



Policy Document **COMPLAINTS**

Definitions

<i>College:</i>	Geelong Lutheran College and St John's Lutheran School and Kindergarten
<i>Complaint/Grievance:</i>	Where an action or decision is considered to be unfair or inappropriate, there is the right to raise a complaint/grievance and have it considered seriously. The complaints/grievance process is intended to encompass any educational, behavioural, or school environment issues that may arise.
<i>Grievance:</i>	A complaint lodged by a staff member or volunteer.
<i>Complaint:</i>	A complaint lodged by a community member – parent, student or public.
<i>Dispute:</i>	Any argument or disagreement where a grievance (staff or volunteer) or complaint (family/student/community) has been formally raised.

Rationale

- In any organisation conflict of a personal or professional nature may arise.
- Lutheran Schools are Christ-centred and need to be mindful of the values of their community. If conflicts arise they need to be dealt with in a spirit of loving servant-hood. Conflicts should be dealt with in relation to the principles of a functioning Christian community. (See Matt. 18:15, 1 Cor 12, Eph 4, Rom 12).
- For a Christian community to function well, all members must actively work together for the common good (Paul's analogy of the church as a human body). The functions and gifts of each member will vary but the desire to work for the good of the community is the same. The respect and status of an individual is not determined by their particular gifts, or by their position in the school. Responsibilities are to be carried out in love and forgiveness so that the community is built up. No one is exempt.
- The welfare of children in the school is paramount. Open criticism of any parties in a dispute does not support children's education. To this end, fair and open communication through the use of the Complaints Procedure ensures that the rights and responsibilities of all parties are respected and the restoration of relationships is achieved.
- The College is committed to:
 - Respectful treatment of complainants
 - Restoration of relationship is a key aim in all aspects of complaints and the College commits to utilising the principles of Restorative Practices.
 - Providing information dealing with complaints and ensuring that it is accessible to complainants.
 - Good communication with complainants about the status of their complaints.
 - Taking ownership of differences and ensuring that people who are responding to complaints are supported.
 - Timeliness of complaints handling and dealing with issues as soon as possible.

- Transparency through recording and analysing complaints data to inform systems improvement.

Aims

- Lutheran Schools should at all times seek to create harmony and to avoid destructive conflict. The Christian atmosphere of a school community should be such that all feel safe to express their point of view openly, honestly and in a spirit of love.
- To provide a framework and a set of guidelines called the 'Complaints Management Procedure' to support the raising of a concern and the means of achieving a final resolution at the lowest possible level.
- To support the College initiative of striving for the restoration of relationships according to Restorative Practices.

Implementation

- The Complaints Management Procedure provides guidelines for raising an unresolved issue or complaint and having it considered seriously, or making a referral in the case of a serious incident or allegation. **[4.31.1 Complaints Management Procedure]**
 - Policy 4.10 applies to a matter of Student Bullying
 - Policies 4.09 and 4.30 apply to matters of Child safety and Child Protection
- It is essential that all parties participating in the discussions must first have familiarized themselves with **4.31.1 Complaints Management Procedure**.
- It is recognized that individuals in the college community are at different stages in their faith journeys and that this could affect their readiness and/or willingness to engage in prayer throughout the procedural steps.
- Complaints/disputes are to be kept confidential.
- All participants are to resist the temptation to become 'rescuers' and fuel the issue through well-intentioned defence/anger/attack/gossip etc. **[4.31.1 Appendix 3 Complaint Manager's Toolkit Behaviour Triangle]**
- Any party to a dispute has the right to be accompanied by another person, in a support role, at any meetings convened to discuss resolution of that dispute.
- Specific guidelines for handling initial complaints from parents concerning educational or behavioural issues, and complaints from the local community are outlined in **4.31.1 Complaints Management Procedure**
- Accurate records of all disputes and proceedings should be maintained and current copies held by all parties involved. A proforma is available in **4.31.1 Appendix 3 Complaint Manager's Toolkit Meeting Record**
- Although anonymous complaints will be heard they may only be treated as indicators of potential issues requiring attention.
- It is the obligation of all parties to deal with a concern as promptly and amicably as possible. In some cases where external personnel or factors are involved, resolution may take longer.

Evaluation

- This policy will be reviewed as part of the College's five-year review cycle.

Related Policies

4.31.1 Complaints Management Procedure