**

This procedure does not extend to complaints which are whistleblowing disclosures. The procedure for processing whistleblowing complaints are outlined in the School's *Whistleblower Policy*.

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, and
- 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.

## **1.3 Related policies**

Complaints about reportable conduct will be addressed in accordance with the School's *Child Protection Policy*.

Complaints regarding a grievance between staff members about work matters, including work relationships and decision made by other staff members which impact on their work, are addressed in accordance with the School's *Staff Grievance Policy*.

Complaints regarding unlawful discrimination, harassment or bullying between staff are generally addressed in accordance with the School's *Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Statement*.

## **1.4 Confidentiality**

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

## 2. Complaints

### 2.1 General information

A complaint or grievance is an expression of dissatisfaction made to the School 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.

Constructive feedback is the core of professional growth, and we are committed to growing as a school, as individual faculties and as individual teachers. The School would like to have an opportunity to work through any concerns you may have.

Matthew 18:15 "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you."

The Bible tells us that if we have a problem with someone, then we should see that person about it first. One of the aims of William Carey is to prepare young people to be responsible adults, in the light of Christ's teachings.

Complaints may be made by a student or parent/carer.

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.

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 3.

### 2.2 Reportable conduct

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 Protection 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.

Under the Children's Guardian Act 2019 *reportable conduct* is defined as:

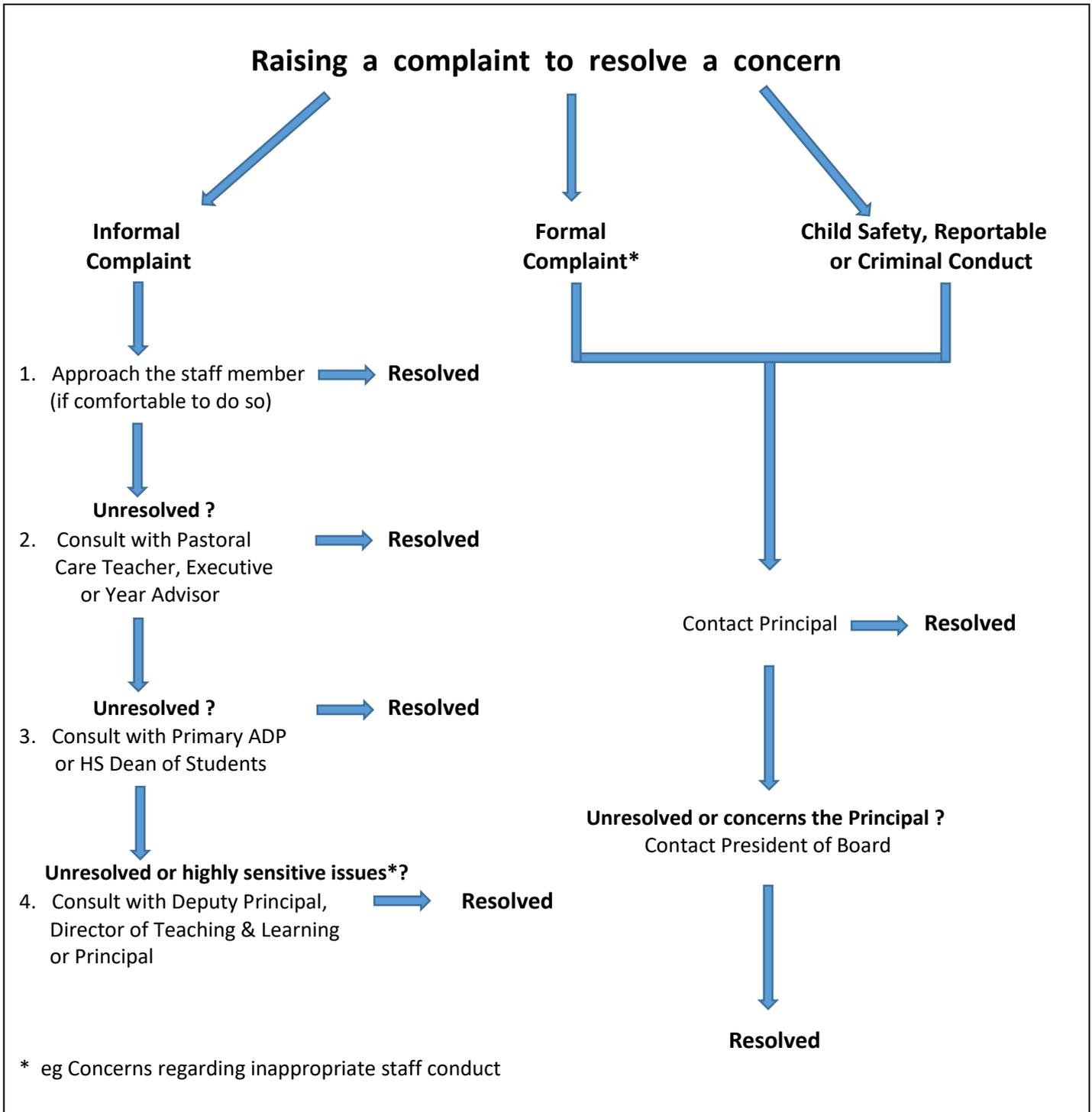
- a sexual offence
- sexual misconduct
- an assault against a child
- ill-treatment of a child
- neglect of a child
- an offence under section 43B (failure to protect) or section 316A (failure to report) of the Crimes Act 1900; and
- behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child.

Reportable conduct does not extend to:

- conduct that is reasonable for the purposes of the discipline, management or care of children, having regard to the age, maturity, health or other characteristics of the children and to any relevant codes of conduct or professional standards; or
- the use of physical force that, in all the circumstances, is trivial or negligible and the circumstances in which it was used have been investigated and the result of the investigation has been recorded in accordance with appropriate procedures; or
- conduct of a class or kind exempted from being reportable conduct by the Children's Guardian Act under section 30.

# 3. Raising a complaint

## 3.1 The complainant



### **3.1.1 Informal complaints**

Informal complaints may be raised by a complainant directly with the person involved. The flow chart above is an example of a correct procedure to raise an informal complaint.

However, if the complainant does not feel comfortable doing so or the matter is one where it may not be appropriate to do so a complaint can be made to the *Deputy Principal, Director of Teaching and Learning or Principal*.

Any complaint about inappropriate conduct of a staff member should be made to the *Deputy Principal, Director of Teaching and Learning, or Principal*.

### **3.1.2 Formal complaints**

Should the matter not be resolved through informal processes, the complainant may raise the matter formally with the School. A formal complaint can be made in writing to the *Principal*, via email [principal@wccs.nsw.edu.au](mailto:principal@wccs.nsw.edu.au).

Where a person wishes to make a formal complaint concerning the *Principal* the complaint should be made in writing to the *President of the Board*, via email [president@wccs.nsw.edu.au](mailto:president@wccs.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 *President of Board*.

### **3.1.3 Complaints regarding child safety, reportable or criminal conduct**

A concern regarding child safety, or the reportable or criminal conduct of a staff member should be raised directly with the *Principal* in the first instance. A complaint regarding a concern of this matter may be made verbally (face to face), by email, letter, by phone call or in a meeting.

## **3.2 The School**

The *Principal* will generally acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint and/or a report related to child safety, reportable or criminal conduct in writing as soon as practicable.

## 4. Handling complaints

### 4.1 Assessing a complaint

The *Principal or their delegate* 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, see section 1.2; and
- the priority of the complaint in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the matter raised; and
- whether the school may be required to report the matter to the Police, Children’s Guardian, Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) or other relevant authorities should the complaint relate to possible unlawful conduct or other reportable matters.

### 4.2 Managing a formal complaint

The *Principal* generally will manage a formal complaint by:

- a) advising the complainant of the likely steps that will be undertaken by the School in relation to the complaint;
- b) if appropriate, advising the relevant parties of the complaint at the relevant time and providing them with an opportunity to respond;
- c) collecting any additional information, the School considers necessary to assess the complaint;
- d) making a decision about how the complaint will be resolved (“resolution decision”); and
- e) advising the complainant in writing, and any other relevant parties as appropriate, of the resolution decision of the *Principal* and if appropriate, any proposed action to be taken.

There may be circumstances where some of the steps outlined above are not appropriate and the School will determine, on a case by case basis the most appropriate method of handling the complaint.

A complainant and the relevant parties that the complaint is about may choose to have an appropriate support person present at any meeting with representatives of the School about the complaint. However, the School maintains the right to determine whether the person’s preferred support person is appropriate and may not approve the attendance of a support person where they are determined by the School to be inappropriate.

### **4.3 Managing a child safety, reportable or criminal conduct complaint**

The *Principal* will manage all complaints that relate to concerns about child safety and/or allegations of conduct that are potentially reportable or criminal by following the procedures outlined in the William Carey Christian School Child Protection Policy, Section 6.

## **5. Contact**

If you have any queries about this procedure, you should contact Leanne Allchin, School Compliance Officer for advice.