



# COMPLAINTS & DISPUTE RESOLUTION POLICY

## **Purpose**

This policy and procedure applies to St Charbel's College ("the College") in handling complaints made in respect of services provided by the College or against staff members, which includes employees, contractors and volunteers.

This policy and procedure does not extend to personal grievances between parents, guardians or other members of the College community.

This policy and procedure ensures that student, parent, employee, contractor and general College community complaints are dealt with in a fair, effective and timely manner.

The College welcomes feedback from all members of the community and recognises the right of students, parents and employees to complain when they are dissatisfied with an action, inaction or decision made by the College.

This policy and procedure should be read in conjunction with the College's Parent Code of Conduct, Staff Code of Conduct, Pastoral Care Guidelines and Enrolment Policy.

## **Whistleblowing Complaints**

This policy and procedure does not extend to complaints which are whistleblowing disclosures. The procedure for processing whistleblowing complaints is dealt with in the College's Whistleblowing Policy, which can be found on the College's website.

In summary, a whistleblowing disclosure is a disclosure which:

- is made by a Board member, staff member, a person who supplies goods or services to the College, including a volunteer, an employer of a supplier or a relative of any of these people
- involves alleged misconduct, an improper state of affairs or circumstances, or any illegal activity
- is made to a Board member, Rector, Principal, the College's auditor or a person who the College has authorised to collect such disclosures

## **Related policies**

### Reportable Conduct

Complaints regarding reportable conduct will be addressed in accordance with the College's Child Protection Policy and Procedures. A copy of this policy is available on the College's website.

### Student grievances

Complaints regarding a grievance between students will be addressed in accordance with the College's relevant Discipline and Anti-bullying policies.

## Staff grievances

Complaints regarding a grievance between staff members about work matters, including work relationships and decisions made by other staff members which impact their work, will be addressed in accordance with the College's Managing Workplace Complaints Policy. A copy of this policy is available to staff on Sentral.

## Staff – Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying

Complaints regarding unlawful discrimination, harassment or bullying between staff will be addressed in accordance with the College's Preventing Workplace Discrimination, Harassment & Bullying Policy. A copy of this policy is available to staff on Sentral.

## **Policy**

### Confidentiality

All parties involved in complaints handling are required to maintain appropriate confidentiality, including in relation to handling and storing records.

### Complaints

A complaint or grievance is an expression of dissatisfaction made to the College about an educational and/or operational matter relating to services provided by the College or the behaviour or decisions of a staff member, contractor or volunteer, including misconduct.

If a parent/guardian or student has a concern about the conduct of a staff member, they should raise the concern with the College in accordance with the procedures set out below.

If a complaint that concerns the behaviour of a staff member may constitute reportable conduct, the matter will be addressed in accordance with the College's Child Protection Policy. A copy of this policy is available on the College's website.

Complainants are not required to assess whether their concern meets the threshold of reportable conduct before making a complaint. Any concern about a child's well-being or the conduct of an employee, volunteer, contractor or member of the College community may be reported under this policy.

Complaints may be made by a student or parent/guardian.

The College will seek to resolve complaints informally where possible but acknowledges that in some cases a person may wish to make a formal complaint.

## **Procedures**

### **Raising a complaint**

Informal complaints may be raised by a complainant directly with the person involved by emailing or calling them. If the complainant does not feel comfortable contacting the person directly, or if the matter is one where it may not be appropriate to do so, a complaint can be made to the relevant Coordinator, Head of Department (Secondary), Pastoral Care Coordinator (K-6), Director of Pastoral Care (Secondary) or other member of the College Leadership team.

Any complaint about the alleged misconduct of a staff member, contractor or volunteer should be raised directly with the Principal (Primary) or Principal (Secondary) in the first instance.

Should the matter not be resolved between the parties through informal processes in the first instance, the complainant may raise the matter formally with the College. A formal complaint can be made in

writing to the Principal (Primary) via email [principalprimary@stcharbel.nsw.edu.au](mailto:principalprimary@stcharbel.nsw.edu.au) or to the Principal (Secondary) via email [principalsecondary@stcharbel.nsw.edu.au](mailto:principalsecondary@stcharbel.nsw.edu.au)

A formal complaint must outline what the concerns are that are being raised and include details such as the circumstances of the complaint, the time of an incident, who was involved, what the complainant heard, saw or experienced, and if there were any other witnesses present.

Where a person wishes to make a formal complaint concerning the Principal (Primary) or Principal (Secondary), the complaint should be made in writing to the College Rector via email [rector@stcharbel.nsw.edu.au](mailto:rector@stcharbel.nsw.edu.au). In this situation, the references in this policy relating to the role of the Principal should be read as references to the College Rector.

The College will generally acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint raised with the College in writing as soon as practicable.

### **Handling complaints**

#### **Assessing the Complaint**

The Principal and/or their delegate generally will assess the complaint and determine:

- whether the complaint is one to be addressed under this policy or is a staff grievance or reportable conduct matter, or another matter identified above and are dealt with by other relevant policies
- the priority of the complaint in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the matter raised
- whether the College may be required to report the matter to the Office of the Children’s Guardian, Police, Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) Services or other relevant authorities should the complaint relate to possible unlawful conduct or other reportable matters.

#### **Managing a formal complaint**

The Principal and/or their delegate will generally manage a formal complaint by:

- advising the complainant of the likely steps that will be undertaken by the College in relation to the complaint
- advising the relevant parties of the complaint, if appropriate, at the relevant time and providing them with an opportunity to respond
- collecting any additional information the College considers necessary to address the complaint
- deciding about how the complaint will be resolved (“resolution decision”)
- advising the complainant and any other relevant parties, if appropriate, in writing of the resolution decision of the Principal and, if appropriate, any proposed action to be taken.

There may be circumstances where some of the steps outlined above are not appropriate and the College will determine, on a case-by-case basis, the most appropriate method of handling the complaint.

A complainant and the relevant parties that the complaint is about may choose to have an appropriate support person present at any meeting with representatives of the College about the complaint. However, the College maintains the right to determine whether the person’s preferred support person is appropriate and may not approve the attendance of a support person where they are determined by the College to be inappropriate.

If the Principal or Rector decide a formal investigation process is required, an external investigator may be engaged to conduct interviews with all parties (including witnesses) reported and confidentiality protocols will be adhered to by all parties. Statements will be taken and cited as a 'true record' of the information provided.

### **Records**

Any records in relation to the receipt, assessment and management of a formal complaint in accordance with this policy will be maintained by the Principal and/or their delegate in a confidential and secure manner. The records are to be confidential and access to them is only available to the Principal or other staff only with the Principal's express authority.