



GRIEVANCE RESOLUTION

Policy

“Bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.” Colossians 3:13

RATIONALE

Dignity, equity and justice in the relationships between all people within the Our Lady of Sion College community are of fundamental importance. Our mission and the charism of the Sisters of Our Lady of Sion call us to be people of dialogue, *concerned always for justice, truth, reconciliation and peace, and [to] be people who build bridges with others and remain open to change*. Our school has both a desire and a responsibility to ensure that high standards of conduct are maintained by staff, students and parents/carers at all times. The Our Lady of Sion College Code of Belonging for parents/carers and Codes of Conduct for staff and students outline the expectations of behaviour for members of our community.

Grievances occur when an employee, parent/carer, student, volunteer, contractor, or visitor feels that any decision, behaviour, act or omission at the school is unfair, discriminatory or unjustified or is in breach of a relevant Policy, Act, Regulation or Order, which results in a complaint. Serious complaints include but are not limited to child safety, reportable conduct, bullying, harassment and discrimination. The College has relevant policies that pertain to any complaints made with regards to these behaviours.

Grievances and complaints will be treated seriously, addressed professionally, competently and in a timely manner in accordance with College values, relevant legislation and Melbourne Archdiocese of Catholic Schools (MACS) guidelines. At all times procedural fairness, and where appropriate, confidentiality will be maintained.

PRINCIPLES

- Everyone has the right to be treated with respect and dignity
- Our Lady of Sion College staff, students, parents/carers, volunteers, contractors and visitors have a right to register a complaint
- As a community that welcomes feedback, students, staff, parents/carers and the broader school community should be encouraged to confidently raise concerns in the knowledge that they will be listened to and their concerns will be professionally managed
- All staff, students, parents/carers, volunteers, contractors and visitors should work within the expectations set out in the Our Lady of Sion College policies and codes
- Complaints should be conveyed and responded to in a way that is sensitive to the diverse circumstances and needs of those involved
- Transparency, dignity and impartiality will form the basis of the grievance resolution process
- Staff members and volunteers should be informed of formal complaints that are made about them
- The principles of due process should provide a sound and fair basis of information dissemination, investigation, conciliation and decision-making
- Where appropriate, the resolution of complaints at the local level is the desired outcome and those involved should seek to achieve the restoration of good and respectful relationships



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- It is incumbent upon College leaders to act where unacceptable conduct is observed or brought to their attention.

INTRODUCTION

This policy does not relate to critical incidents, emergency management, criminal offences, the imposition of School Community Safety Orders, or the conduct of the clergy or other persons involved in religious ministry. This policy is not for use by staff or volunteers in relation to complaints about their workplace or employment conditions.

IMPLEMENTATION

Communication Plan

- The College will make its policies and procedures relating to the handling of complaints easily available to all members of the community through a range of communication including but not limited to the school website, staff handbook, newsletters, and enrolment information.

Staff training

- Staff will be provided opportunities to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills in handling complaints through a range of methods including Professional Practice Consultations, staff induction and the Compliance dashboard which all staff must read and to which they must attest.

Managing Complaints - Staff, Parents/Carers

Our Lady of Sion College has developed and maintains a fair, effective and efficient grievance resolution process so that complaints about events or decisions at Our Lady of Sion College can be addressed. The following steps guide the process.

- Staff, parents/carers are asked to refer to the most appropriate person to resolve the complaint (please see table below). They are encouraged to initially resolve grievances personally by talking with or writing to the person whose responsibility it is to address the complaint.
- If the matter is raised directly with the staff member, the staff member should acknowledge any email within two working days, and both parties should seek to resolve the matter.
- If the issue is unresolved, staff and parents/carers may also choose to seek assistance from staff in positions of leadership, Deputy Principals or the Principal. In such circumstances, the leaders will use local complaints resolution procedures, including private discussions, mediation, monitoring, training or counselling.
- Staff may choose to seek assistance from the College Contact Officer(s) whose role is to provide appropriate support and options for the complainant to consider, including possible strategies and potential outcomes.
- Parents/carers and staff members discussing complaints with the Principal may be accompanied by a support person who may act in a support role only. Any person acting in a professional capacity on behalf of the parents/carers must provide their occupational details and full name prior to the meeting being held. It is at the Principal's discretion if an external professional is a participating member of any school meeting.
- The College will record the details of all complaints including the name and contact details of the persons making the complaint and will ensure that all records are maintained in accordance with its obligations under the Public Record Office Victoria Recordkeeping Standards.
- Any inquiry conducted by the school will be done so in a timely, efficient and confidential manner, ensuring fair principles are applied for all. Staff, parents/carers will be provided with an anticipated



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timeframe for a resolution. The staff member conducting the inquiry will record the details of the inquiry.

- If the complaint relates to the treatment of a parent/carer or their child's treatment by another student(s), or family member while at Our Lady of Sion College, we expect that parents/carers will refer their complaint directly to the school, via their child's Wellbeing and Growth Leader, Deputy Principal or Principal. Under no circumstances should parents/carers approach another student in the care of the school to discuss the issue or chastise them. Direct contact with parents to resolve the matter is also discouraged if the complaint pertains to issues or incidents that have arisen at the school. Parents/carers making complaints are to be respectful, confidential and courteous.
- If the complaint relates to the treatment of a staff member by a student, the matter should be referred to the Wellbeing and Growth Leader, the complainant should not approach the student directly. If the matter is not resolved at this level, the complainant should escalate the matter to the Director of Pastoral Care or Deputy Principal Student Wellbeing.
- If the complaint relates to the treatment of a staff member by another staff member, the matter should be referred to the Human Resources Officer or a member of the Leadership Team, who will follow the Grievance Resolution Policy.
- A complaint can be withdrawn at any stage during the process but should be done so in writing and documented.
- In most instances, it is expected that the complainant will have raised their complaint at Our Lady of Sion College before taking it to the Our Lady of Sion College Board Chair.
- Our Lady of Sion College endeavours to address and respond to all complaints. In some situations, the College may not be able to fully address complaints that are made anonymously or without sufficient detail being provided to enable an inquiry or resolution of the matter. To ensure procedural fairness, respondents have a right to know the particulars of the allegations being made against them and be given an opportunity to respond to them. Where possible, complainants are encouraged to give their names and to be reassured that the College will deal with complaints professionally and in accordance with procedural fairness and confidentiality. If the complainant wishes to remain anonymous, it is at the Principal's discretion what, if any, action will be taken. Anonymous complaints will be recorded in the same manner that all other complaints are recorded.
- Privacy laws may prohibit information being provided to the complainant of any specific action that has been taken in relation to individuals about whom the complaint has been raised.

Managing Complaints - Students

Our Lady of Sion College encourages students to raise any concerns they may have with a trusted adult staff member at the school. Complaints made by students will be taken seriously. A trusted adult at the school may include a teacher or a member of the support staff. The staff member will explain to the student what the school can do to support them and what steps they will take to try to resolve the issue. Students can also ask their parent/guardian/carer or another trusted adult outside the school to talk to the school about the issue.

Our Lady of Sion College will ensure students are informed about who to approach and relevant processes to raise complaints or concerns by providing information at assemblies, or discussions during Pastoral lessons.

Students may also be accompanied by a support person when raising a complaint. The support person can be a family member or a friend. The support person can also assist with ensuring the cultural safety of students in the complaints process.



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Additional resources to support students to raise issues or concerns are available at: Report Racism Hotline (call 1800 722 476) – this hotline enables students to report concerns relating to racism or religious discrimination Reach Out Headspace Kids Helpline (call 1800 55 1800) Victorian Aboriginal Education Association (VAEAI).

Documentation

The following information about complaints received will be recorded:

- date of complaint and method of communication
- name and contact details of the complainant
- nature of the complaint and the requested resolution
- name of staff member handling the issue
- any action and the timeframe taken, minutes/notes of meetings and communication
- a statement of the outcome, including the closure date and date of advising the complainant of the outcome.

When handling all complaints, Our Lady of Sion College will maintain any records as required in accordance with information and records management policies and procedures, relevant retention and disposal schedules and any applicable Public Record Office Victoria Recordkeeping Standards.

Our Lady of Sion College will handle personal, sensitive and health information in accordance with the College Privacy Policy and requirements under the Child Information Sharing Scheme and the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme. Privacy laws may prohibit information being provided to the complainant of any specific action that has been taken in relation to individuals about whom the complaint has been raised. Our Lady of Sion College ensures that it will create and maintain records relevant to child safety and wellbeing.

Expectations

In making a complaint, Our Lady of Sion College requests that the complainant will:

- have clarity around the concern they wish to raise
- raise the concern or complaint as soon as possible by speaking with the relevant person, as described in the table below
- communicate and respond in ways that are constructive, fair and respectful
- provide complete and factual information about the concern and complaint
- observe confidentiality and a respect for sensitive issues
- act in good faith to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
- have realistic and reasonable expectations about possible outcome/remedies.

If the issue remains unresolved after discussion with the relevant person/s at the school, complainants are invited to request an appointment to discuss the concern with a Deputy Principal or the Principal.

Resolutions

Outcomes for the complainant may include:

- feeling that their concern has been considered seriously
- reaching a compromise solution
- knowing that the College has been alerted to a possible problem
- achieving an outcome which may be different from the one they sought, but which they perceive to be well considered
- receiving a verbal or written apology
- an understanding that the behaviour will not happen again
- achieving a change to a policy, procedure or practice that would prevent a recurrence of similar complaints.



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Outcomes for the school may involve:

- dismissing the complaint, e.g. no breaches have occurred
- reaching a compromise solution
- upholding the complaint and implementing a specific action, such as overturning a decision, mediation – with an internal or external mediator, giving an apology
- improving processes
- increasing staff development, training or performance improvement
- the enactment or review of school policies and procedures
- an official warning or disciplinary action in line with the Catholic Education Multi-Enterprise Agreement
- taking other actions to ensure that the matter is handled appropriately in the future
- the development of a behavioural contract (in the case of a student)
- the provision of pastoral or spiritual care.

If a matter remains unresolved and further time is required to resolve the matter, Our Lady of Sion College will consult with the complainant and discuss any interim solutions to the concerns that can be put in place. If the complainant and the school cannot achieve a mutually agreed outcome, the Principal or someone appointed by them will write to the complainant providing a summary of the action taken by the school in response to their complaint and the school's position in response to the issues raised. This should occur as soon as practicable from when the complaint was first received, however, depending on the complexity of the complaint, more time may be needed to gather enough information to fully understand the circumstances of the complaint.

Our Lady of Sion College will provide updates throughout the process as appropriate. If the scope of the complaint is beyond the capacity or jurisdiction of the school, the matter will be referred to The Chair of the Board and the complainant will be informed of the referral and reasons for this decision. This may be required for complaints against the Principal or where matters are unresolved by Our Lady of Sion College.

Escalation

When the College Board will become involved.

The Board Chair is responsible for responding to complaints when:

- a complainant is not satisfied that a matter has been addressed in accordance with the school's complaints handling policies and processes
- a complainant is not satisfied that an acceptable resolution has been reached
- the subject of the complaint relates to policy outside the responsibility or management of the school
- the subject of the complaint is the Principal of the College.

The Board Chair will not become involved when:

- issues have not been raised with the school
- the school is continuing to address the issues in the complaint
- issues raised are the responsibility of the school (e.g. school uniform, parking)
- issues raised should be able to be resolved at the school level.

The Board Chair will:

- acknowledge receipt of a complaint as soon as practicable
- contact the complainant to ensure they are aware of the complaint handling procedures



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- raise the issue with the school, if the complainant has not done so to assist with initiating discussions with the school.

If the complaint is unable to be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, but the matter is however finalised, the complainant has the right to seek alternative independent or other advice or contact other entities such as the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission. Complaints related to the minimum standards for school registration can be referred to the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA).

MISCONDUCT OR SERIOUS MISCONDUCT

All complaints of alleged misconduct or serious misconduct by a teacher, staff member or volunteers should be reported to the Principal of Our Lady of Sion College.

Complaints about teachers can also be reported to the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) – the regulator in relation to the registration and investigation of serious misconduct (including conduct which is of a physical or emotional nature) of all teachers in the state of Victoria.

In some cases, certain actions which involve physical or emotional misconduct, such as unlawful assault or threats to the person, may constitute a criminal offence. These types of offences should be reported to and investigated by the police. Initial consultation with the Principal of Our Lady of Sion College may help to determine the appropriate course of action in these circumstances.

CHILD ABUSE (including sexual offences)

Child abuse includes any instances of physical or sexual abuse (including grooming), emotional or psychological harm, serious or significant neglect and family violence involving a child.

Complaints of the alleged child abuse (including sexual offences) of students should be reported to the Principal of Our Lady of Sion College.

There are legal obligations on all adults to report child abuse to police once a reasonable belief is formed that a sexual offence may have been committed against a child.

Failure to disclose a sexual offence against a child is a criminal offence under section 327 of the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic.) (Crimes Act) and applies to all adults (18 years of age and over) in Victoria.

Communication with children under 16 years of age by teachers, staff or any other person to prepare or groom a child for future sexual activity is a criminal offence under section 49M(1) of the Crimes Act and must be reported to the police. The offence of grooming applies to any person aged 18 years or over and does not apply to communication between people who are both under 18 years of age.

COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE CLERGY OR OTHER PERSONS INVOLVED IN RELIGIOUS MINISTRY

If the complaint relates to the clergy or other persons involved in religious ministry with Our Lady of Sion College, the complainant should contact and seek advice from the Professional Standards unit of the Vicar General's Office in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, 383 Albert Street, East Melbourne. Visit www.melbournecatholic.org or contact 03 9926 5677. If the person is a member of a religious order, the complainant should also contact the provincial head or professional standards office of that congregation or religious order.



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COMPLAINTS IN RELATION TO THE INFORMATION SHARING SCHEMES

Our Lady of Sion College is a prescribed Information Sharing Entity (ISE) that may share information under the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) and the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS).

The school, as an ISE, may receive complaints from individuals in relation to its conduct as an ISE under the CISS or FVISS. It may also receive a complaint from another ISE.

The following information is recorded where a complaint is received under the CISS or FVISS:

- the date the complaint was made and received
- the nature of the complaint
- the action taken to resolve the complaint
- the action taken to lessen or prevent the issue from recurring
- the time taken to resolve the complaint
- further action taken if the complaint was not resolved.

COMPLAINTS RELATING TO REPORTABLE CONDUCT

Legal obligations are imposed on Our Lady of Sion College to report to the Commission for Child and Young People (CCYP), and investigate allegations of reportable conduct, where those allegations are based on a person's reasonable belief that reportable conduct or misconduct involving reportable conduct has occurred. Reportable conduct includes the following:

- sexual offences against, with or in the presence of a child
- sexual misconduct against, with or in the presence of a child
- physical violence against, with or in the presence of a child
- behaviour that causes significant psychological or emotional harm
- significant neglect.

Complaints relating to a reportable conduct allegation which meets the requisite threshold and which involves an Our Lady of Sion College employee (which amongst others, can include a teacher, principal, volunteer or contractor) must be reported.

Complaints of reportable conduct in relation to an employee (other than a Principal) should be reported to the Principal of Our Lady of Sion College. Complaints of reportable conduct involving the Principal of Our Lady of Sion College should be reported to the Our Lady of Sion College Board Chair: boardchair@sion.catholic.edu.au



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RELATED POLICIES

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Reportable Conduct Policy
- Whistleblower Policy
- Sexual Harassment Policy
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Our Lady of Sion College Code of Belonging
- Privacy Policy
- Staff Anti-Bullying Policy
- Student Behaviour Policy
- Drug Issues in Schools Policy
- Electronic Communication (Staff) Policy

Review Date: 2029

Ratified by the College Board: July 2025



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Sample Area of Complaint	Teacher	Wellbeing and Growth Leader or Learning Area Leader or Director	Deputy Principal	Principal	Board/MACS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pastoral Care Concern Behaviour between students Day to day College Operations 	Homeroom	Wellbeing and Growth Leader Director of Pastoral Care	Student Wellbeing		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching and Learning Concern Assessment result Reports 	Subject	Learning Area Leader Director of Learning and Curriculum	Learning and Teaching		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subject Selection 			Learning and Teaching		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faith and Mission program 		Religious Education Learning Area Leader	Faith and Mission		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Behaviour Management of students (including in public) 		Wellbeing and Growth Leader Director of Pastoral Care	Student Wellbeing	Principal	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bullying and Harassment of a student 		Wellbeing and Growth Leader Director of Pastoral Care	Student Wellbeing Learning and Teaching	Principal	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bullying and Harassment of a staff member/parent/carer 			All	Principal	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child Safety (including Child Abuse or Sexual Assault) 			Student Wellbeing	Principal	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reportable conduct Professional conduct 			Student Wellbeing Learning and Teaching	Principal	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Terms of Employment Serious Misconduct Leadership Team Member 				Principal	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clergy or Religious Persons Visitors 				Principal	Professional Standards Unit of the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne



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<ul style="list-style-type: none">Principal					Chair of the College Board
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