



Complaints Procedure

Purpose

This document will identify the procedure for lodging a complaint with St Peter's College.

Scope

All students, parents and members of the St Peter's College School community are covered by this procedure.

The School has a **Child Protection Policy** with a stated Code of Conduct and Reporting Process, a **Child Protection Complaints Management** and a **Harassment Policy**. These three existing policies, and their procedures, take precedence over the Complaints Policy at all times.

Policy

Complaints occur from time to time and the School is committed to an effective resolution in a positive atmosphere. This policy and procedure sets out the process by which complaints can be addressed in a confidential, expeditious and sensitive way.

Positive resolution arises out of a clear understanding of the School's policies and practices, good communication and an agreed method of resolution.

Positive resolution involves good record-keeping during the process of hearing a complaint and respect at all times for appropriate confidentiality.

It is in the common interest to manage resolution of any conflict by means which neither disrupt nor damage the School's optimum operation.

St Peter's College is committed to:

- Working in partnership with parents and staff, delivering education and care of the highest quality.
- Providing a working and learning environment that is safe, fair and just.
- Actively promoting the development of positive and respectful relationships and seeking to minimise the incidence of conflict that might otherwise give rise to a complaint.
- Supporting the right of every person to have his or her complaint lodged, listened to, addressed fairly and dealt with as soon as possible.
- Attempting to resolve complaints in a non-threatening manner in a respectful and supportive way.
- Meeting its moral and legal obligations (e.g.: Mandatory Reporting) and complying with all relevant statutory and legal requirements. These include for example, but are not limited to: anti-discrimination and vilification laws, child protection laws and Family Court orders.





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- Maintaining high levels of communication and record keeping.
- Providing adequate training and support for people with responsibility to investigate and mediate on complaints.

Complaint definition

This procedure provides for the resolution of complaints. A complaint can arise from any of the following:

- A behaviour, act or perceived intention by a member of the School community (staff, parent, volunteer or student) who has, or is likely to have a significant and serious negative impact on another member of the School community to undertake his or her duties, work or studies at St Peter's College.
- Conflict of interest.
- Discriminatory or unprofessional behaviour or conduct by school staff, parents or students.
- Breach of a School Policy.

Informal resolution of complaints wherever possible

Many complaints may be minor in nature, or readily resolved and often arise from genuine misunderstandings and/or issues relating to communication. In the vast majority of cases, these can be satisfactorily resolved informally.

The School supports complainants, wherever possible and as soon as practicable after a matter becomes a concern, to seek to resolve a complaint in an informal and amicable manner. This is often best done through direct communication / discussion by and between the parties themselves (i.e. parent and teacher).

Formal procedures (as identified below) for the resolution of complaints should only be invoked when a matter is of a serious nature and/or cannot be resolved by the parties themselves through informal means.

Guiding principles

The following principles will apply to the lodging of a complaint:

1. The health, safety and wellbeing of all members of the School community remain the highest priority.
2. People are entitled to lodge a complaint.
3. Complaints should be lodged in good faith and without frivolous, malicious or vexatious intent.
4. The complaint will be heard promptly and will be taken seriously.





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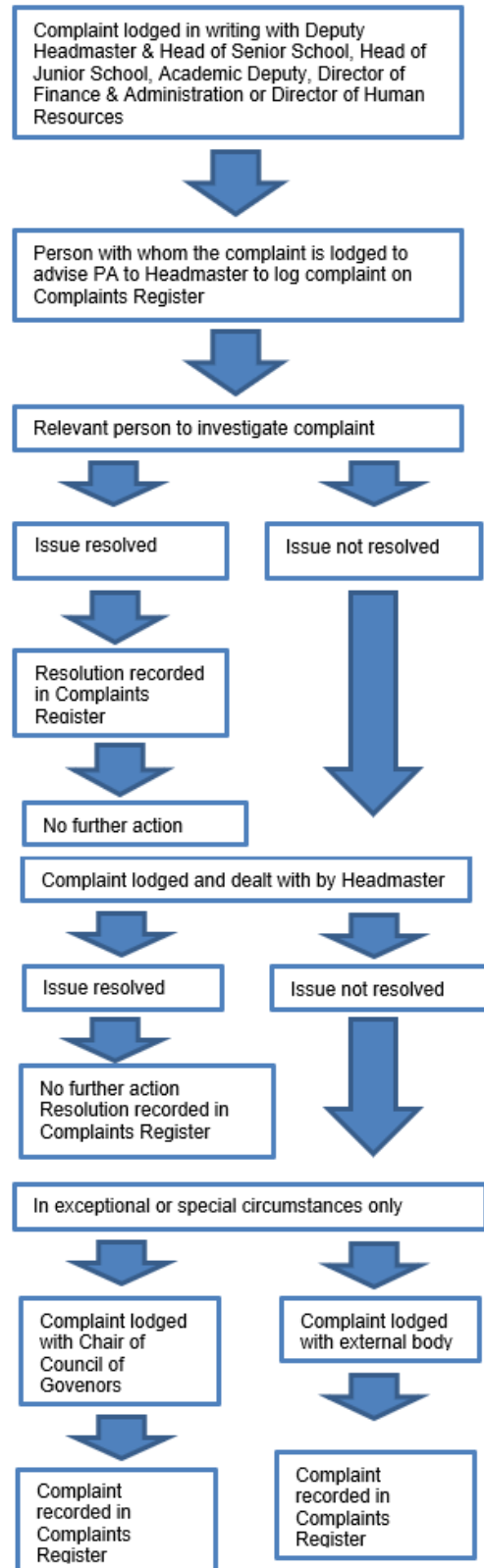
5. The right to complain will be affirmed and the complainant will not be pressured in any way.
6. The School will make every reasonable effort to ensure a person lodging a complaint will not be treated unfairly or victimised because of the grievance.
7. All resolution policies and processes acknowledge and value different perspectives and will operate under the principles of impartiality, promptness and protection from victimisation.
8. The complainant will be reminded that this policy does not remove the right of any person lodging a complaint to proceed to an external body or authority.
9. Each complaint is to be dealt with on its particular circumstances and merits and any settlements reached or determinations made through the resolution process will not necessarily constitute any binding precedent for future or similar cases.
10. In responding to a complaint, informally or formally, every reasonable effort shall be made to ensure that natural justice and procedural fairness are afforded to all parties. This means, in practical terms, that:
 - a. All parties are to be treated with respect and to be heard.
 - b. All parties should participate fully in the resolution process to achieve an outcome that is realistic and reasonable.
 - c. A person who is the subject of a complaint should be informed of the substance thereof and given a full opportunity to present their perspective.
 - d. All parties have a right to seek advice and support.
 - e. Investigations and proceedings must be conducted fairly, thoroughly and without bias or undue delay.
 - f. Parties should provide all relevant material, complete and factual information, documents or other evidence relating to the document.





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Referral to outside bodies

Where a complaint is not or cannot be resolved within the School, the parties may seek assistance from outside professional agencies or judicial bodies in order that a further attempt can be made to resolve the matter.

It should be noted that:

- The Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA) will not act as a mediator between parents and the School but if a matter remains unresolved, or parents feel that the School has failed to take their complaint seriously, AISSA may be able to provide general assistance to help parents understand the School's position.
- Neither the Minister for Education and Child Development or the Department for Education and Child Development has any power to directly intervene in any complaints relating to the operations of a non-government school and therefore will not receive or consider any referral of a complaint regarding St Peter's College.

Communication:

This policy and procedure is available on the School's Information System – Keystone and on the School's website.

This policy, and any changes or updates, will be made available to all parents of the School.

