



## **POLICY ON COMPLAINTS**

### **For the Board of Proprietors and Board of Trustees**

#### **Rationale:**

The individual needs of all staff, students and parents need to be recognised and the wider interests of the school, Tolcarne Boarding Residence and community protected and enhanced. All complainants, staff, students and parents have a right to fair, non-threatening treatment. The environment at St Hilda's and the Tolcarne Boarding Residence should be such that parents, staff and students feel able to come forward with concerns and know that all matters will be dealt with fairly and in the strictest confidence.

#### **Aims:**

1. To deal with complaints in a professional manner that enables positive working relationships to be maintained between/among students and any individuals employed directly or indirectly by the St Hilda's Collegiate Board of Proprietors or Board of Trustees.
2. To protect the rights of school community members by:
  - a) ensuring the complaints are fairly investigated and decisions are made on the basis of properly evaluated evidence;
  - b) ensure the process complies with the procedure set out below and relevant contractual provisions.
3. To protect the rights of complainant by:
  - a) acting promptly to resolve the dispute or complaint;
  - b) ensuring that they are not harassed for having laid a complaint.
4. To protect the rights of the respondent by:
  - c) acting promptly to resolve the dispute or complaint;
  - d) ensuring that they are not harassed for having a complaint laid against them.
5. To ensure the School's standards of teaching, learning and pastoral care (including day and boarding) are upheld.
6. To protect the operational integrity and reputation of the School.

#### **Definition of Complaint:**

An INFORMAL or FORMAL expression of dissatisfaction or unease about service; action/or inaction; or aspects of school affecting achievement and/or well-being.

## Procedures:

In the first instance, concerns will be treated as ‘informal complaints’:

**A. Informal Complaint (concern):** Usually verbal (a telephone call, an email, or face to face meeting) to express concern, mild dissatisfaction or to request some specific (low level, remedial) action.

- i) Contact (by telephone/email/meeting) to any of the following:
  - the subject teacher
  - Form Teacher
  - Year Dean
  - Head of Department/teacher in charge of subject
  - Director of Boarding
  - Senior Leadership[ team
  - Principal
- ii) Explain the nature of the situation
- iii) Discuss how things can be remedied
- iv) Agree on a course of action
- v) Await implementation
- vi) School to initiate a follow-up discussion to confirm positive outcome.

## B. Formal Complaint (Board Complaint)

If the concern/informal complaint cannot be resolved or if either party is not satisfied with the outcome, or if it is of a more serious nature, a formal complaint should be lodged. This should be in writing, addressed to the Principal, or if it is a complaint about the Principal, it should be addressed to the Chair of the relevant Board.

- i) A letter expressing the nature of the issue, concern, problem, dissatisfaction – preferably itemising the things that are not acceptable. The complainant must stipulate that the complaint is formal.
- ii) The complaint is investigated and a meeting held to explore solutions and agree on actions to be taken.
- iii) At this stage the Principal must notify the sub-committee of the Board of Trustees/Proprietors of the complaint.
- iv) Remedial action implemented and documented in a reply from the Principal or Board as appropriate.
- v) If the outcome of steps (i-v) is deemed unsatisfactory, then the complainant has the right to forward the complaint (in writing) to the Chair of the relevant Board.
  - a. The complaint is investigated and a meeting held to explore solutions and agree on actions to be taken. This will involve a sub-committee of the Board.
  - b. Remedial action implemented and documented in a reply from the Chair of the Board.

### **Guiding Principles:**

1. All informal and formal complaints will be dealt with in a transparent, equitable and fair manner.
2. All informal and formal complaints will be treated seriously, professionally and will be responded to as soon as it is practicable to do so.
3. All informal and formal complaints are to be initiated by reporting the same to the appropriate person or persons as detailed above.
4. Any formal complaint that concerns the conduct or performance of a staff member will be dealt with in accordance with the School's Code of Conduct, the principles of natural justice and compliance with employment legislation.
5. Any complaint that concerns the conduct or performance of a member of the School community will be dealt with in accordance with the Enrolment Contract, the principles of natural justice and compliance with employment legislation and school enrolment.
6. Complaints shall be listened to but cannot be actioned if the identity of the complainant cannot be revealed. Without knowing the complainant, the respondent cannot justly answer any complaints.
7. Confidentiality about the complaint must be maintained by all involved.
8. Complaints about students in the School shall be dealt with according to the School's Student Code of Conduct and Behaviour Management System.
9. Parents and students will be made aware of the complaints procedures in this policy via the School Handbook or website.
10. Complaints regarding breaching the Code of Practice for International Students will be dealt with in accordance with the procedures outlined. The International Education Appeal Authority is an independent body that receives and adjudicates on complaints received from international students and may be consulted if required.
11. The School supports the use of an independent mediator should this be appropriate.
12. Any professional development needs identified by this process will be addressed.
13. Any formal complaints to the relevant Board should be addressed to the Chair and include all relevant details. The Board Secretary will forward letters to the relevant Board Chair.
14. The Principal or the Boards will take all steps to resolve the issue and will provide a written response.
15. This policy should be read in conjunction with the policy on Complaints by Employees about their Employment.
16. In the event that complaints are made to individual Board members, then such complaints should be directed to the Principal so that they can be dealt with in accordance with this policy.
17. In the event that the complaint is about the Principal, then correspondence should be directed to the Chair of the appropriate Board.

**Investigation:**

1. If a disciplinary investigation is commenced, the respondent shall be advised of this decision and of his or her right to representation during the investigation. The identity of the person(s) who will be carrying out the formal investigation on behalf of the relevant Board shall be notified.
2. The disciplinary investigation may involve interviewing those persons considered relevant to the enquiry. Both parties shall be kept advised of the scope of the enquiry.
3. Both parties shall be given the opportunity throughout the process to give responses and ensure his or her views are considered. They may have a support person with them.
4. At the completion of the formal investigation, a report setting out the findings of the sub-committee shall be presented to the relevant Board who shall make the final decision as to whether the complaint has been sustained. Findings and recommendations of the Board shall be made available to the parties, who will be given further opportunity to respond to the findings and recommendations.

This Policy will be reviewed as required or biennially.

Adopted 28 September 2017.

**Reviewed**                      18 March 2019

Policy Reviewed:            18 March 2019      (Date)

Policy Reviewed:            14 March 2022      (Date)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Chair, Board of Trustees)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Chair, Board of Proprietors)

## St Hilda's Collegiate School Concerns & Complaints Process

