

COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this **Complaints Handling Policy** is to establish a framework for the handling of matters of concern that relate to the Central Coast Steiner School. It is intended to provide to students, Parents/Guardians and members of the wider community a process for communicating concerns and/or making a complaint within a supportive and respectful environment.

This **Complaints Handling Policy** provides a clear process so that matters raised are met with both confidentiality and a commitment to procedural fairness. Matters raised may be about a policy or procedure, decision, behaviour, act or omission that is considered to be unsatisfactory, unfair or unreasonable. This policy is in place so that, so far as is reasonably practicable, complaints are addressed in a timely and confidential manner in order to prevent minor problems or concerns from escalating.

Complaints may be verbal or written. Written complaints include those sent by letter or email. Anonymous complaints do not allow for this **Complaints Handling Policy** to be implemented fully.

There is an underlying assumption on the part of the School that complaints are not vexatious or malicious, i.e. that they are made in good faith with honest good will and an intention for resolution. The School expects that complaints will be brought forward and processed in a respectful manner, recognising the dignity of each person concerned.

2. POLICY FRAMEWORK

This policy will:

- endeavour to foster healthy relationships between the Central Coast Steiner School, students, Parents/Guardians and the wider community
- recognise and protect the right to raise matters of concern or complaints
- recognise the rights of a person who is the subject of a complaint (the respondent)
- provide a fair and accessible process for prompt response
- apply the principles of procedural fairness
- provide, so far as is reasonably practicable, a complaint handling process that is impartial, inclusive and confidential
- provide clear information on the complaints handling process, including the right of review

Who does this Complaints Handling Policy apply to?

This **Complaints Handling Policy** extends to concerns raised by students, Parents/Guardians, and members of the wider community. The School has specific policies in place for issues relating to Child Protection, Whistleblowing, harassment, discrimination, and staff grievances.

The procedures for processing 'whistleblowing' complaints are addressed in the school's **Whistleblowing Policy**. This policy relates to concerns of an improper state of affairs or circumstances, or illegal activity,

Child Protection matters, including complaints about reportable conduct will be addressed in accordance with the school's **Child Protection Policy**.

COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

Complaints regarding a grievance between staff members about work-related matters, including work relationships and decisions made by other staff members which impact on their work, are addressed in accordance with the school's **Staff Grievance Guidelines**.

3. PRINCIPLES OF THIS POLICY

3.1 Commitment

This school will investigate all complaints in accordance with this policy. The School will put relevant training of staff in place for the implementation of this policy. The School will monitor the integrity and effectiveness of this Policy and associated procedures.

3.2 Responsiveness

Complaints will be dealt with promptly. The process and the time needed to resolve an issue will vary depending on the nature, complexity and scope of the matter.

3.3 Visibility

The existence of this **Complaints Handling Policy**, its purpose, and the method of accessing is communicated to the School community. It can be accessed on our website, and upon request to the School administration.

3.4 Procedural Fairness

The principles of procedural fairness will be followed in all aspects of complaint handling. Procedural fairness ensures the application of the 'hearing rule' and the right to an unbiased process. This includes:

- enabling the opportunity to raise a concern
- offering reasonable assistance to enable the complaint to be made
- handling the complaint process confidentially, impartially and with sensitivity
- providing support/ interpreter services where needed
- informing the respondent of the substance of the complaint, and providing them an opportunity to respond
- providing both the complainant and respondent with information about the complaint handling process
- assessing the facts, evidence and circumstances of the situation objectively and determining the outcome fairly
- processing complaints as expeditiously as reasonably possible and advising the complainant and the respondent of the outcome of the process
- providing the complainant and respondent with details of the determination and reasons for the decision
- informing the complainant and respondent of processes for review

3.5 Confidentiality

Confidentiality will be respected at all times within the constraints of the need to fully investigate the matters relating to the complaint. The obligation to maintain confidentiality extends to the complainant

COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

and to the respondent. It is expected that the parties involved discuss the matter only with the contact person at the School and the support person.

3.6 Access and equity

The complaints handling process is accessible and equitable. Additional assistance may be available to you if you are from a culturally and linguistically diverse background, have a disability or are a young person.

Where students with special needs are involved in any aspect of the complaint processes, every assistance will be given to them to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that they are supported to engage with the procedures detailed in this policy.

3.7 No victimisation

If a complaint is made in good faith, all parties will be protected from detrimental action including victimisation, repercussions or unfair treatment.

4. PROCEDURES

Raising a Concern- who is the appropriate contact person?

Parents/Guardians and Community members

- If you are a Parent/Guardian raising a concern relating to your own child or about a student other than your own child, you should first raise it with the Class Teacher or Year Guardian/s.
- If you are a Parent/Guardian or a member of the community raising a concern about a member of staff, the issue should first be discussed with the relevant staff member and/or the Deputy Principal/ Principal.
- If you are a Parent/Guardian or a member of the community raising a concern relating to the School's grounds, buildings and buses, you should raise it first with the Operations Coordinator: operations@ccrss.nsw.edu.au . If the matter remains unresolved, the complaint should be put in writing to the Principal by writing to: info@ccrss.nsw.edu.au
- If you are a Parent/Guardian raising a concern about a financial or fees-related matter, you should raise it first with our Business Manager: businessmanager@ccrss.nsw.edu.au
- If you are raising a concern about the Principal, this should be raised with the Principal in the first instance. If you are unsatisfied with the outcome, you can raise your concern/complaint with the Chair of the Board of Directors. The matter is to be addressed in writing to the Chair of the Board: chair@ccrss.nsw.edu.au.

Students

- If you are a student raising a concern about another student, you should raise the concern with your Class Teacher/Year Guardian/s or the Deputy Principal/ Principal.
- If you are a student raising a concern about a member of staff, you should raise it first with the relevant staff member and/ or the Deputy Principal or the Principal.
- If you are a student raising a concern about a member of staff, or allegations of staff misconduct or 'reportable conduct', this must be reported directly to the Deputy Principal/Principal.
- If you are raising a concern about the Principal, this should be raised with the Principal in the first instance. If you are unsatisfied with the outcome, you can raise your concern/complaint with the

COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

Chair of the Board of Directors. The matter is to be addressed in writing to the Chair of the Board: chair@ccrss.nsw.edu.au.

Child Protection Concerns and Complaints

All allegations of staff misconduct or '**reportable conduct**' must be reported directly to the Principal. If a complaint that concerns the behaviour of a staff member may constitute reportable conduct, the matter will be addressed in accordance with the school's **Child Protection Policy**. Please refer to the school's **Child Protection Policy** for information about reportable conduct. This is published on the School's website: <https://ccss.nsw.edu.au> and can be provided by request.

Complainants are not required to assess whether their concern/complaint meets the threshold of reportable conduct before raising a concern and/or making a complaint. Any concern about a child's wellbeing may be reported under the **Child Protection Policy**.

If you are raising a concern or allegations of misconduct or 'reportable conduct' relating to the Principal, this should be addressed in writing to the Chair of the Board to: chair@ccrss.nsw.edu.au.

Communication

If you choose to speak directly to the person to address a matter of concern/complaint, you are asked to:

- describe clearly the incident, action or behaviour that is of concern
- communicate respectfully
- state the outcome you are seeking.

In all cases where Parents/Guardians are raising concerns, they must abide by the **Parents and Guardians Code of Conduct**. They are required to refrain from gossip, aggression or any form of negative communication that may involve reputational damage or distress to the respondent.

How we respond to concerns/complaints that you have raised

If you are raising your concern or complaint with a teacher, a member of the school administration or the Deputy Principal/ Principal, the person handling your complaint will record details of the information you provide, ask you what action you request to be taken in response to your complaint and explain to you how the complaint handling procedure is undertaken.

The complainant and the respondent may choose to have a support person present at any meeting with representatives of the School about the complaint. However, the School maintains the right to determine whether a preferred support person is appropriate and may not approve the attendance of a support person where they are determined by the School not to be appropriate.

Prior to any meeting, support person/s must agree to maintain confidentiality about all matters discussed at any meetings.

The Principal / Deputy Principal/Delegate will decide on the most appropriate person to manage the concern raised on a case-by-case basis. The Principal/ Deputy Principal/Delegate will:

- communicate the information received from the complainant to the respondent and seek a response

COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

- document the issues raised
- if appropriate, speak to any witnesses involved. This will be done carefully so as not to breach confidentiality or cause reputational damage.
- consider any further information that may be relevant
- provide language support/ interpreter resources if required
- maintain impartiality

Upon considering all the information gathered, and all perspectives considered, the Principal/ Deputy Principal/Delegate reach a conclusion and advise both the complainant and the respondent of the outcome of the process.

What are the possible outcomes?

A concern raised/complaint may be addressed in a variety of ways. This will depend on whether or not the complaint is upheld, the seriousness of the matter, the wishes of the complainant and the nature of the relationship of the persons involved.

A complaint is said to be upheld (substantiated) if the person investigating it believes that, on the balance of probabilities and on the basis of the evidence provided, the matters raised did occur.

If the complaint is upheld, possible outcomes include, but are not limited to these, depending on the nature of the complaint:

- an explanation/ justification and agreement between the complainant to the respondent
- a verbal and/or written apology
- mediation
- targeted professional development or training
- dissemination of information where relevant
- referral of persons to counselling/ mental health support services if required
- Principal's directions about further interaction between the complainant to the respondent
- acknowledgement that the matter could have been handled better, resulting in a School review of a relevant policy, guideline or procedure
- where a staff member is the subject of the complaint, targeted professional development or disciplinary action or termination of employment contract may follow, applying the School's **Child Protection Policy** as required
- where a student is the subject of the complaint, a range of disciplinary actions as documented in the school's **Student Discipline Policy** may be considered.

If a complaint is not upheld or not substantiated (i.e. the evidence is insufficient on the balance of probabilities) but some issue is required to be addressed, possible outcomes include:

- monitoring of behaviour of students
- counselling for the parties involved
- mediation
- relevant training for staff
- school review of a policy, guideline or procedure

If the complaint is not upheld, is vexatious or if there is evidence that the complaint was made with the main purpose or intent of causing distress and/or reputational damage to the respondent or school, the following are possible outcomes:

COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

- counselling for one or more of the parties involved
- a verbal or written apology from the complainant
- disciplinary action
- termination of the enrolment contract due to breach of the **Parents and Guardians Code of Conduct**

5. RIGHT OF REVIEW

If you have been involved with a complaint matter and you have concerns regarding the complaints handling process or if you think that the final decision was unfair/ not right, you may seek a review of the decision.

You may refer the matter to the Chair of the Board for review. You should contact the Chair of the Board in writing at chair@ccrsw.edu.au and explain your grievance. The Chair of the Board will consider the decision that has been made and determine if there is need for any further review. Depending on the outcome of the review, either no further action may follow or there may be further consideration of the matter.

6. RECORD KEEPING

The Principal maintains a secure complaint register that has restricted access. Records of complaints, interviews and other documentation relating to a complaint investigated at the school are kept in the Principal's office in a restricted access file. These records must be kept permanently.

Regular reviews of complaints take place by the Principal and at School Board level in order to see that matters of concern which are raised have been identified and responded to appropriately. The School's Board of Directors receives regular reports with respect to the status of existing complaints, any underlying trends, as well as information with respect to corrective actions that have been put in place.

7. RELATED POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

- **Student Discipline Policy**
- **Child Protection Policy**
- **Codes of Conduct for Students (Primary and High School)**
- **Code of Conduct for Parents and Guardians**
- **Whistleblowing Policy**
- **Staff Grievances Guidelines**

8. REVIEW

The **Complaints Handling Policy** will be periodically reviewed and updated to ensure its relevance and effectiveness. Any revisions will be communicated, and the guidelines are accessible to relevant parties. The School's **Complaints Handling Policy** can be accessed via the School's website <https://ccss.nsw.edu.au/policies-and-resources/>

Reviewed 14/03/2026 Principal