



5.1 Complaints Handling Policy

Rationale

Sunshine Christian School welcomes feedback from all members of the school community and takes all complaints or concerns that may be raised seriously. This Complaints Handling Policy is designed to assist you to understand how to make a complaint.

For the purposes of this policy, we use the terms “staff” and “staff member” to include all teaching and non-teaching staff, School Board members, volunteers, contractors and external providers.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to Sunshine Christian School, related to our services or operations, or the complaints handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.

Complaints about child abuse, grooming or other harm, or other breaches of our Child Safe Codes of Conduct, relating to conduct by:

- current or former staff members
- current or former students
- other people on school premises or at school events

are managed differently to other complaints.

Refer to the section at the end of this policy – Complaints About Child Safety Incidents or Concerns At or Involving the School or its Staff Members – for more information.

Sunshine Christian School’s Commitment

Sunshine Christian School is committed to handling complaints effectively and efficiently. To manage complaints effectively, we have established a Complaints Handling Program in line with:

- Principle 6 of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, using the Office of Child Safety’s “Complaints Handling Guide: Upholding the Rights of Children and Young People”
- the international complaints handling standard (ISO 10002:2018 Quality management – Customer satisfaction – Guidelines for complaints handling in organizations), and
- the Australian/New Zealand complaints handling standard (AS/NZS 10002:2014 Guidelines for complaint management in organizations).

Our internal complaints handling process is available at no cost.

Our Complaints Handling Program includes the establishment of an online complaints management system which allows us to effectively capture, manage and report on complaints.

Regular analysis of complaints received and the implementation of rectification action, where deficiencies are identified, are key to the School’s commitment.

Informal Complaints Resolution

The vast majority of issues causing concern in schools can be handled quickly and in an informal manner. We therefore ask that, where appropriate, you first raise your concern directly with the relevant staff member. Even if the issue is resolved informally, all staff are required to log issues through our complaints management system so we are able to identify any systemic issues arising, and take appropriate rectification action.

How do I make a Formal Complaint?

If you have been unable to resolve a matter informally, or simply wish to make a formal complaint you can do so by any of the following means:

1. Sending an email to Principal@scs.vic.edu.au
2. Writing a letter to the School addressed to "The Principal".
3. Telephoning the School and asking to speak to the student's teacher

All formal complaints will be logged into our online complaints management system and managed in accordance with the following procedure.

Our Internal Complaints Handling Process

Step 1 – All formal complaints are logged through our online complaints management system where they are screened by the Principal, or in the case of complaints against the Principal by the Chair of the School Board.

Step 2 – All valid complaints will be acknowledged in writing, as soon as practicable, and allocated a status, priority and target resolution date. It is our policy, where possible, to resolve all disputes within 14 days.

Step 3 – The Principal will conduct an investigation into the issues raised, following principles of procedural fairness, and make a determination.

Step 4 – Following the determination, if appropriate, the Principal will formulate a resolution and provide a written response to the complainant. The matter will be closed if this response is accepted.

Step 5 – Internal reviews: If the initial response is not acceptable the matter will be reviewed internally by the Principal or the Principal's delegate, who may seek additional information or submissions from the relevant parties. The Principal or their delegate seek to resolve all disputes within 14 days from the date that the review process is initiated. The matter will be closed if the response of the Principal, or their delegate, is accepted.

Step 6 - All complaints received will be entered into our Complaints Register and, where appropriate, a corrective action request will be made to address any underlying processes which the complaints investigation revealed may require improvement.

Step 7 - If the matter remains unresolved, the complainant may pursue external resolution alternatives.

Overseas Students

If an overseas student is not satisfied with the outcome of School's internal complaints handling process, they may lodge an external appeal through the Overseas Students Ombudsman (OSO) which investigates

complaints about problems that overseas students or intending overseas students may have with private education and training in Australia. The services of the OSO are free. The contact details for OSO are as follows:

Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au

Call: 1300 362 072 within Australia. Outside Australia call +61 2 6276 0111.

Enquiries: 9:00am to 5:00pm Monday to Friday, Australian Eastern Standard Time (Australian Eastern Daylight Time when daylight savings is in effect)

Postal: Commonwealth Ombudsman, GPO Box 442 Canberra ACT 2601.

Website: <https://www.ombudsman.gov.au/How-we-can-help/overseas-students>

Sunshine Christian School agrees to be bound to the OSO's recommendations, and will ensure that any recommendations made are implemented within 30 days of receipt of the report.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality applies with respect to both information relating to the person making the complaint, and, if relevant to a person against whom a complaint is made. The School is committed to maintaining the confidentiality of information throughout the complaints process.

Personally identifiable information about a complainant will only be made available for the purpose of addressing the complaint and (unless the complainant consents) will be actively protected from disclosure.

Complaints About Child Safety Incidents or Concerns At or Involving the School or its Staff Members

Complaints about or allegations of:

- breaches of the Child Safe Codes of Conduct
- child abuse, grooming or other harm of a current or former student by
 - current or former staff members
 - current or former students
 - other people on school premises or at School events
- "reportable conduct" as defined in the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- other child protection/child safety/child safeguarding-related staff misconduct

are managed by the School in a different manner to other complaints.

This is because of the additional confidentiality and privacy requirements surrounding these kinds of matters.

We refer to these as child protection-related complaints.

If your complaint is a child protection-related complaint, please make your complaint to: the Principal principal@scs.vic.edu.au or if this person is the subject of your complaint please notify the Chair of the governing board.

For information about how the School manages child protection-related complaints, as well as **any** child safety incidents or concerns at or involving the School or its staff members, please refer to our **Procedures**

for Managing Child Safety Incidents or Concerns At or Involving the School or its Staff, Volunteers or Contractors, available on our public website.

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.

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