



If you are a non-English speaker who needs help to understand this Policy, please contact Sunshine Christian School Office

Sunshine Christian School's Complaints Handling Policy

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.

In this Policy, we use the terms "staff" and "staff member" to include all teaching and non-teaching staff, 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. This definition is taken from the Australian and Complaints handling standard AS 10002:2022.

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 from other complaints.

Refer to the section at the end of this Policy – Complaints About Child Safety Incidents or Concerns At or Involving the *School/College* 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 "Complaint Handling Guide: Upholding the rights of children and young people"
- the Australian complaints handling standard (AS 10002:2022 Guidelines for complaint management in organizations)*
- the Australian Privacy Principles (APP).

There is no fee associated with making a complaint.

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.



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Complaints may be made anonymously or using a pseudonym. If you make an anonymous complaint, we will be unable to provide you with feedback on the progress and outcome of your complaint. It may also limit our ability to fully investigate the complaint if we are unable to contact you to obtain further details.

We will support and provide practical assistance to complainants to make a complaint and throughout the complaints process.

We insist on all complainants being respectful to and cooperating with staff as a prerequisite to the management of their complaint.

Informal Complaints Resolution

Most 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 that 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 or writing a letter to the school addressed to The Principal.
2. Telephoning the school and asking to speak to the principal.

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

The following process is a guide only and may be varied by the school as circumstances require:

1. All 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, or a member of the school board, by the Chair of the school board. A complaint about the Chair of the school board is directed to the Lutheran Education Victoria New South Wales Tasmania. Complaints about the Principal or a member or the Chair of the school board will be properly investigated but they will not be dealt with by the Principal.
2. All complaints, except those made anonymously, 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*. We will keep in regular contact with the complainant prior to the target resolution date, advising of the status of the matter and each time confirming when the next communication should be expected.
3. The Principal (or, if the complaint is about the Principal, a member of the school board or the Chair of the school board, the person whom the Chair of the school board asks to investigate the complaint) will conduct an investigation into the issues raised, following principles of procedural fairness. The investigation may involve:



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- providing an opportunity for the complainant to fully communicate the complaint in detail
- where the complaint involves staff, providing details of the complaint to them and seeking their response.
- accessing any other relevant information in relation to the complaint.

After the investigation is completed, the person conducting the investigation will make a determination.

4. Following the determination, if appropriate, the Principal (or, if the complaint is about the Principal, a member of the school board or the Chair of the school board, the person who has undertaken the investigation of the complaint) will formulate a resolution and, except where the complaint was anonymous, provide a written response to the complainant. The matter will be closed if this response is accepted.
5. If the response is not accepted, 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 seeks 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. If the complaint was about the Principal or a member of the school board or the Chair of the school board, LEVNT will review the matter.
6. All complaints received will be entered into our Complaints Register and, where appropriate, corrective actions will be made to address any underlying processes which the complaints investigation revealed may require improvement.
7. If the matter remains unresolved, and/or the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome or the way that the complaint has been managed, the complainant may pursue external resolution alternatives. External agencies to which complaints may be made include the Victorian Regulations and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) (vrqa.vic.gov.au) and the Victorian Ombudsman (ombudsman.vic.gov.au). For general information on mediation, counselling, advocacy and support, refer to the Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria (disputes.vic.gov.au).

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 the OSO are as follows:

Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au

Call: 1300 362 072 within Australia. Outside Australia call +61 2 51173600

Enquiries: 10:00am to 4:00pm 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>

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



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Confidentiality and Privacy

The School is committed to maintaining the confidentiality of information throughout the complaints process. This includes maintaining the privacy of information relating to the person making the complaint and any person named in the complaint.

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 from other complaints.

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

We refer to these as child protection/child safety/child safeguarding-related complaints.

If your complaint is a child protection/child safety/child safeguarding-related complaint, please make your complaint to: the Senior Child Safety Officers Michelle Clarke and Brent Pelton or Principal Damian Pietsch or if this person is the subject of your complaint please notify Chair of the school board Erin Mibus.

For information about how the School manages child protection/child safety/child safeguarding-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.