



## **5.1 Complaints Resolution**

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### **Rationale**

- Our school has both a desire and a responsibility to ensure that high standards of conduct are maintained by all members of the school community at all times, and that complaints are managed and resolved fairly, efficiently, promptly and in accordance with relative legislation.
- As a Christian School we strive to work together in a spirit of love, and aim towards reconciliation and forgiveness when disputes occur.
- Effective complaint handling procedures are essential to the wellbeing of staff members and students, their parents and the wider community.

### **Aims**

- To provide a harmonious, positive and productive school environment, according to the scriptures in particular Matthew 18 verses 15 and 16, Ephesians 4 verse 29, and Ephesians 4 verse 32.
- To resolve complaints fairly, efficiently, promptly and in accordance with relevant legislation.

### **Implementation**

- The Lutheran Church of Australia ‘Safe Place Policy’ must be applied in conjunction with this policy.
- Our school seeks to provide a positive, harmonious and productive environment. Therefore when dealing with complaints, procedures and guidelines the school should emphasise fairness, courtesy, professionalism and natural justice.
  - Staff should be courteous and helpful
  - Each complaint should be dealt with objectively and with respect
  - Complaint resolution should occur in a timely fashion, usually within 14 days.
  - The respondent should be notified of the complaint against them
  - Each person should have the right to be heard and treated fairly
  - Procedures should be fair and in no way cause the complainant or respondent to feel victimised or discriminated against
  - Interpreters should be provided for those complainants / respondents who need them
  - Counselling and other forms of welfare support should be offered when needed
  - Both the complainant and the respondent have the right to a support person or witness.
- Our school aims to deal with complaints with a fair and pastoral approach. All members of the community are asked to first discuss issues with the Principal or Senior staff member with the intention of resolving the situation and avoiding possible harm or hurt to others.
- It is the responsibility of the school leaders (Council and Principal) to provide a healthy and positive school environment that is free from discrimination and harassment. In doing so, leaders must ensure that all members of the school community are aware of their rights and responsibilities.

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- All cases of serious misconduct – sexual offences, criminal charges, or other serious incidents – must immediately be referred to the School Council and Principal.
  - It is incumbent upon the School Council and Principal to act where unacceptable conduct is observed or brought to their attention.
  - Members of the school community may at any stage choose to take their complaint directly to other agencies other than the Lutheran Church of Australia, such as the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Victorian Equal Opportunity Commission, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Lawyers or the Ombudsman. However, the school requests that respect for the school community and possible damage to its reputation is considered and that all complainants are discreet.
  - It is important that all complaints, ensuing procedures and outcomes are fully documented.
  - The Principal may choose to respond to a complaint through an informal process in cases where the complaint is minor, the complainant wishes the matter to be dealt with informally or the complaint has arisen from lack of or unclear communication.
  - Formal processes will be used when informal processes haven't been successful, a complainant seeks a formal process, or the Principal believes the complaint warrants formal investigation.
  - Full details regarding formal complaint resolution procedures can be accessed through ISV (Australian Independent Schools – Victoria) or VIT (Victorian Institute of Teaching).
  - The formal process involves: -
    1. Investigating the complaint including formal interviews, written statements, conveying the details of the complaint to the respondent in writing providing the opportunity for a written response.
    2. Dismissing or accepting the complaint. Acceptance may involve verbal or written warnings, conciliation, or counselling etc.
    3. Preparation of a detailed confidential report.
    4. Possible notification of appropriate bodies.
    5. Monitoring of the situation.
  - Parties dissatisfied with the process can appeal to the previously mentioned external agencies.
  - All matters must be treated with utmost confidentiality, and professional respect at all times.
  - The School Council chair will be kept informed of all complaints.

## **Evaluation**

This policy will be reviewed in keeping with the “Safe Place Policy” of the Lutheran Church of Australia and the LEA “Valuing Safe Communities” documentation.

*Date Approved: June 2020*

*Origin: SCS*

*Date for Review: 2023*