



# St Mary MacKillop College

## Concerns and Complaints Policy

### Purpose

The following policy aims to ensure that St Mary MacKillop College is committed to promoting a safe and supportive learning environment and promotes open communication and positive relationships to achieve responsive, just and transparent outcomes.

### Scripture

“And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8).

### Scope

This policy applies to all members of the College community.

### Definitions

**Concerns:** a ‘concern’ is an issue of interest (because of its importance and effect) which is raised informally in order to improve or change a situation.

**Complaints:** a ‘complaint’ is an expression of grievance or resentment where the complainant is seeking redress or justice.

**Staff:** any employee or volunteer engaged by the college.

### Policy Statement

It is St Mary MacKillop College’s policy to provide a safe and supportive environment for all Staff, students and families. St Mary MacKillop College endeavours to ensure that complaints are managed and resolved fairly and timely.

The College will:

- Encourage early intervention in impacting issues or concerns;
- Ensure that behaviours destructive to positive relationships (such as bullying, harassment and discrimination) are identified and managed;
- Ensure that complaints are dealt with consistently and in a fair and equitable manner;
- Identify and manage patterns of unacceptable conduct;
- Promote and encourage patterns of acceptable conduct; and
- Provide appropriate avenues for facilitation of resolutions.

### Consequences

The consequences of this policy are that St Mary MacKillop College will establish and follow appropriate procedures for the handling of concerns and complaints.

### Responsibilities

The Principal and Leadership Team are responsible for the implementation of the policy.

## **Associated Documents**

St Mary MacKillop College – Vision and Mission Statement

St Mary MacKillop College – Concerns and Complaints Procedures

St Mary MacKillop College – Concerns and Complaints Flowchart

Ballarat Diocesan School Advisory Council – School Complaints

St Mary MacKillop College – Child Safe Policy 2017 Policy 2016

St Mary MacKillop College – School Safe Policy 2017

St Mary MacKillop College – Student Behaviour Support Policy 2017

Ratified: July 2018

Next Review Date: July 2021

## Complaints Procedure

In the first instance, complainants should contact the person/s involved in the issue when it first arises so that it can be resolved quickly. In many cases this would involve the classroom teacher in the resolution of the complaint even if the complaint is not directly about them. The types of complaints could include

- issues related to student discipline procedures
- issues related to learning and teaching
- damage/loss of personal property
- bullying and harassment

Concerns about your child could be addressed by:

1. writing a note to the relevant teacher outlining your concerns and provide a contact number if the teacher needs to contact you for further information or follow up. This will usually be outside of classroom times.
2. making an appointment to speak on the phone or in person with the teacher, ensuring that you inform the school about the issue you wish to discuss. It is important to remember that teachers cannot always meet with you just before and after class times due to other responsibilities and meetings
3. arranging a meeting time or phone call through the school office (this is more convenient for both you and your child's teacher and does not interrupt teachers during the time they need to be with their students).
4. you having the right to be accompanied by another person, in a support role, at any meetings convened to discuss a resolution of that dispute.

The teacher, together with any others who may be involved, such as another classroom teacher, should be given a reasonable amount of time to take the steps required to resolve or address your concerns. Remember, it may not always be possible to resolve an issue to your complete satisfaction.

If the matter is urgent and the teacher is not available, then contact the Administration Office to arrange for a member of the Leadership Team or other suitable staff member to either meet or contact you.

### Concerns to be raised with the Principal

Most concerns are resolved by discussing the issue with the relevant person. However, if the issue remains unresolved you can then ask to see the Principal.

To do this, you will need to request an appointment through the school office. Please note that:

- the Principal may ask another senior staff member to speak with you on their behalf
- if a teacher is going to be present at the meeting it is more likely to occur outside of classroom hours.
- you have the right to be accompanied by another person, in a support role, at any meetings convened to discuss a resolution of that dispute.

If your concern is related to issues of school policy, these should be raised more formally (in writing) with the Principal. Before a complaint is referred beyond the school, the Canonical Administrator should be given the opportunity to assist with the resolution of the complaint. If the complainant after meeting with the principal and or delegate believes that the school has not listened to their concerns or followed school processes, then the complainant can take the issue to the school governing authority or Catholic Education Office Ballarat.

It is important to note that the school will make decisions that are not always accepted by the entire school community.

## **Maintaining a Safe Environment**

At any stage in the complaint process, staff have the right to feel safe. Aggressive or abusive behaviour will not be tolerated. In such instances, the staff member will end the meeting and refer the matter to the principal and the occupational health and safety officer.

If the complainant feels unsafe, they should end the meeting and refer the matter to the principal. In the case of it being the principal, then the complainant should contact the governing authority.

## **Making, Receiving and Investigating Complaints**

At St Mary MacKillop College, all staff are expected to:

listen carefully and deal calmly and respectfully with complaints

- document the complaint, actions taken and outcomes
- look at all sides of an issue - focus particularly on issues that may be affecting the learning and/or safety of students
- resolve complaints in a timely manner
- provide feedback to the complainant on any actions/outcomes/decisions taken
- accept that it is not possible to resolve all complaints
- identify when a complaint cannot be resolved
- ensure privacy and confidentiality of information is maintained in accordance with relevant legislation
- refer more complex or unresolved complaints to the principal or the school governing authority.

Those making complaints are expected to:

- be clear about the topic or issue you want to discuss
- focus on the things that are genuinely affecting your child
- always remain calm and respectful, particularly when discussing the complaint in the presence of children
- remember you may not have all the facts relating to the circumstances of the topic or issue you wish to discuss
- think about what would be an acceptable outcome for you and your child that is consistent with school policy and procedures
- listen carefully to other sides of the issue
- be informed by checking the school's policies or guidelines, where relevant
- accept that it is not possible to resolve all complaints
- be aware that you have the right to seek advocacy, mediation, counselling or support from.

## **Record Keeping**

A record of a complaint should include the following detail:

- Date when issue was first raised
- Name of parent(s)
- Name of student(s)
- Detailed statement of concern/complaint including:
  - nature of complaint
  - identity of person(s) involved
  - time of allegation
- Description of the procedures applied and the time frame for reporting on the outcomes of any investigation  
Statement of outcomes
- Staff member(s) handling complaint.

Accurate records of the complaint and proceedings will be maintained and filed in school records management system.