

Southern Hills Christian College

# Complaints Management Procedure



**SOUTHERN HILLS**  
Christian College

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## OVERVIEW

Key principles for handling complaints at Southern Hills Christian College:

1. The College is open to the concerns of parents and students.
2. Complaints are received in a positive manner.
3. Parents and students can expect to be taken seriously and can approach a member of staff about their concerns.
4. Concerns are dealt with speedily and those who have raised them are kept informed about progress.
5. It is not acceptable for students to receive adverse treatment because they or their parents have raised a complaint.
6. Clear confidential records are kept.
7. Confidentiality is respected and maintained so far as is possible.
8. Resolution of the matter is sought.
9. Staff training covers the handling of complaints as appropriate.

Premise: If a concern/complaint is dealt with seriously and sensitively at an early stage, it is likely to have a satisfactory outcome. Having a sound system will therefore reflect positively on the values of the College.

Complaints can also be helpful to the College – the information can be constructive and provide the College with helpful information. They can be used to improve standards and prevent cause for further problems or complaint.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem, whether it is about an individual, group, department or College as a whole.

Sharing complaints and having suitable protocols can reduce anxiety by taking the matter seriously.

As complaints may become legal action in the future it is essential that complaints be recorded, whether that be at a teacher or Administrative level, and suitable records are kept.

### Confidentiality

Confidentiality is essential. For someone to express their concern they may feel the need for the security of confidentiality. Where possible individuals may not be named, and the issues not discussed with the broader staff/students.

In some cases, there is a need to share information and in that case the complainant should be informed that information will be passed on to only those whose role requires it. Also, in some cases, to undertake an investigation there may be a need to mention names. This again must be discussed with the complainant.

If there is a situation involving the police, the Principal or next most senior staff member if the Principal is unavailable, will take responsibility for action in the College and the Association CEO will be informed as soon as possible.

Anonymous complaints are handled at the discretion of the Principal.

## Guidelines for Complaints Procedure for Parents

Southern Hills Christian College welcomes suggestions and comments from parents and takes seriously complaints and concerns that may be raised. A Complaint will be treated as an expression of genuine dissatisfaction that needs a response. We wish to ensure that:

- ▶ Parents wishing to make a complaint know how to do so
- ▶ We respond to complaints within a reasonable time and in a courteous, efficient way
- ▶ Parents realise that we listen and take complaints seriously
- ▶ We take action where appropriate.

At Southern Hills Christian College, we do not mandate who a complainant may wish to convey a grievance to, but it is essential that the information is passed on and dealt with appropriately.

## Independent Investigation

If the matter is not resolved to the satisfaction of all parties, an independent investigator will be appointed by mutual agreement of the parties.

## PROCEDURE

The steps outlined below, together with the flowcharts are intended to provide guidance as to how to handle complaints generally.

Every incident will vary in degree of seriousness and not all parts of the steps outlined below will be required to be undertaken in every circumstance.

### Step 1 – Dealing with Informal Concerns

It is likely that from time-to-time a member of the College community may make a statement or send an email expressing dissatisfaction with an aspect of the College's service or operations.

Often these concerns can be resolved quickly and easily usually through verbal communication. In many instances the complainant may not consider that they are making a complaint but rather providing constructive feedback.

All members of the college community who have a concern are encouraged to contact the staff member who is most closely connected to the issue or whom they feel most comfortable speaking to.

While a concern may seem minor, if the College was to receive numerous such concerns, it could indicate a larger problem that needs to be addressed. It is for that reason all concerns and complaints received by staff must be logged with the Principal.

The following information should be emailed by the staff member receiving the concern to [feedback@southernhills.wa.edu.au](mailto:feedback@southernhills.wa.edu.au)

- Date of concern/complaint
- Name of complainant
- Contact details of complainant
- Complainant type, for example, parent, student, staff member
- Response action
- Person actioning complaint
- Feedback provided to the complainant
- Complainant satisfaction

- Policies/procedures amended

### Step 2 – Receiving and Lodging Complaints

All concerns and complaints received by staff, regardless of how they are communicated, must be logged with the Principal.

Community members wishing to lodge a complaint directly with the college can do so by emailing [feedback@southernhills.wa.edu.au](mailto:feedback@southernhills.wa.edu.au)

Where a complaint is received, rather than a concern which can be resolved immediately, the Principal must send a written acknowledgement to the complainant within three working days.

### Step 3 – Screening Complaints

Once a complaint is received the Principal will:

- enter details into the Complaints Register
- either accept or reject the complaint and, if accepted;
- allocate the complainant an incident priority considering such criteria as severity, complexity, impact and the need and possibility of immediate action;
- establish a targeted resolution date; and
- assign ownership of the complaint, if appropriate, to a member of the College Executive team who will be responsible for investigating the complaint.

### Step 4 – Establishing the Facts and Communicating to the Complainant

Once a complaint has been accepted an internal investigation will be undertaken. If the complaint involves a specific member of staff the investigation will be conducted as follows:

- The member of the executive responsible for the investigation will contact the staff member and arrange to meet to discuss the matter and gain access to relevant documentation.
- At the meeting the staff member will be provided with details of the complaint and be asked to provide their version of events. The meeting will be documented.
- The facts of the complaint with the staff member's response will be matched and, any discrepancies discussed with both parties.
- A report summarising key findings of the investigation will be prepared by the Executive undertaking the investigation and submitted to the Principal.
- If the complaint relates to a matter not specific to a staff member, the Principal will conduct an investigation based on the incident.
- The Principal will contact the complainant prior to the target resolution date and keep in regular contact, advising the status of the investigation and each time confirming when the next communication should be expected.

### Step 5 – Making a Determination

After considering all of the facts available, the Principal will make a determination which addresses all aspects of the complaint. The following options are available:

- accept the complaint and take rectification action;
- accept the complaint, or part there of; or
- reject the complaint and provide reasons for such rejection

### Step 6 – Formulation or Proposed Resolution

The resolution for any complaint will depend upon the nature of the complaint. Some complaints are administrative in nature and the remedy may be to rectify an administrative

error or issue a verbal or written apology. Other resolutions maybe more complex and require a multifaceted approach.

In formulation a proposed resolution the following matters are to be considered:

- the extent to which others may have suffered in the same way as the complainant but did not make a formal complaint;
- level of authority required internally to implement the proposed resolution;
- implementation of a strategy for following up where appropriate; and
- how information will be disseminated to relevant staff members.

#### Step 7 – Presenting a Final Response

Regardless of the outcome of the investigation or subsequent determination, the complainant must be advised of the following in writing:

- the substance of the original complaint;
- an outline of the investigation undertaken;
- the finding of the investigation; and
- any proposed resolution or offer of redress

All final responses and/or offers of redress must be approved by the Principal and/or the CEO and be made in writing as soon as a decision has been made.

#### Step 8 - Complaints Register

A Complaints Register will be maintained by the Principal.

The Complaints Register is reviewed at Executive Meetings. Key information will be provided to the Chief Executive Officer and SCEA Board on a regular basis.

#### Step 9 – Rectification and Risk Management

Regardless of whether a complaint has been resolved internally or not, it is important for the College to reflect on the circumstances that led to the complaint and reduce the risk of such a complaint happening again and to improve our internal systems and procedures.

In order to ascertain whether or not rectification work is required, the Complaints Manager will meet with the person responsible for the relevant area of the College, review the underlying fact leading to the complaint being made, and if necessary make a recommendation regarding rectification work required.

The effective management of complaints and the rectification of underlying process from which a complaint has arisen are key elements of the College’s School Improvement Plan

#### Step 10 – Closure of Internal Complaint Handling

The complaint will be deemed to be closed once:

- The complaint has been resolved with the complainant (either internally or externally) or all reasonable internal and external options have been exhausted.
- All relevant information has been captured in the relevant complaint instance;
- Consideration has been given to the underlying risk associated with the complaint; and
- Any recommendation with respect to rectification work has been recorded.

#### Step 11 – Referral to Chief Executive Officer

If a complaint cannot be resolved to the complainant’s satisfaction at a school level the complainant can write to or email the SCEA Chief Executive Officer outlining their complaint.

The CEO will obtain all of the information gathered by the school and speak to all parties to the complaint if required.

The CEO will review the College's final response and will determine if further action is required to be taken. The CEO will then respond to the complainant in writing.

Chief Executive Officer 1 Padbury Terrace  
Midland WA 6056  
Telephone: 9274 6411  
Email: [info@scea.wa.edu.au](mailto:info@scea.wa.edu.au)

#### Step 12 – SCEA Board

If a complaint cannot be resolved to the complainant's satisfaction at a CEO level the complainant can write to or email the SCEA Board Chair outlining their complaint.

SCEA Board Chair PO Box 254  
Midland WA 6936  
Email: [info@scea.wa.edu.au](mailto:info@scea.wa.edu.au)

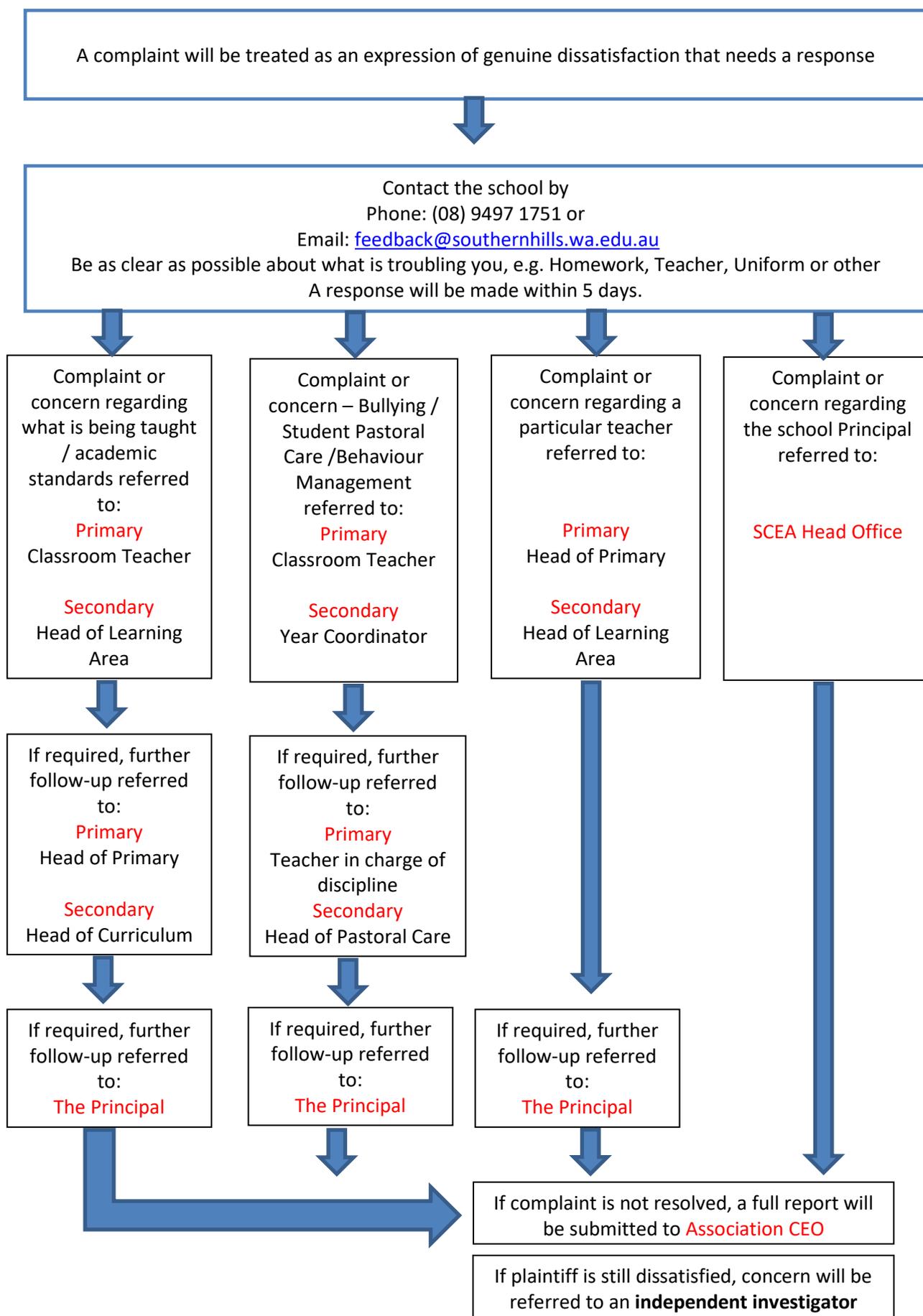
The Board Chair may elect to engage the SCEA Grievance committee to investigate if required. The Board Chair will the make the final ruling.

#### Step 13 – Record Keeping

The College is required to keep records of complaints, reports and allegations received, actions taken, decisions made and outcomes. All complaints will be recorded in the online Complaints Register.

Information must be retained permanently for students of indigenous origin or in out-of-home care and for other students for a period of 75 years from the date of birth of the student. For matters related to child protection (suspected harm or risk of harm to a student), all information will be stored permanently.

## Complaint Referral Process:



## Complaint Form

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

### PARENT ENQUIRY / COMPLAINT FORM

Parent/s Name:

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Parent Contact  
Number:

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Date of complaint:

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**Complaint:**


**Facts:**


**Outcomes Sought:**


**Investigated by:**


**Action taken:**


**Resolution:**


**Parent/Student Informed:**


**Signature/s:**

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**Date:**

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