



**SAMUEL
MARSDEN**
COLLEGIATE SCHOOL

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POLICY ON COMPLAINTS

POLICY CATEGORY: Communication

Review: 2020

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is:

- To enable concerns to be addressed quickly and efficiently so they do not escalate to complaints.
- To ensure complaints are dealt with respectfully and with due consideration of all parties rights.
- To ensure complaints are dealt with consistently and in accordance with procedures established by the Management Board and Senior Management Team.
- To put in place appropriate corrective action, and/or disciplinary action, as required.

For the purposes of this policy, the term complaints covers all problems and concerns which a parent/caregiver, student, staff or community member may wish to express to the School regarding the physical, emotional, spiritual, social and academic progress or wellbeing of a student.

DEFINITION

Concern – A minor issue that may be resolved informally directly between the parties involved. Concerns are not expected to have disciplinary, legal or industrial consequences.

Complaint – Any verbal or written statement about a school practice or policy that in the opinion of the complainant is deemed to be of a serious nature that disadvantages them or the school community. Any verbal or written statement of a serious nature that indicates a member of the school community has acted illegally, unprofessionally, or in any manner which is harmful to another member of the school community.

SCOPE

The Management Board is responsible for ensuring that concerns and complaints are handled in a fair, consistent and equitable way, mindful of natural justice principles, and in accordance with the relevant Employment Agreements, Legislation, and Codes of Conduct.

PROCEDURES

Parents/Caregivers

- In the first instance, parents/caregivers should address their complaint to the Dean or Director of School concerned.
- In order that the Dean or Director of School is well prepared and able to give full attention to the problem, they should encourage parents/caregivers to inform the School of the nature of the complaint prior to an interview being arranged.
- Parents/caregivers are entitled to a confidential and fair meeting by all concerned.
- Immediate solutions to complaints are not always possible and may take time to resolve.
- Interviews should be approached in a co-operative and collegial manner by all parties.
- Parents/caregivers shall be informed of courses of action and shall be invited to discuss further, where necessary.

Guidelines for Staff

- Staff members are not expected to conduct impromptu interviews.
- When a complaint is received, all requests for interview from parents/caregivers should be reported to the appropriate Dean, Director of School, Principal, or Senior Management Team member.
- Where complaints are received without prior warning, the staff member shall report the complaint as soon as possible to the appropriate Dean or Director of School.
- The staff member receiving the complaint must first determine whether the complaint is a concern or a complaint. This will determine the procedures that should be followed.
- All concerns should be acknowledged and an attempt made to resolve directly to the satisfaction of all parties involved.
- All complaints should be recorded in writing by staff. Written statements should be brief, factual and non-emotive giving dates, times, and any agreed action noted.
- Staff should acknowledge complaints in a professional manner.
- Confidentiality is to be maintained. Loose discussions amongst staff is inappropriate.
- Staff members will advise parents/caregivers of proposed courses of action.
- Staff members shall ensure that any information gained as a result of the complaint, while a matter of record, will remain confidential under the terms of the Privacy Act, 1993.
- If it is anticipated that a meeting between staff member and parent will be difficult, staff are encouraged to seek support from a colleague e.g. HOD, Dean.

Senior Management

Preschool and Primary School – Preschool and Primary School complaints will be referred to the Head of Preschool and Director of Primary. Primary School complaints will be dealt with by the Director of Primary and referred to the Principal. Parents/caregivers should be encouraged to make their complaint to the staff member concerned.

Year 7- 13 – Complaints will be referred to the Dean or HOD as appropriate. Where necessary the appropriate Director of School or the Principal will be advised of the complaint immediately.

Where a complaint has been made about a staff member, the Dean or Director of School will ensure that the staff member's view shall be acknowledged prior to any interview with the parents/caregivers. The staff member concerned will be given professional support in the amelioration of that complaint.

Senior Management will ensure that information obtained as a result of either the complaint or staff disclosure, while a matter of record, will remain confidential under the terms of the Privacy Act, 1993.

Where a complaint concerns any staff member, the School will act in accordance with the relevant conditions of the current employment agreement(s), Codes of Conduct, as well as all relevant legislation pertaining to the nature of the concern/complaint on the advice of the Board's legal representative, if necessary.

Principal – In the case of a complaint being made against the Principal, the complainant will be referred to the Management Board Chairperson to investigate.

PROCEDURES

Concerns should be acknowledged immediately and resolved to the satisfaction of all parties as professionally and co-operatively as possible. Any changes deemed necessary arising from the concern should be discussed with staff directly involved or included in discussion at staff meetings.

Complaints should be recorded in writing stating the date, time, name of complainant, and details of the complaint. An interview should then be arranged between the complainant and the Director of School or Principal. Where the complaint concerns a member of staff then time will be given to acknowledge the view of the staff member concerned and this should be recorded in writing.

Once the interview process is complete and a resolution to the complaint agreed, then this should be recorded in writing and a copy retained by the Director of School or the Principal.

Should the Management Board be involved in a complaint then this will be documented and all copies of correspondence relating to the complaint will be held by the Board and/or Principal.

Review: 2023

Authorised:

Date: November 2020

Consultation Undertaken: Principal, Management Board, Directors of School, Deans, Head of Departments, Staff.