



Complaints Procedure

This procedure should be read in conjunction with the *Complaints Policy*.

1 Background

- 1.1 Pymble Ladies' College (the College) acknowledges that many concerns and issues arise from simple misunderstandings or unclear communication and may be resolved in an informal manner without the need to follow the formal complaints process. It is hoped that this will be the case in most instances.
- 1.2 Complaint resolution is best achieved when all parties consistently display respect, mutual trust and co-operation in their actions and their words.

2 Overview

- 2.1 Any complaint related to a child protection issue must be referred immediately to the Principal or delegate, if the Principal is not available.
- 2.2 Any complaint regarding staff professional misconduct should be directed to the Supervisor in the first instance.
- 2.3 A complaint may be made in person, by telephone, email or in writing.
- 2.4 Most College complaints will be directed as per the flowchart (Appendix 1).
- 2.5 Generally, anonymous complaints will not be acted upon.
- 2.6 Parents, students and staff are encouraged initially to raise the concern or issue informally with the relevant person as a discussion may clarify the situation and/or clear up any misunderstandings satisfactorily. However, if the complaint is not resolved at this stage, the matter may be referred to the relevant Supervisor.
- 2.7 If a parent is not sure who to contact, the relevant Head of School will generally be able to assist with directing the concern to the appropriate person.
- 2.8 If parents have a concern about the actions of a student at the College that is not their own child, they should raise the concern with the relevant Head of School, if known. If not known the parents should raise it with the Head of School of their child. Under no circumstances should they contact the other student directly or the other student's parents.

- 2.9 Students can raise a concern with any staff member with whom they feel comfortable. It is then the responsibility of that person to pass the concern on to the relevant staff member, as outlined in the flowchart (Appendix 1).
- 2.10 All parties may seek support during the resolution process.
- 2.11 If a complaint relates to:
- A key staff member, the complaint should be directed to the Deputy Principal or Principal
 - A member of the Senior Executive Team, the complaint should be put in writing to the Principal or an appointment made with the Principal to discuss the matter
 - The Principal, the complaint should be put in writing and forwarded to the Council Chairperson at the College Postal Address.
- 2.12 When concerns arise, the College will share information and address issues only with those who genuinely need to know.
- 2.13 Confidentiality, unless otherwise required by law is expected from all parties.
- 2.14 All parties have the right to seek independent advice at any stage of the resolution process.
- 2.15 Depending on the nature and complexity of the complaint, the time the process will take, will vary.

3 Process for Resolving Complaints

Stage 1

- 3.1 In the first instance, consideration should be given to an informal face-to-face discussion with the person with whom there is a concern or complaint. In many cases complaints and concerns can be resolved at this level. If they are not resolved, or if the complaint is of a serious nature, then move to Stage 2.

Stage 2

- 3.2 The complainant may be asked to put the complaint in writing, concisely setting out:
- the details of the complaint
 - the facts on which it is based
 - the progress of discussions to date and
 - suggestions for possible solutions.

- 3.3 The person allocated to manage the complaint will notify, discuss the situation with and provide the opportunity for the respondent to present their understanding of the issue and possible solutions. The issue may be resolved at this stage.
- 3.4 If necessary and appropriate the person allocated to manage the complaint may convene a meeting between the parties.
- 3.5 Each party may be accompanied by a support person. A support person is not a spokesperson for either party or an active participant in the process. The convenor of the meeting should be notified prior to the meeting if either party is bringing a support person so that they can notify everyone who will be present at the meeting.
- 3.6 The purpose of the meeting is to clarify issues and encourage the parties to create solutions which are mutually acceptable. The solution may be verbal or in writing and signed by all parties.
- 3.7 If a resolution is not reached or either party is unsatisfied with the process, they should escalate to the relevant person as outlined in Appendix 1.

Stage 3

- 3.8 At this stage, the purpose is to review the process and information, meet with the parties as appropriate in view of seeking a resolution.
- 3.9 If a resolution has not been reached at Stage 3, or if either party is unsatisfied with the process, the matter will be referred to the Principal or their nominee for further investigation and/or determination.

Stage 4

- 3.10 The Principal or nominee will investigate the circumstances through perusal of the written documents, interviews with the parties and others whom they believe may be in possession of information relevant to the complaint and any additional information provided by the parties. This may include witness materials, accounts or any other evidence relevant to the issues that the parties wish to be considered in the process.
- 3.11 The Principal or nominee will use the above process to determine the substance of the complaint and will recommend a course of action to the parties. If the investigation is conducted by a nominee, a recommendation will be provided to the Principal.
- 3.12 In the event that the parties do not accept the recommendation, the Principal or nominee will determine how the College will manage the complaint and inform the parties in writing.
- 3.13 If the parties are still not satisfied, they may refer the matter to the Council Chairperson who will review the circumstances of the complaint and advise the parties, including the Principal, whether the decision is to stand, or the matter is to be resolved in some other way.

4 Determinations

- 4.1 The Council Chairperson and/or the Principal has the delegated responsibility to determine whether the College has followed due process.
- 4.2 The Council Chairperson and/or the Principal may delegate to an external person or agency the authority to review a complaint and report the result of the review to the Council Chairperson and/or the Principal, as applicable.

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Complaints Process Flowchart

