

Complaints Handling Policy & Procedure



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose and Scope

This procedure applies to Ascham 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 dealt with in the School's *Whistleblowing Policy*.

1.3 Related policies

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

Complaints or grievances between staff members are addressed in accordance with the School's *Employee Grievance Procedure* or the School's *Anti-Discrimination, Anti-Harassment and Anti-Bullying Policy*, as applicable.

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

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.

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.

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* in accordance with section 1.3. Please refer to the School's *Child Protection Policy* for information about reportable conduct. 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.

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.

3. RAISING A COMPLAINT

3.1 The complainant

Informal complaints may be raised by a complainant directly with the person involved. 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 Head of School or the Head of School. Any complaint about the conduct of a staff member should be raised directly with the Head of School in the first instance.

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 Head of School, via email headofschool@ascham.nsw.edu.au; or online through the "Feedback Form" on the School's website.

Where a person wishes to make a formal complaint concerning the conduct of the Head of School the complaint should be made in writing to the Chair of the Council, via email chairofcouncil@ascham.nsw.edu.au. **This is not a general right of review of decisions made by the Head of School – it applies where the grievance is about the Head of School's conduct (as opposed to a decision that you do not agree with).** In this situation, the references in this policy relating to the role of the Head of School or authorised delegate should be read as references to the Chair of the Council.

3.2 The School

The Head of School or authorised delegate will generally acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint in writing as soon as practicable.

4. HANDLING COMPLAINTS

4.1 Assessing a complaint

The Head of School or authorised delegate generally 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 1.3; 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 Ombudsman, Police, the Department of Community and Justice or other relevant authorities should the complaint relate to possible unlawful conduct or other reportable matters.

The Head of School or authorised delegate may seek further information from the complainant in relation to the complaint in order to make that assessment.

4.2 Managing a formal complaint

The Head of School or authorised delegate will generally 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 consider 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 Head of School or authorised delegate 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. GENERAL

This policy and procedure is not a term of any contract, including any contract of employment. This policy and procedure may be varied from time to time.

5. CONTACT

If you have any queries about this policy or procedure, you should contact the HR and Compliance Department for advice.