

Complaints & Grievances Policy

RATIONALE

The College recognises that in all partnerships there will be times when there are disagreements and issues of concern that will need to be resolved. The aim is to establish a harmonious, positive, and productive school environment that values feedback and treats all with respect and dignity according to the Gospel values and traditions of our founders.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all members of the Emmanuel College community, including staff, students, parents/guardians, volunteers, and contractors.

DEFINITION

A **complaint** or **grievance** is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived issue at the College where a response or resolution is expected. The dissatisfaction will usually arise from a perception that the College has done something wrong, failed to do something it should have, or acted unfairly or inappropriately. The complaint may involve a staff member, student, or policy or procedure.

POLICY STATEMENT

The College is committed to managing all complaints and grievances fairly, efficiently, and effectively, and in accordance with CECV and Mercy Education guidelines and relevant statutory and regulatory requirements.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. The principles of procedural fairness will be applied when handling all complaints and grievances.
2. Incidents of serious professional misconduct, including sexual offences and criminal charges, must be referred to the Police or relevant authority.
3. Complaints of a child protection nature must be addressed in accordance with child protection laws and reporting obligations.
4. The Principal is responsible for ensuring all complaints and grievances are taken seriously and managed in a confidential and objective manner that is respectful and understanding of the perceptions of others.
5. The College Management Team is responsible for ensuring staff are appropriately trained in the procedures for responding to complaints and grievances, and all staff have a responsibility to comply with this policy.
6. Informal resolution processes may be used where the issue is minor, the complainant wishes the matter to be dealt with informally, or the complaint or grievance has arisen from lack of or unclear communication.
7. Formal resolution processes will be used when informal resolution processes have not been successful, a complainant seeks a formal process, or the Principal believes the complaint or grievance warrants intervention or investigation.
8. Complaints and grievances will be acknowledged promptly, whether informally or formally, and the resolution process will seek to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties in a timely manner.
9. Resolution of complaints and grievances should occur as soon as the situation has been identified to help maintain respectful relationships and learning outcomes for students and to protect the reputation of the College.

10. All complaints and grievances, ensuing procedures and outcomes should be documented and confidentiality maintained.
11. All parties have the right to seek advocacy or refer the matter to an external agency where a complaint or grievance remains unresolved.
12. This policy will be available on the College website and Parent Access Module (PAM) and communicated through the school newsletter and enrolment procedures.

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

Complaints and grievances could be about an individual staff member, a student, or a policy or procedure. Examples include, issues related to student behaviour, teaching and learning programs, communication with parents, school fees and payments, or damage/loss of personal property.

This policy does not cover complaints that are of a child protection or criminal nature, or from staff about aspects of their work or employment conditions.

There are both informal and formal processes for the resolution of a complaint or grievance. The use of informal options is recommended in the first instance so that complaints and grievances are resolved closest to the source of the issue, and to help prevent the escalation of minor disputes into more serious complaints.

When a staff member receives a complaint or grievance, they should determine the seriousness of the concerns raised and whether they can deal with the matter in the ordinary course of their role using informal options, or whether to refer the complaint on for investigation.

Informal resolution processes

The informal options open to a complainant to attempt to resolve a complaint or grievance include:

- Speaking directly with the person about their behaviour or actions.
- Consulting with other relevant staff, such as the Business Manager, Director of Human Resources, Wellbeing team, homeroom teacher, year level coordinator, or head of school, for advice, support and assistance.
- Reporting the matter to the Principal or a member of the College Management Team, or to Mercy Education if the complaint is about the Principal.

Informal resolution processes do not usually involve an investigation or making findings based on an investigation, but generally involve the parties coming to an understanding or agreement as to how the issues can be amicably resolved. The process could include facilitated discussion, mediation, or self-resolution.

Formal resolution processes

If a complaint or grievance is not able to be resolved using informal options, or for more serious matters, a formal resolution process should be followed.

The Principal and College Management Team are responsible for managing formal complaints and grievances, or Mercy Education if the complaint or grievance is about the Principal.

Formal complaints and grievances should be made in writing and set out the details of the specific allegations, including dates, times, locations, what happened, what was said, witnesses (if any), and steps already taken to attempt to resolve the matter. Wherever possible, it should be supported by relevant documentation.

Following receipt of a formal complaint or grievance, the Principal or member of the College Management Team (or Mercy Education delegate if the complaint or grievance is about the Principal) will meet with the complainant to discuss the matter. This will involve canvassing options for resolution which could include informal resolution processes. A staff member will be informed if a formal complaint is made about them. The complainant will be informed of:

- How the complaint will be investigated (eg interviews, viewing documents).
- The expected timeframe for any investigation.
- Who can be present at investigation interviews?
- What support is available for persons involved in the process.
- The interim measures, if any, that will be implemented to ensure the health, safety and welfare of any person pending the resolution of the complaint or grievance.

- If the complaint raises issues which place the College under a legal obligation to report the matter to law enforcement agencies.

Resolution outcomes

If after appropriate investigation and consideration, the College determines that a complaint or grievance is substantiated in whole or part, it will apply an appropriate remedy as soon as practicable. Depending on the circumstances, this could include:

- an explanation or further information about the issue
- disciplinary action involving one or more students
- mediation, restorative strategies, counselling, or other support
- an apology, expression of regret, or admission of fault
- a change of decision
- a revision of College policies, procedures or practices.

If an investigation is inconclusive (ie a complaint or grievance cannot be proved due to a lack of evidence) further action may nevertheless be taken which may include counselling, mediation, changed working arrangements, and/or conducting training for staff on relevant policies.

Confidentiality

Complaints and grievances will be treated with respect and sensitivity. However, it may not be possible that all communications and documents supplied to the College will necessarily be kept confidential. Although the College will endeavour to deal with complaints and grievances with appropriate discretion, it reserves the right to disclose details of the matter to other persons who may need to know them, in order to facilitate a resolution of the complaint.

Record keeping

All complaints and grievances should be recorded, even those which are about issues perceived as trivial or minor. This helps to identify key risk areas and any whole-school issues which, if not resolved, could lead to an escalated or more serious complaint or grievance. Records are also useful if further disputation occurs or in the case of future legal action.

Complaints and grievances will be recorded on the College's school administration systems and contain full details of the matter and resolution steps taken, including:

- the contact details of the complainant (ie parent/guardian)
- the date of the complaint or grievance and the method of communicating it to the College (eg in person, phone call, email, or letter)
- the nature of the complaint or grievance and the requested resolution
- the member of staff handling the issue
- any actions and time taken, minutes of meetings, and communications
- a statement of the outcome, including the closure date, and the date of advising the complainant of the outcome.

Unreasonable claims

The College will not deal with complaints or grievances that are made anonymously without sufficient detail being provided to allow investigation or resolution of the matter.

The Principal has the right to reject a complaint or grievance that in their opinion is frivolous, vexatious, misconceived, or without substance. Where a complainant is abusive, aggressive, bullying, violent or threatening towards staff, the Principal can suspend investigations. In these instances, the complainant will be informed of this decision in writing.

LOGGING A COMPLAINT OR GRIEVANCE

Complaints and grievances can be expressed verbally or in writing by contacting the College at:

Phone: 03 5560 0888

Email: info@emmanuel.vic.edu.au

Mail: The Principal, Emmanuel College, PO Box 486, Warrnambool, Victoria 3280

Web: <http://www.emmanuel.vic.edu.au/contact/contact-info.html>

Complaints or grievances about the Principal can be expressed verbally or in writing by contacting Mercy Education at:

Phone: 03 9490 6600

Email: contact@mercy.edu.au

Mail: Chief Executive Officer, Mercy Education, PO Box 5067, Alphington, Victoria 3078

Web: <https://www.mercy.edu.au/about/contact-us>

Where a complaint or grievance cannot be resolved at the school level, the Principal or the complainant can refer the matter to Mercy Education for external resolution processes.

POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed every three years or as needed, and the process will include seeking feedback from the College community.

RELATED DOCUMENTS/LINKS

Appendix 1 – Complaints and Grievances Procedure Flowchart

Communication Guidelines for Parents and Staff

Behaviour Management Policy

Child Safety Policy

Child Protection: Reporting Obligations Policy

Enrolment Policy

Privacy Policy

Whistleblower Policy

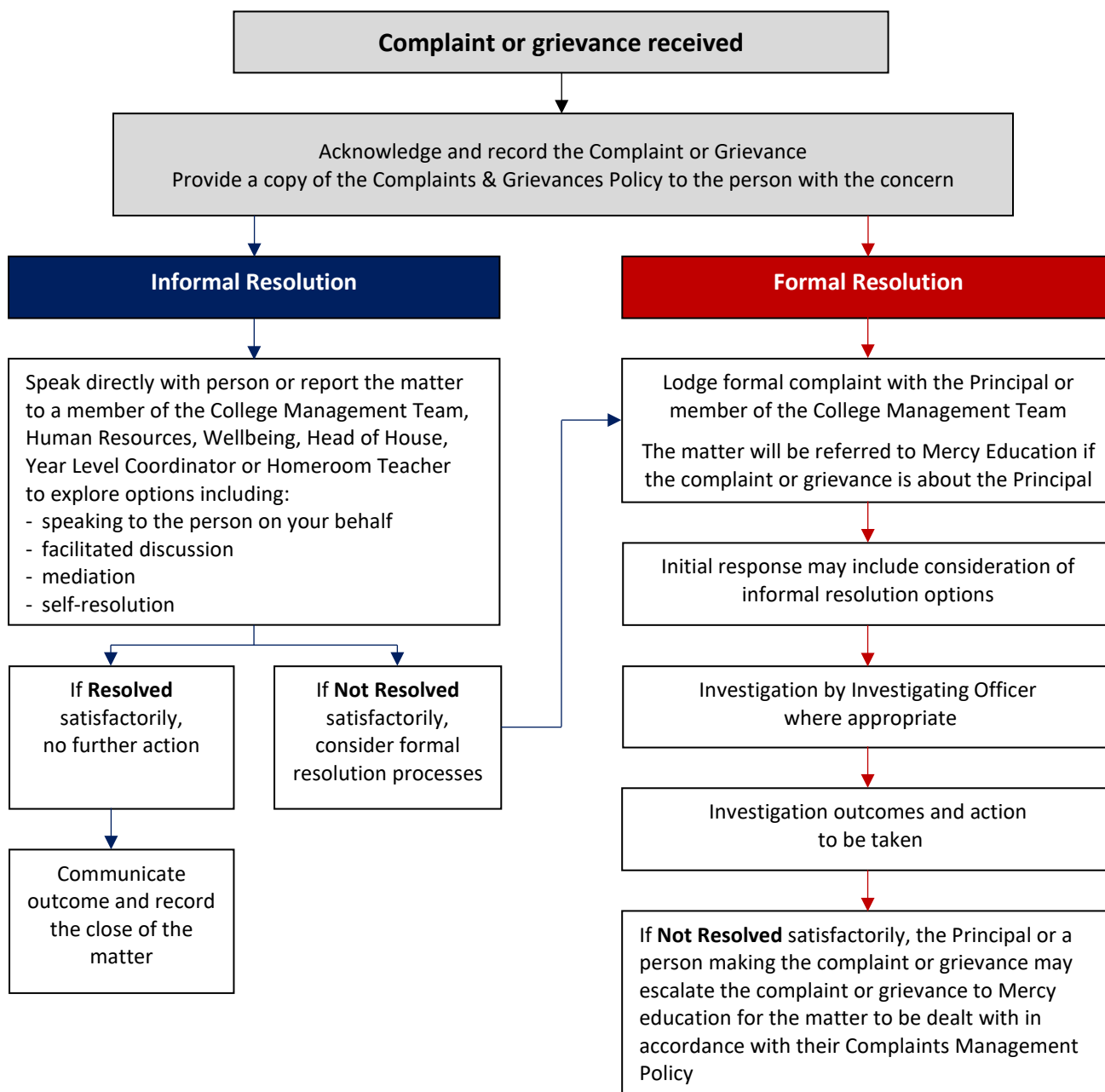
[Mercy Education Complaints Management Policy and Complaints Management Flowchart](#)

[CECV Complaints Management Practical Guide for Schools](#)

REVIEW HISTORY

Version	Date released	Next review	Author	Approved
1.0	August 2021	August 2024	Principal's Assistant	College Leadership Team

Complaints & Grievances Procedure Flowchart



Employee Assistance Program:

[Converge International](http://www.convergeintl.com.au)

Email: eap@convergeintl.com.au

Phone: 1300 687 327

The complainant has the right under Australian law to seek appeal through external agencies and regulatory authorities. This could incur a financial cost to the complainant.