



COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide written processes about receiving, assessing, investigating and otherwise dealing with complaints.¹

SCOPE

Any person directly affected by the subject of a complaint. Examples may include staff, students or a student's parent or guardian, contractors, or community members.

RESPONSIBLE PERSON

College Board

IDENTIFIED STAKEHOLDERS

College Executive

REFERENCES, RELATED LEGISLATION, POLICIES & OTHER RESOURCES

- *Child Safe Organisations Act 2024* (Qld)
- *Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2017* (Qld)
- *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* and National Code
- Australian Education Act 2013 (Cth)
- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)
- Disability Services Act 2006 (Qld)
- Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act 2017 (Qld)
- Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2017 (Qld)
- Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (Qld)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Standards Australia, AS 10002:2022 Guidelines for complaint management in organizations (ISO 10002:2018 NEQ)
- Matthew Flinders Anglican College Reporting Concerns of Harm and Abuse Policy
- Matthew Flinders Anglican College Student Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Matthew Flinders Anglican College Complaints Handling Procedure
- Matthew Flinders Anglican College Behaviour Management Policy (Students)
- Matthew Flinders Anglican College Code of Conduct - College Community
- Matthew Flinders Anglican College Our Standards of Practice
- Matthew Flinders Anglican College Respect and Inclusion Policy
- Matthew Flinders Anglican College Privacy Policy
- Matthew Flinders Anglican College Constitution and Board Charter
- Matthew Flinders Anglican College Anti-Bullying Guidelines (Students)
- Matthew Flinders Anglican College Work Health and Safety Policy
- Matthew Flinders Anglican College Enrolment Policy
- Matthew Flinders Anglican College Statement of Commitment to Student Safety and Wellbeing
- QFCC Guidelines for Implementing the Child Safe Standards in Queensland

¹ *Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulations 2017*, s.7

DEFINITIONS

- Complainant:** The person, organisation or their representative making a complaint.²
- Complaint:** An expression of dissatisfaction made to or about the school, related to the College's services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.³
- Formal Complaint:** A complaint about a matter that is serious, complex or may pose a threat to the health and safety of any person. Examples include serious allegations or breaches of policy, complaints against a senior staff member, including the Principal or an informal complaint that could not be resolved informally or allegations of reportable conduct involving a worker. Assessment of the complaint is required by the Principal or their delegated authority.
- Informal Complaint:** A complaint about a matter that is likely to be simple, straight forward, easily manageable, or minor, where a simple or quick resolution is appropriate such as discussion of the matter with a relevant staff member.
- Respondent:** The person who is referred to in a complaint by a complainant as the person responsible for their concerns or who can best respond to their concern.
- Worker:** Has the same meaning as section 8 of the Child Safe Organisations Act 2024. A worker is a person who performs work of any kind for the College, including staff, volunteers, contractors, subcontractors, consultants, labour-hire workers, governing body members, and religious leaders.

POLICY STATEMENT

Matthew Flinders Anglican College ('the College') acknowledges the right of students, parents/guardians, staff and others to complain when dissatisfied with the College's services, including an action, inaction or decision of the College. The College encourages constructive criticism and complaints. The College is committed to ensuring that complaints received are handled in a responsive, efficient, consistent, effective, transparent and fair way.

The College will ensure staff can recognise, receive, and appropriately refer complaints to the informal or formal complaints procedure.

The College recognises that time spent on handling complaints can be an investment in better service to students and parents/guardians and a better culture for staff, and views complaints as part of an important feedback and accountability process.

The College promotes a safe, inclusive and culturally responsive environment for all students, ensuring their safety and wellbeing are prioritised. The College is committed to students exercising their right to speak up and participate in College processes and decisions that affect them.

The College recognises that some complaints may raise issues of child protection or reportable conduct involving workers. These matters will be managed in accordance with relevant legislation and the College's Reporting Concerns of Harm and Abuse Policy and Student Safety and Wellbeing Policy, including compliance with the *Reportable Conduct Scheme*.

Statement of Commitment to Student Safety and Wellbeing

Matthew Flinders Anglican College is committed to taking all reasonable steps to promote the safety and wellbeing of students enrolled at the College and their protection from foreseeable harm. We prioritise student safety and wellbeing in all aspects of our work and do not tolerate any form of child abuse or harm. We act in accordance with the Child Safe Organisations Act 2024 (QLD) and implement the Child Safe Standards and Universal Principle to create a safe, inclusive, and accountable environment. We listen to students, value their views, and support them to participate in decisions that affect them.

² Standards Australia, AS 1002:2022 Guidelines for complaint management in organizations (ISO 10002:2018, NEQ), s.4.2

³ Standards Australia, AS 1002:2022 Guidelines for complaint management in organizations (ISO 10002:2018, NEQ), s.4.3

Matthew Flinders Anglican College is committed to the safety and inclusion of all students, including those from diverse cultural backgrounds, students with disability, LGBTQIA+ students, and students who may be experiencing vulnerability. We also make a clear commitment to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and to providing an environment where their identities, cultures, and connections to Country are respected and upheld.

COMPLAINTS HANDLING PRINCIPLES

The College will manage complaints according to the following (which include principles of procedural fairness):

- complaints will be taken seriously, dealt with fairly and objectively, without judgement and addressed in a reasonable timeframe
- complaints should be resolved with as little formality and disruption as possible, having regard to the nature of the complaint
- interested parties to the complaint (for example, the complainant and any respondent) will be heard and/or may provide relevant information in relation to the complaint
- confidentiality and privacy will be maintained as much as possible
- a child-centred approach will be maintained, and all complaints will be managed in a manner that prioritises the student's safety, wellbeing, and voice
- a trauma-informed and culturally safe approach to managing complaints will be prioritised
- the complainant and any respondent will be offered support as appropriate
- victimising behaviour towards a complainant, respondent or other people associated with the complaint, will not be tolerated
- complainants that lodge a complaint on reasonable grounds will not suffer any other reprisals on the basis of lodging the complaint.

COMPLAINTS THAT MAY BE RESOLVED UNDER THIS POLICY

The College encourages anyone who feels impacted by an issue involving the College to file a complaint. Complaints can address matters such as:

- the College, its staff or students having done something wrong
- the College, its staff or students having failed to do something they should have done
- the College, its staff or students having acted unfairly or impolitely
- issues of student or staff behaviour that are contrary to the Behaviour Management Policy (Students), Code of Conduct - College Community or Our Standards of Practice, including inappropriate staff conduct as reported by a student.⁴
- issues related to learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
- issues related to communication with students or parents or between staff
- issues related to College fees and payments
- general administrative issues
- issues relating to non-compliance with a process outlined in College policies or procedures, for example the Reporting Concerns of Harm and Abuse Policy, discrimination policies, or privacy policy.⁵

Student complaints may be brought by students or by parents on behalf of their children, as appropriate in the circumstances.

ISSUES OUTSIDE THIS POLICY

The following matters are outside the scope of this policy and should be managed as follows:

- Child protection concerns including allegations of sexual abuse, likely sexual abuse or harm to children should be dealt in accordance with the College's Reporting Concerns of Harm and Abuse Policy.
- Allegations that may constitute *reportable conduct* involving a worker (as defined under the *Child Safe Organisations Act 2024* (Qld)) will not be managed solely under this policy and must be managed in accordance with the College's Reporting Concerns of Harm and Abuse Policy and the College's obligations under the *Reportable Conduct Scheme*, including notification to the Queensland Family and Child Commission within legislated timeframes.

⁴ Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2017 s.16(2)(a)

⁵ Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2017 s.16(5)

- Student bullying complaints should be dealt with under the College's Behaviour Management Policy (Students) and Anti-Bullying Guidelines (Students).
- Student discipline matters, including matters involving suspension or expulsion, should be dealt with under the College's Behaviour Management Policy (Students).
- Student or staff violence or criminal matters should be directed to the Principal who will involve the Police as appropriate.
- Disputes relating to a staff member's employment should be directed to their manager and dealt with under the Grievance Resolution Policy - Staff, Enterprise Agreement and/or employment law.
- Disputes between Board Directors should be dealt with in accordance with the College Constitution and Board Charter.
- Formal legal proceedings should be managed as appropriate in the circumstances.
- Complaints relating to the education and training services provided by the College to an overseas student should be dealt with in accordance with the *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* and National Code and the College's Overseas Student's Complaints and Appeals Policy and Process.

RESPONSIBILITIES

College

The College has the following roles and responsibilities:

- develop, implement, promote and act in accordance with the College's Complaints Handling Policy
- appropriately communicate the College's Complaints Handling Policy to students, parents and staff
- ensure that the Complaints Handling Policy and processes are readily accessible by staff, students and parents
- upon receipt of a complaint, manage the complaint in accordance with the Complaints Handling Policy
- ensure that appropriate support is made available to all parties to a complaint
- take appropriate action to prevent victimisation or action in reprisal against the complainant, respondent or any person associated with them
- appropriately implement remedies
- appropriately train relevant staff
- keep records
- conduct a review/audit of the Complaints Register at regular intervals
- report to the College's insurer when relevant.

All Parties to a Dispute

The complainant and respondent both have the following roles and responsibilities:

- comply with the College's Complaints Handling Policy
- provide complete and factual information in a timely manner
- not provide deliberately false or misleading information
- not make frivolous or vexatious complaints or retaliatory complaints
- act in good faith and maintain a mutually beneficial relationship of trust and cooperation
- act in a calm, courteous and non-threatening manner
- acknowledge that the common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
- recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced
- maintain and respect the privacy and confidentiality of all parties
- not victimise or act in reprisal against any party to the dispute or any person associated with them.

Staff Receiving and/or Managing Complaints

Staff receiving and/or managing complaints have the following roles and responsibilities:

- act in accordance with the College's Complaints Handling Policy
- refer the complainant to the College's Complaints Handling Policy and processes and provide additional information as necessary
- maintain confidentiality as far as possible
- keep appropriate records
- forward complaints to more senior staff, including the Principal, if the complaint cannot be resolved at the initial level or if it involves serious issues that require escalation
- identify and escalate matters that may involve child safety concerns or reportable conduct by a worker, in accordance with the College's Reporting Concerns of Harm and Abuse Policy
- not victimise or act in reprisal against the complainant, respondent or any person associated with them.

IMPLEMENTATION

The College is committed to raising awareness of the process for resolving complaints at the College, including by the development and implementation of this policy and via the clear support and promotion of the policy.

The College is committed to raising awareness of the process for resolving complaints through the development, implementation, support and promotion of this policy. The policy will be readily accessible to all members of the College community via the College website, parent and staff portals, enrolment materials, and key College publications. Information regarding the complaints process will also be communicated through community information sessions, parent orientation programs, and regular College communications to ensure all stakeholders understand how concerns can be raised and addressed.

The College is also committed to providing regular training to staff on the implementation of this policy. Training will be undertaken as part of staff induction for all new employees and will be reinforced through annual professional learning programs and compliance training. Additional training and guidance will be provided to staff and leaders when legislative requirements, policy updates, or identified needs arise to ensure complaints are managed consistently, fairly, and in accordance with the principles outlined in this policy.

COMPLAINT REGISTER

The College will maintain a complaint register with details such as the date, source and description of complaints, the staff managing the complaint, the actions taken, outcome and the date the complaint was closed.

The complaint register will be stored securely.

All complaints shall be entered onto the complaint register as soon as practicable after the complaint is received. The complaint register will not contain complaints about the Principal. Records of complaints about the Principal will be maintained by the Board with access restricted to the Board.

To safeguard confidentiality and maintain the integrity of the complaint process, access to the entire complaint register will be limited to the Principal and Principal's Executive Assistant.

The Principal may authorise the sharing of specific, relevant entries from the complaint register with other designated staff members (such as the senior leadership team), provided measures are taken to protect the confidentiality of all parties involved, particularly ensuring that respondents to a complaint do not gain inappropriate access to information about the allegations against them.

COMPLAINT HANDLING PROCEDURE

These Procedures support the Complaints Handling Policy ('the Policy') and provide direction to relevant persons regarding their role and responsibilities when actioning the Policy.

Any individual can make a complaint, including students, staff, visitors, parents, guardians or other members of the community.

Throughout the Procedures, unless otherwise indicated, the term 'College staff' includes the Principal and all other employees.

REPORTABLE CONDUCT SCHEME

Allegations that may constitute *reportable conduct* involving a worker (as defined under the *Child Safe Organisations Act 2024 (Qld)*) will not be managed solely under the Complaints Handling Policy and must be managed in accordance with the College's Reporting Concerns of Harm and Abuse Policy and the College's obligations under the *Reportable Conduct Scheme*, including notification to the Queensland Family and Child Commission within legislated timeframes.

Allegations of *reportable conduct* by the Principal can be lodged with the Board Chair via boardchair@mfac.edu.au.

Allegations of *reportable conduct* by a worker or the Principal can be made directly to the [Queensland Family and Child Commission](#).

An initial report must include the following particulars:

- a) details of the reportable allegation or reportable conviction;
- b) the name, including any former name or alias, of the worker the subject of the reportable allegation or reportable conviction;
- c) the date of birth of the worker, if known;
- d) the name of the head of the reporting entity;
- e) whether the sector regulator for the reporting entity or the police service has been contacted about the reportable allegation or reportable conviction;
- f) the reporting entity's contact details, including its name, address and telephone number;
- g) if the worker currently performs work for the reporting entity—any action, including risk management action, taken in response to the reportable allegation or reportable conviction, including, for example—
 - i. immediate steps taken to prevent the worker from having contact with children; and
 - ii. any disciplinary action taken or proposed to be taken against the worker;
- h) any other matter prescribed by regulation⁶.

PROCESS

All complaints in relation to an action, behaviour, omission or decision by a College staff member, or volunteer will be managed in accordance with the following complaints handling process.

- Refer to **Specific Complaints Handling Requirements** below for information about complaints in relation to visitors to the College, the Principal, members of the College Board of Directors and the Chair of the Board of Directors.

Stage 1 - Discuss the matter with the relevant staff member or volunteer

Wherever possible, the complainant is encouraged, in the first instance, to discuss their complaint with the staff member or volunteer whose action, behaviour, omission or decision is in question. When resolving complaints at this stage:

1. the complainant is asked to speak with the staff member or volunteer and request a time to discuss their concern regarding the staff member or volunteer's action, behaviour, omission or decision;

⁶ *Child Safe Organisations Act 2024 (Qld)* s.35

2. the complainant and the staff member or volunteer may speak with a member of the College Executive about obtaining support during the complaints handling process, as outlined herein;
3. if the Principal, or another member of the College Executive is not involved in the discussion, the staff member or volunteer is to:
 - a. inform the complainant about these Procedures and the Complaints Handling Policy, and
 - b. offer to inform the Principal, or another member of the College Executive of the complaint raised, and the outcome of the discussion;
4. if the Principal, or another member of the College Executive is made aware of the complaint, they will:
 - a. ensure the complaint is documented; including the names of all parties involved, the nature of the concerns, the date and time of any discussion, the agreed outcomes and any required actions;
 - b. consider if any other policies, procedures or protocols are to be applied, particularly those referenced in the complaints handling Policy regarding student protection and the conduct of staff and volunteers;
 - c. consider if it is appropriate to ensure the document outlining the management of the complaint is filed in the staff member or volunteer's personnel file and any agreed actions are completed;
 - d. consider whether the staff member or volunteer requires any additional training or support in relation to their role, or whether any other action is required; and
 - e. identify any issues or strategies to be incorporated in the College quality improvement planning.

When the complainant determines that it is not appropriate to discuss the complaint with the staff member or volunteer, or in doing so they do not believe their complaint has been addressed to their satisfaction, they are asked to proceed to Stage 2 of the complaints handling process.

Stage 2 – Make a complaint to the Principal or another member of the College Executive

When escalating a complaint to this stage, the complainant may raise their complaint with the Principal or another member of the College Executive either in writing or verbally. When resolving a complaint at this stage:

1. the complainant is asked to inform the Principal or other member of the Executive of their complaint: including the names of all parties involved, the nature of the concerns, any specific dates and times when incidents occurred, the complainant's feedback about their discussion with the staff member or volunteer, and the reason why the complaint remains unresolved;
2. the Principal or Executive member will:
 - a. consider if other policies, procedures or protocols (particularly those referenced in the Complaints Handling Policy regarding student protection and the conduct of staff and volunteers) are to be applied;
 - b. speak with the staff member or volunteer and obtain further information about their actions in relation to the complaint;
 - c. advise all parties involved about support available to them during the complaints handling process, as outlined herein;
 - d. organise meeting/s with the complainant, or their advocate, and the staff member or volunteer, as soon as practicable; to gather further information about the ongoing complaint and develop a plan to satisfactorily resolve the complaint;
 - e. explain to the complainant, or their advocate, and the staff member or volunteer that they may have a support person present during any meeting;
 - f. ensure meetings are documented, including the agreed outcomes and required actions;
 - g. consider whether the staff member or volunteer requires additional training or support in relation to their role, or whether any other action is required;
 - h. ensure the agreed outcomes and required actions are communicated to the complainant;
 - i. ensure the records related to the complaint, e.g. meetings, reports, letters etc. are filed on the staff member or volunteer's personnel file and any agreed actions are completed; and
 - j. incorporate relevant learnings into the College's quality improvement planning.

When the complainant determines that it is not appropriate to discuss the complaint with another member of the College Executive, or in doing so they do not believe their complaint has been addressed to their satisfaction, they are asked to contact the Principal.

When the complainant or their advocate determines that it is not appropriate to discuss the complaint with the Principal, or in doing so they do not believe their complaint has been addressed to their satisfaction, they are asked to proceed to Stage 3 of the complaints handling process.

Stage 3 – Escalate the complaint to the Chair

When escalating a complaint to this stage, the complainant may raise their complaint with the Chair of the College Board, either in writing (boardchair@mfac.edu.au) or verbally. When resolving a complaint at this stage:

1. the complainant is asked to inform the Chair of their ongoing complaint, including their feedback on previous meetings with the College and the reason why the complaint remains unresolved;
2. the Chair will:
 - a. consider if other policies, procedures or protocols (particularly those referenced in the Complaints Handling Policy regarding student protection and the conduct of staff and volunteers) are to be applied;
 - b. advise the Principal and staff member or volunteer that the complaint has now been escalated and obtain further information about the matter and the College responses to the complaint, including copies of relevant documents or complaints handling plans;
 - c. advise all parties involved about support available to them during the complaints handling process, as outlined herein;
 - d. organise meeting/s with the complainant or their advocate, the Principal and other relevant staff members and volunteers as soon as practicable to gather further information about the ongoing complaint and, if required, develop a complaints handling plan to resolve the issues;
 - e. explain to the complainant and the staff member or volunteer that they may have a support person present during any meeting;
 - f. ensure meetings are documented, including the agreed outcomes and required actions;
 - g. consider whether the staff member or volunteer requires additional training or support in relation to their role, or whether any other action is required;
 - h. ensure the agreed outcomes and required actions are communicated to the complainant;
 - i. ensure the records relating to the complaint, e.g. meetings, reports, letters etc. are filed on the staff member or volunteer's personnel file and any agreed actions are completed; and
 - j. incorporate relevant learnings into the College's quality improvement planning.

SPECIFIC COMPLAINTS HANDLING REQUIREMENTS

Complaints in Relation to Visitors to the College

When a complaint is about a visitor to the College, the complainant is asked to inform the Principal or another member of the College Executive of their concerns including, where known, the name of the visitor, the organisation that the visitor works for, the names of any children involved, if relevant, and any dates and times of particular incidents related to their complaint.

The Principal or Executive member will consider if any other policies, procedures or protocols are to be applied, particularly those referenced in the Complaints Handling Policy regarding student protection.

The Principal or Executive member will document the concerns and, unless the matter involves a criminal investigation, will forward the complaint to the organisation that employs the visitor who has been named in the complaint. If the matter does relate to a criminal investigation, direction will be sought from the Police.

The Principal or Executive member will also consider the nature of the complaint and determine whether this may impact any future visits to the College by the person named in the complaint.

If the matter is being managed by another member of the Executive, this member will brief the Principal as soon as practicable.

Complaints Concerning the Principal

If the complaint relates to the Principal the complainant shall address their complaint, in writing, to the Chair of the Board of Directors (boardchair@mfac.edu.au).

Complaints Concerning a Member/s of the Board of Directors

If the complaint relates to the College Board or a member of the College Board then the complainant shall make the complaint in writing to the Chair of the Board of Directors (boardchair@mfac.edu.au).

Together, both the complainant and Chair of the College Board can then take steps to attempt to resolve the problem at this level.

Complaints Concerning the Chair of the Board of Directors

If the complaint relates to the Chair of the Board of Directors the complainant shall write to the Principal who will forward the correspondence to the Deputy Chair of the Board.

Approved by: Board of Directors Date Approved: June 2026	Reference Code: ADM-028-POL-012 Next Review Due: June 2027
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This policy may be updated or revised from time-to-time. The College will not notify you each time the policy is changed. If you are unsure whether you are reading the most current version, you should contact the Principal's Office.