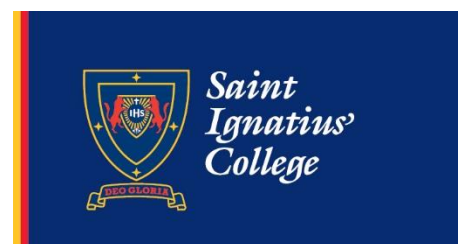

Reporting and Resolving Complaints Policy

Version 1.1



Go, set the world *alight*.

COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1. STATEMENT

At Saint Ignatius' College we are committed to delivering high quality education and care to our students and remain focused on creating an environment for all members of the College community where they can feel welcomed, valued and supported. We acknowledge that from time to time complaints may be received by the College from parents (including guardians and any person with whom a student normally or regularly resides), our wider community or the general public. It is always our aim to deal with such circumstances with a high standard of care and consideration.

A positive resolution will most often arise where there is clear communication, an opportunity for all parties to express their views and be heard. As such, the College encourages parties to agree upon a method of resolution.

2. DEFINITIONS

Complaint or Grievance: an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived situation or outcome. These can be

1. Minor – readily resolved
2. Major – cannot be readily resolved. A sustained and lengthy issue that is unresolved or a matter taken to a third part eg CESA, JEA, other

College Community: All students, parents, old scholars and other members of the College community are covered by this Policy.

The College has the following policies that operate in conjunction with this Policy:

- Child Protection Policy with a stated Code of Conduct and Reporting Process
- Student Bullying and Harassment Policy
- CESA Responding to Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace

These policies and their procedures take precedence over the Complaints Policy and Procedure at all times.

3. PURPOSE

This Policy and Procedure sets out guidelines and processes by which complaints can be addressed respectfully, fairly, expeditiously and sensitivity to all concerned.

The dissatisfaction may be based on the perception that the College has:

- done something wrong;
- failed to do something it should have; or
- acted unfairly or inappropriately.

It may be about the College as a whole, about a specific department within the College or about an individual.

4. PRINCIPLES

Saint Ignatius' College is committed to:

- Providing a working and learning environment that is safe and fair;
- Promoting our College values and nurturing respectful relationships;
- Minimising the incidence of conflict that might give rise to a serious complaint;
- Supporting the right of every member to have his or her complaint lodged, listened to, addressed fairly and dealt with as soon as practicable.;
- Meeting its moral and legal obligations. These include for example, but are not limited to: anti-discrimination and vilifications laws, child protection laws and Family Court Orders;
- Maintaining high levels of communication and record keeping;
- Providing adequate training and support for people with responsibility to investigate and mediate on serious complaints.

Lodging a Complaint – Guiding Principles

The following principles will apply to the lodging of a complaint:

- The health, safety and wellbeing of all members of the College community shall remain the highest priority.
- Complaints should be lodged in good faith and without frivolous, malicious or vexatious intent.
- Every reasonable effort should be made by the College and its representatives to ensure that the person who lodges a complaint or anyone dealing with or involved in the complaint will be treated fairly, and not victimised, coerced or intimidated.
- Communication and resolution processes should always be based on the parties acting in good faith, exercising good judgement, being open and honest and focusing on the issue and not the person(s).
- Each complaint is to be dealt with on its particular circumstances and merits.
- Any settlements reached or determinations made through the resolution process will not necessarily constitute any binding precedent for future similar cases.
- *In responding to all complaints* every reasonable effort shall be made to ensure that natural justice and procedural fairness are afforded to all parties. This means in practical terms that:
 - All parties are entitled to be treated with respect and to be heard.
 - All parties should participate fully in the resolution process to achieve an outcome that is realistic and reasonable.
 - A person who is the subject of the complaint shall be informed of the substance thereof and given a full opportunity to present their perspective.
 - All the parties have a right to seek advice and support.
 - Investigations and proceedings must be conducted fairly, thoroughly and without bias or undue delay.
 - Parties should provide all relevant, material, complete and factual information, documents or other evidence relating the complaint.

4.1 Informal early resolution of complaints wherever possible

Many complaints may be minor in nature, or readily resolved and often arise from genuine misunderstandings and/or issues relating to inadequate communication. In the vast majority of cases, *such complaints ought to be satisfactorily resolved quickly and informally by a meeting or telephone call held between the parties involved.*

The College supports complainants, wherever possible and as soon as practicable after a matter becomes of concern, to seek to resolve a complaint in an informal and amicable manner. This is best done through direct communication/discussion by and between the parties themselves (e.g. a parent and teacher/coach).

The College expects that it should only be necessary for more formal procedures (Section 4.2 below) to be invoked when a matter is of a very serious nature and/or cannot be resolved by the parties themselves through informal means.

4.2 Formal and serious complaints

The Complaints Reporting and Resolution Process for **formal and serious complaints** is depicted in the flowchart in [Appendix A](#). The key steps to be followed for resolution are as follows:

STEP 1: Lodging a Complaint

1. Complaints that cannot otherwise be resolved pursuant to 4.1 or are of a very serious nature should be made in WRITING to any one of the following:
 - Faculty Leaders
 - Director of Teaching and Learning
 - Director of Student Wellbeing
 - Head of Business (if your matter relates to finance, administration, HR, grounds and operations or any other related business operations at both campuses)
 - Head of Junior School
 - Head of Ignatius' Early Years
 - Head of Senior School
 - Principal and/or Rector

Email addresses for the above staff can be obtained by contacting the Junior School Front Office on 8130 7100 or Senior School Front Office on 8334 9300.

In such instances, the complainant may also seek advice or clarification from any of the aforementioned staff about the appropriate person(s) in the College to whom the concern or complaint might best be directed.

Urgent matters

If you feel that your complaint is of a critical nature and requires immediate attention we advise you to contact the Executive Assistant (EA) to the Principal.

STEP 2: Acknowledging a Complaint

All formal written complaints will be acknowledged in writing as soon as practicable, and in any event within 5 business days.

STEP 3: Arrange an initial meeting with the complainant

A formal notice of complaint would typically be dealt with in the first instance by arranging a meeting with the complainant as follows:

1. Where possible, College staff and complainant are encouraged to have a support person present at the meeting.
2. Discuss the complaint in a private office or like location within the College.
3. Allow the complainant to tell the whole story.
4. Affirm the right to complain and acknowledge the complainant's concerns.
5. Take notes of each key point made by the complainant and seek the complainant's confirmation that the noted points represent an accurate record of the complaint.
6. Ask the complainant what they wish to achieve in terms of resolution.
7. Discuss who might and/or should be informed about the complaint.
8. Focus on what is in the best interests of students of the College as a whole, having regard to any particular student(s) involved in the subject of the complaint.
9. Discuss a time frame for follow up.

STEP 4: Investigation

1. As soon as practicable after a formal written complaint has been lodged and/or an initial meeting is held with the complainant, a process will be put in place by the College to investigate the complaint.

2. The investigative process in relation to formal complaint will include but not necessarily be limited to gathering relevant and material information relating to the complaint, further meetings convened of the parties to discuss the complaint and to seek a resolution.

STEP 5: Resolution or determination

1. If a resolution cannot be found, a determination will be made by the College, based on a thorough investigation, as to whether to uphold the complaint.
2. If the complaint is substantiated, the evidence is inconclusive or if the complaint is found to not be substantiated, all parties will be formally advised accordingly, along with any follow-up counselling or other actions as the parties agree and/or the College deems appropriate and necessary in all the circumstances.

STEP 6: Escalation to Principal, College Board or Province

1. If the complaint is not resolved by the person with whom it was lodged, the complainant may escalate their complaint to the Principal who will investigate and seek to resolve the complaint.
2. If the complainant believes that the complaint has not been satisfactorily resolved by the Principal OR if the complaint is about the Principal or the Rector, the complainant may lodge the complaint with the Chair of the College Board. The Principal may also determine that due to the nature of the complaint, for example the complaint concerns an allegation of serious criminal conduct, that it should be referred to the Chair of the College Board as soon as practicable.
3. The Chair of the College Board will have the discretion as to how to deal with the complaint, including referring it back to a member of the College staff.
4. If the complainant believes the outcome to be still unsatisfactory or if the complaint relates to a College Board Director, the complainant may lodge the complaint with the Province Director of Professional Standards by emailing professionalstandards@sjasl.org.au.

In turn, and in consultation with the complainant, the Chair of the College Board or the Director of Professional Standards will expeditiously take all reasonable steps to have the complaint fully investigated and to facilitate a resolution.

Complaints Register

All complaints received will be entered into the College's Complaints Register. The person with whom the complaint is lodged should advise the EA to Principal to log the complaint on the Complaints Register which will record the date the complaint was received, who received the complaint, what action was taken and what outcome was achieved.

STEP 7: Referral of a complaint to an external authority

Where a serious complaint is not or cannot be resolved by the College or the Province, the parties may seek assistance from outside professional agencies or judicial bodies in order that a further attempt can be made to resolve the matter.

Please note that neither the Minister for Education nor the Department for Education has any power to directly intervene in any complaints relating to the operations of a non-government school in South Australia.

4.3 Confidentiality and Discretion

As far as possible and appropriate, due discretion and respect will be maintained by all parties throughout the resolution process. However, the College reserves the right to disclose details of the matter to other persons who in the College's opinion, need to know them in order to facilitate the resolution of the complaint.

4.4 Anonymous complaints

If a parent/guardian chooses to make a complaint without disclosing their identity, this will limit the options for proper and thorough investigation and resolution. It also raises issues in relation to procedural fairness for those who have a complaint made about them as they have a right to know the particulars of the complaint and to respond. The College therefore cannot guarantee that anonymous complaints can or will be dealt with.

4.5 Obligation to notify or report

Where complaints are made in circumstances where an alleged crime may have been committed or the matter falls under the *Reporting Abuse and Neglect provisions*, the Police or similar outside agencies (e.g. Child Abuse Report Line (CARL)) will be contacted and formally advised.

4.6 Withdrawal of a complaint

The complainant may withdraw a complaint at any stage of the resolution process. If a complaint is withdrawn, the matter will be deemed to be closed, unless the College, at its discretion and in all the circumstances, wishes to continue to address a matter raised. The complaint will still be recorded on the Complaints Register and a notation will be made to the effect that it has been withdrawn.

4.7 Record keeping by the College

Records will need to be kept if further disputation occurs or in the case of future legal action. Details such as dates, names, contacts, statements, relevant files, staff involved in outcomes should be recorded in written form (including via electronic records).

Accurate, appropriate and secure records will be kept at the College by the person(s) responsible for overseeing or managing the resolution process for a particular complaint.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

Principal/Rector

Responsible for:

- the implementation of this Policy and Procedure;
- resolving complaints that have been escalated to them in accordance with this Policy and Procedure.

Executive Assistant to the Principal

Logging and managing complaints on the College's Complaints Register including details of the date the complaint was received, who received the complaint, what action was taken and what outcome was achieved.

Leadership Team/Executive Management Team

Responsible for:

- ensuring all formal complaints received by them are dealt with in accordance with this Policy and Procedure;
- advising the Executive Assistant to the Principal to log any formal or serious complaints on the Complaints Register.

All Staff

Investigate and take steps to resolve complaints in accordance with the "Complaints and Resolution Process" set out in this Policy and Procedure if directed by the relevant members of the Leadership or Executive Management Team who received the complaint.

Risk and Compliance Officer

Responsible for:

- Co-ordinating the review and amendments to this Policy and Procedure;
- Assisting staff in the implementation of this Policy and Procedure.

5. RELATED LEGISLATION, DOCUMENTS., SOURCES

Legislation and Standards

- The Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Commonwealth)
- The Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (SA)

College Policies, Procedures, Frameworks, Resources

- Child Protection Policy

- Student Bullying and Harassment Policy
- CESA Responding to Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace

6. DOCUMENT REVIEW AND UPDATES

This Policy and Procedure, and any changes or updates thereto, is made available to all staff (via the School's network on the V drive) and the Parents of the College (via the College's website).

7. REVISION RECORD

Document Title	Reporting and Resolving Complaints Policy
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APPENDIX A: COMPLAINTS REPORTING AND RESOLUTION PROCESS FOR FORMAL AND SERIOUS COMPLAINTS

