

Complaints Handling

Policy and Procedure



Westside
Christian College
Achievement Belonging Care

Purpose	This policy outlines the process for submitting, managing and responding to complaints and disputes, ensuring these are dealt with in an efficient, effective and procedurally fair manner.		
Scope	This policy applies to College students and parents, suppliers and members of the public. Where College employees seek to make a complaint that relates to their employment, this is addressed in the Grievance policy.		
Status	Approved	Version	2.0
Drafted by	HRC Manager	Supersedes	Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure V1.1
Authorised by	APCCS Board Chair	Date of Authorisation	9 August 2025
References	Legislation		Other College Policies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulations 2017 • Australian Education Regulations 2013 • Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld) • Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) • Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld) • Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth) • Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth) • Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth) • Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) • Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth) • Standards Australia, Guidelines for complaint management in organizations (ISO 10002:2022, NEQ) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the College Enterprise Agreement (2022) • the College Work Health and Safety Policy • the College Workplace Discrimination Bullying and Harassment Policy • the College Disability Discrimination Policy • the College Privacy Policy • the College Code of Conduct • the College Grievance policy
Review Date:	Annually	Next Review	September 2026
Definitions	<p>Student A student currently or previously enrolled at the College.</p> <p>Parent A parent, guardian or carer of a student.</p> <p>Public A member of the public not otherwise attached to the College. This includes a person living in a property near the College, who lives in close proximity to operations of the College.</p> <p>Supplier A person or professional entity who supplies goods or services to the College</p> <p>Complaint An expression of dissatisfaction made to or about the school, related to the school's services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.¹</p>		

¹ Standards Australia, Guidelines for complaint management in organizations (ISO 10002:2018, NEQ), s.4.3

	Complainant	The person, organisation or their representative making a complaint. ²
	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. Assessment of the complaint is required by Principal.
	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.
Revision/Modification History		
Date	Version	Summary
29 October 2024	1.1	Section 2.1 added contact email for the College Board. Section 2.3 – Appeals process
25 July 2025	2.0	Various changes to structure of policy

1.0 Policy

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

Westside Christian College will ensure employees 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 employees, and views complaints as part of an important feedback and accountability process.

1.1 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
- 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 the lodging the complaint

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

1.2 Complaints that may be resolved under this Policy

The College encourages students, parents and suppliers to lodge promptly any concerns such as when it is felt that:

- the College, its employees or students have not met the service delivery standards set out in the Student Enrolment Agreement, or that could be reasonably expected
- issues of student or employee behaviour that are contrary to the relevant Code of Conduct
- issues related to learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
- issues related to communication
- issues related to College fees and payments
- general administrative issues.

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

1.3 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 school's [Child Protection Policy](#).
- Student bullying complaints should be dealt with under the behaviour management procedures
- Student discipline matters, including matters involving suspension or expulsion, should be dealt with under the Behaviour Management policies and procedures for each campus.
- Student or employee violence or criminal matters should be directed to 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 enterprise agreement and/or employment law, and/or the College's Grievance policy
- Disputes between board members, between members of the Association of Parent-Controlled Christian Schools at Brisbane (APCCS) and board members, or between APCCS members should be dealt with in accordance with the [APCCS Board Charter](#).
- Formal legal proceedings should be managed as appropriate in the circumstances.
- Complaints relating to the education and training services provided by the school to an overseas student should be dealt with in accordance with the [Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000](#) and [National Code](#) and the school's Overseas Student's Complaints and Appeals Policy and Process.

1.4 Responsibilities

1.4.1 The College

The College has the following roles and responsibilities:

- develop, implement, promote and act in accordance with the College's Complaints Handling Policy and procedures
- appropriately communicate the College's Complaints Handling Policy and procedures to students, parents and suppliers
- ensure that this policy and procedures are readily accessible by staff, students and parents
- upon receipt of a complaint, manage the complaint in accordance with the Complaints Handling procedures
- 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 employees

- keep a record of the complaint and actions taken to resolution
- conduct a review/audit of the Complaints Register from time to time
- monitor and report to the governing body on complaints, especially regarding any claim for redress
- report to the College's insurer when that is relevant.

1.4.2 All Parties

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

- apply and comply with the College's Complaints Handling Policy and procedures and Code of Conduct as applicable
- lodge the complaint as soon as possible after the issue arises
- expect that the complaint will be dealt with fairly and objectively; in a timely manner; with procedural fairness wherever practicable; that confidentiality and privacy will be maintained as much as possible
- provide complete and factual information in a timely manner
- not provide deliberately false or misleading information
- not make frivolous or vexatious complaints
- act in good faith, and in a calm and courteous manner
- act in a non-threatening manner
- to be appropriately supported
- acknowledge that a common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
- recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced
- not victimise or act in reprisal against any party to the dispute or any person associated with them.

1.4.3 Employees Receiving Complaints

Employees receiving complaints have the following role and responsibilities:

- act in accordance with the College's Complaints Handling policy and procedures
- inform the party lodging the complaint of how complaints can be lodged, when they should be lodged and what information is required
- provide the complainant with information about any support or assistance available to them to assist with lodging the complaint
- maintain confidentiality
- keep appropriate records
- forward complaints to more senior employees, including the Principal as appropriate, with any additional background known to assist in understanding the complaint and actions already taken to remedy
- not victimise or act in reprisal against the complainant, respondent or any person associated with them.

1.5 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 related procedures, and via the clear support and promotion of the policy and procedures.

The College is also committed to appropriately training relevant employees (especially senior staff) on how to resolve complaints in line with this policy and the related procedures.

The College will keep appropriate records of complaints, will monitor complaints and their resolution and will report on a high-level basis to the College Board on complaint handling at the College.

The College will act to encourage students, parents and employees to contribute to a healthy College culture where complaints are resolved with as little formality and disruption as possible.

2.0 Procedure

Complaints may be resolved in any of the following ways:

Level 1	Self-managed	<p>The College encourages complainants to first raise their complaint with the person/s to whom it relates. This can often provide informal resolution to the matter.</p> <p>Strategies at this level might include (but are not limited to) conversations, emails or phone calls.</p>		
Level 2	Supervisor/Management	<p>If resolution has not been successful, or if prior steps are insufficient due to the nature of the complaint, the matter can be raised with a member of the College Senior Leadership or Executive Teams. These staff are:</p>		
		Primary College	Secondary College	Business Office
		Head of Primary Deputy Head of Primary Head of Teaching and Learning	Head of Secondary Deputy Head of Secondary Head of Teaching and Learning	Business Manager Human Resource and Compliance Manager
		<p>Complaints at this level should be made in writing. Letters addressed to staff in these positions can be delivered to either campus Reception, or sent via email.</p>		
Level 3	Principal	<p>If resolution has not been successful, or if prior steps are insufficient or inappropriate due to the nature of the complaint (for example, the complaint is about the supervisor/manager), the matter can be raised with the College Principal.</p> <p>Complaints at this level should be made in writing. Letters addressed to the Principal can be delivered to either campus Reception, or sent via email. It is expected that almost all complaints will be able to be resolved if they reach this level.</p>		
Level 4	College Board	<p>If resolution has not been successful, or if prior steps are insufficient or inappropriate due to the nature of the complaint, the matter can be raised with the College Board, marked attention to the Board Chairman. This is also an appropriate first point of call if the complaint is in relation to the Principal. The Board can be contacted via email to board@wcc.qld.edu.au.</p> <p>Complaints at this level should be made in writing. Letters addressed to the Board can be delivered to either campus Reception, or sent via email.</p>		

2.1 Support Person

The complainant may request a support person to assist in the resolution of a complaint, if the complaint is at Level 2 or higher.

The support person should not have a conflict of interest. For example, if someone is required as a witness in the investigation, it would be considered to be a conflict of interest for them to be the support person.

It is important that the complainant provides the name of their support person to the person leading meetings before the meeting takes place, as they may be asked to find a different support person if the College believes there is a conflict of interest. This avoids having to reschedule meetings due to an inappropriate support person attending, and the meeting being terminated.

The role of a support person is to attend meetings regarding the grievance, and outside of meetings, to listen to the discussion and provide advice and act as a sounding board. The support person is generally not permitted to speak at meetings; they should not speak on behalf of the complainant nor provide explanations or submissions. They may take notes, or clarify discussion points that appear to have confused the complainant. The College reserves the right to discontinue a meeting in instances where the support person acts contrary to these instructions.

Complainants may choose to not have a support person.

2.2 Alternative Dispute Resolution

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) is a pathway for settling disputes during a formal complaint process. There are various types of ADR, including mediation, conciliation, and arbitration. ADR is only possible with the assistance of an impartial third party who assists both parties to reach an agreement and/or satisfactory resolution.

Depending on the nature of the complaint, the College may offer (and the complainant can request) a form of ADR. For ADR to be effective, both parties need to be willing to participate in this activity, and agree to follow the process and adhere to the outcomes.

2.3 Appeals Process

Complainants may appeal the outcome of a complaint by writing to:

- i. the Principal (for complaints not previously managed by the Principal),
- ii. the Board Chair (for complaints previously managed by the Principal, or complaints about the Principal).