



GRIEVANCES HANDLING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

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1. Statement of Context and Purpose

Seymour College (the College) is committed to the development and maintenance of positive relationships among all members of the community and to the timely resolution of any grievances which may arise. Grievances will be addressed professionally, competently and in a timely manner applying principles of natural justice, confidentiality and procedural fairness.

To manage grievances effectively, we have established a Grievance Handling Program in line with both the international complaints handling standard (ISO 10002:2018 Quality management – Customer satisfaction – Guidelines for complaints handling in organizations), and the Australian/New Zealand complaints handling standard (AS/NZS 10002:2014 Guidelines for complaint management in organisations).

2. Application and Scope

This policy applies to all parents, guardians and caregivers of the College, except in the following circumstances:

- Child protection issues (i.e. suspected risk of harm or risk of significant harm to a child which is addressed, via legislated child protection processes). All such complaints should be made directly to the Principal as per the [Child Protection Policy](#);
- Performance and discipline of employees which are managed in accordance with the Staff Code of Conduct;
- Workplace bullying and harassment allegations dealt with under the Unlawful Discrimination Harassment and Bullying Policy;
- Matters reported under the [Whistleblower Policy](#);
- Grievances brought by a student against another student will be dealt with under College's Code of Behaviour; and
- Grievances brought by employees and contractors will be dealt with under the Grievance Resolution Procedure.

3. Definitions

1. *Grievance*: a serious allegation raised by a parent, guardian and caregiver concerning an incident, judgment or situation made against a student, a member of staff or a group of students or staff members.
2. *Concern/complaint*: matters that may be raised informally via conversation, a phone call or email to a member of staff that may be dealt with expediently.

3. *Restorative Practice*: a process by which the healing of relationships between community members is at the centre of the grievance management processes adopted by the College.
4. *Natural Justice*: an unbiased and fair process which allows all parties to be heard and kept informed.
5. *Report Abuse and Neglect* (previously Mandatory Reporting): the need for all employees to notify authorities about information relating to incidents that are covered under relevant legislation.
6. *Resolution*: where the complaint is withdrawn or parties agree on a future course of action or a compromise is agreed upon.

4. Principles

When managing a complaint, the College will:

- Provide information to the College community about how and where to complain and to make the complaints management process as simple and accessible as possible;
- Ensure that the complainant is informed as to the progress of their complaint and ensure that complaints are resolved as quickly as possible;
- Ensure that complaints are thoroughly investigated and that the College understands the complaint from the complainant's point of view;
- Make sure all complaints are addressed, on their merits, in an equitable, impartial, objective and unbiased manner;
- Keep complaints confidential and ensure that personal identifiable information about complainants and about any person that is the subject of the complaint are only available for the purpose of addressing the complaint. Staff members receiving complaints should not discuss these with other students or staff other than with the complaints officer; and
- Keep records of complaints and the information collected in the complaints handling process.

5. Visibility, Accessibility and Promotion

The Principal will ensure this policy and procedures are readily accessible to all staff, parents, guardians, caregivers, students and members of the community. Information about the Complaints Handling Process and reference is also made to the complaints handling process on the College website.

Complaints may be received in person, on the telephone, in writing or electronically. If a member of the College community requires assistance lodging a complaint, due to language or other barriers, assistance will be provided wherever possible.

6. Resource Allocation and Staff Training

The Principal is responsible for encouraging an environment where complaints are handled seriously. All staff will be trained on how to identify a complaint, when a complaint can be managed informally and when it should be escalated to a more senior manager (see escalation process below).

7. Informal Complaints Resolution

The vast majority of issues causing concern in the College can be handled quickly and in an informal manner. It is in everyone's interest that concerns are resolved at the earliest possible stage and many concerns can be resolved informally without the need to invoke formal procedures. We therefore ask that, where appropriate, you first raise your concern directly with the relevant staff member.

The College supports where possible an informal, amicable, and equitable resolution of concerns through discussions, mediation and/or conciliation to achieve an agreed course of conduct, action and behaviour.

The College takes community concerns seriously and ideally, most concerns will be dealt with directly and quickly at the point where the concern arises.

There are occasions when the complainant/s would like to raise their concerns formally or where a concern cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the parent, student or community member and should be considered a grievance. In those instances, the College's formal procedures should be followed as outlined below.

Parents, Guardians, Caregivers and senior students are encouraged to always raise any concern or complaint that they have with the College in the first instance and are reminded that it is not appropriate to communicate concerns or complaints regarding College matters via the media, group messaging or social media.

8. Grievance Handling Procedure

8.1 Receiving Complaints

Complaints may be received by:

- Using the Feedback / Concerns and Suggestions Policy via the College Website and SOCS.
- Writing an email to the College addressed to the most appropriate person to address the concern (see escalation process below).
- Arranging a planned meeting or telephone call.

While parents, guardians, caregivers and senior students are encouraged to first raise any concerns informally, they do have the option of lodging a grievance formally at any time via any of the above stated methods.

8.2 Escalation Process

Concerns or complaints which are raised with a frontline staff member, should be referred to a line manager if they:

- Remain unresolved;
- Involve complex issues;
- Involve a number of different staff;
- Need action that is beyond the responsibility of the staff initially approached about the complaint; and/or

In the first instance the Chair and members of the College Board are not involved with the receipt, investigation or resolution of parent grievances, unless these relate directly to the Principal.

8.3 Escalation Protocol

McGregor Campus Early Years		McGregor Campus Prep – Year 6		Barr Smith Campus Year 7 -12		Boarding	Financial Issues	Community / Local Complaints
<i>Educational / Wellbeing Concern</i>	<i>Enrolment / Financial Matters</i>	<i>Academic Concern</i>	<i>Pastoral concern</i>	<i>Academic concern</i>	<i>Pastoral concern</i>	Head of Boarding	Finance Manager	Director of Community Relations
Learning Space Teacher	Early Years Manager	Classroom Teacher Prep - Yr 2	Class Teacher Prep – Year 2 Clan Guardian Year 3-6	Subject Teacher	Homegroup Teacher	Director of Residential Life	Director of Finance and Operations	Deputy Principal Wellbeing and Operations
Assistant Head of Early Years	Head of Early Years	Prep – Year 2 Coordinator Year 3 -5 Coordinator Year 6 Coordinator		Heads of Department	Middle Years Guardian (Year 7- 9) Clan Guardian (Year 10-12)	Deputy Principal Wellbeing and Operations	↓	↓
Head of Early Years	↓	Assistant Head of McGregor Campus SEY – Year 6		Dean of Middle Years (Yr 7-9) Dean of Senior Years (Yr 10-12)		↓		
Head of McGregor Campus		Head of McGregor Campus		Head of Barr Smith Campus		↓		
Deputy Principal Academics and Professional Practice Or Deputy Principal Wellbeing and Operations	Director of Enrolments and Community relations Or Director of Finance and Operations	Deputy Principal Academics and Professional Practice	Deputy Principal Wellbeing and Operations	Deputy Principal Academics and Professional Practice	Deputy Principal Wellbeing and Operations			
Principal		Principal		Principal		Principal	Principal	Principal

9. Key Responsibilities in the College Complaints Handling Process

Parents, Guardians and Caregivers

- Raise complaints in good faith that are not vexatious in nature, being respectful at all times avoiding personal insults, inflammatory statements or intimidating comments;
- Consider whether the concern/complaint can be dealt with through direct contact with a teacher;
- Notify the appropriate member of the College Executive of a grievance at the earliest opportunity;
- Provide complete, accurate information when submitting a grievance;
- If possible, articulate the preferred resolution, accepting that this might not be possible or may change as the grievance is acted upon;
- Contact the Principal if the grievance has not been handled appropriately; and
- Contact the Chair of the College Board if the grievance concerns the Principal.

Staff Members

- Resolve parent concerns/complaints, whenever possible, in a timely and informal manner;
- Refer formal grievances or escalating concerns to the appropriate College Leadership member;
- Keep accurate records of communication regarding any parent concerns/grievances; and
- Participate, as appropriate, in grievance resolution processes.

College Executive

- The Executive members responsible for managing a formal grievance will acknowledge receipt of the parent grievance at the earliest opportunity and be the primary point of contact for the complainant (at times it may be appropriate to refer the grievance to another Executive Member for resolution);
- Investigate grievances in a timely manner, and work towards a just resolution;
- Inform those involved of their right to be accompanied by a support person in any meetings;
- Keep accurate records of any meetings and communication, validating these with others involved in the process;
- Record the grievance in an appropriate way;
- Keep the Principal informed of the progress of the grievance procedure;
- Maintain contact with all those involved, providing updates on progress and steps to resolution;
- If appropriate, involve the appropriate College Counsellor/ Psychologist in grievance resolution processes;
- The Assigned Executive Member can seek the assistance of another Executive member or the Principal at any time if they are unsure how to proceed; and
- Ensure that all mandatory reporting requirements are dealt with according to the law.

Principal

- Ensure that the College keeps a record of all grievances;
- Be involved in the resolution process if it cannot be resolved at a College Executive level;
- If an unresolved issue has the potential to escalate, the Principal will inform the Chair of the Board;
- Review grievances to identify and address grievance patterns; and

- Address grievance issues that relate to Executive Team members.

College Board

The College Board only becomes involved in grievances directly if:

- all other avenues have been exhausted as per this policy;
- the grievance directly concerns an allegation about the Principal's conduct- in which case the Chair of the Board will determine appropriate procedures for handling the complaint;
- the Principal determines that due to the nature of the grievance/s complaint it should be referred to the College Board for determination; or if
- the processes within the College have failed.

10. The Grievance Handling Process

A grievance made by a parent, student, or member of the College community, should be made in writing with one of the following member of the Executive Team: Principal, Deputy Principals, Head of Barr Smith Campus, Head of McGregor Campus, Director of Enrolments & Community Relations or Director of Finance and Operations.

A formal grievance would be dealt with in the following manner:

Step 1 - All formal grievances received are lodged through the online Incident Management System.

Step 2 - The assigned Executive (from the list above) will acknowledge the grievance in writing within 48 hours.

Step 3 - The assigned Executive, will gather information relating to the allegations and may convene meetings of the relevant parties to discuss the grievance with the person(s) accused, and to hear all relevant evidence and submissions. Each party to a grievance is entitled to personal and/or professional advice, support or representation.

Step 4 - The assigned Executive, armed with the information obtained from above and using other relevant avenues, will conduct an investigation into the issues raised, following principles of procedural fairness.

Step 5 - The assigned Executive will formulate a determination / resolution on whether or not to uphold the grievance, based on the investigation,.

Step 6 - All parties will be advised If the grievance is substantiated, if the evidence is inconclusive or if the grievance is found to be unsubstantiated, The Executive member will seek to resolve the matter within 20 College operational days from the start of the investigation. If the resolution is agreed and accepted by all parties during the grievance process, the matter will be closed.

Step 7 - If the initial outcome is not agreed or accepted, the matter will be reviewed internally by the Principal or the Principal's delegate, who may seek additional information or submissions from the relevant parties. The Principal or their delegate seek to resolve all disputes within 20 College operational days from the date that the review process is initiated. The matter will be closed if the response of the Principal, or their delegate, is accepted.

Step 8 - All complaints received will be entered into our Complaints Register and, where appropriate, a corrective action request will be made to address any underlying

processes which the complaints investigation revealed may require improvement.

Step 9- If the matter is not or cannot be resolved within the College, by the Principal, the parties may contact the Chair of the Board.

Step 10 - If the grievance has still not been resolved, the complainant may seek the assistance of outside professional agencies at their own expense or other relevant judicial or quasi-judicial bodies in order that a further attempt can be made to resolve the matter.

Step 11 - When a grievance has been resolved, diarise a follow-up phone call to the claimant (timing dependent on the nature of the grievance) ensuring things are continuing smoothly and that the complainant continues to be happy with the outcome.

It should be noted that:

- The Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA) will not act as a mediator between parents/guardians/caregivers and the College but if a matter remains unresolved, or parents/guardian/caregivers feel that the College has failed to take their grievance seriously, AISSA may be able to provide general assistance to help parents/guardians/caregivers understand the College's position.
- Neither the Minister for Education and Child Development nor the Department for Education and Child Development has any power to directly intervene in any complaints relating to the operations of a non-government school and therefore will not receive or consider any referral of a grievance regarding the College.

11. Anonymous Complaints

Although the College understands that the sensitive nature of some complaints and grievances may cause a complainant to want to raise them anonymously, this limits the College's ability to follow up with the complainant and it is often difficult to undertake a thorough investigation and resolution if the complainant cannot be identified or does not want information to be passed to the relevant people. This raises issues in relation to procedural fairness for those who have a complaint made about them as they have a right to know the particulars of the complaint and to respond.

The College therefore cannot guarantee that anonymous complaints can or will be dealt with in accordance with these procedures. Complainants are therefore encouraged to identify themselves.

12. Confidentiality

Confidentiality will be respected at all times within the constraints of the need to fully investigate the grievance. To maintain confidentiality, all participants in the process should restrict information about the grievance to a "need to know" basis. The obligation to maintain confidentiality extends also to the complainant and to the respondent.

13. Objectivity and Natural Justice

Each grievance should be addressed in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner. The principles of natural justice and procedural fairness apply to all complaints. The more serious a grievance the more important it is to ensure procedural fairness. Procedural fairness requires that parties to a grievance are:

- Treated impartially – investigations are conducted impartially, and decisions are made without bias;
- Informed of concerns or allegations being made – this means that the person about whom the complaint is made will be informed of the content of the complaint and, in most cases of the identity of the complainant at a point in time when it is clear what the issues are and who needs to respond to them;
- Given the opportunity to respond – this means that where a concern is raised which may result in action being taken against a person, that person will normally be given an opportunity to respond;
- Informed of the complaints process and review process;
- Advised of the outcome of the investigation; and
- Aware that each grievance is dealt with on its particular circumstances and merits and any outcome reached will not constitute a precedent for future grievances.

14. Resolution and Outcomes

A grievance may be resolved in a variety of ways. Some possible outcomes include an apology, a review of a policy or a procedure, mediation processes or a restorative practice session, targeted professional development or counselling for the parties involved. All complaints or grievances provide an opportunity for College to reflect on our processes, identify potential weaknesses in our approach and take action to improve. If an opportunity for improvement is identified as a result of a complaint / grievance, the complainant will be advised of the changes to processes that College will be implementing.

If it is determined through the College's investigation that staff misconduct has occurred, the College will notify the complainant of the finding and will advise that corrective action has been taken. If the circumstances of the complaint require the College to maintain confidentiality in relation to the outcome of the complaint, the College will observe this requirement.

15. Record Keeping

All formal complaints must be recorded in the College Incident Management System (CompliSpace Assurance). The assigned Executive Member will keep written records of the complaint resolution process and outcome. Complaint records will be filed and stored appropriately in a secure location. The Complaints Officer is responsible for ensuring the electronic record is updated and closed off once the grievance is resolved.

16. Timeliness

College will endeavour to investigate and resolve complaints in a timely fashion. The Complaint Officer will ensure that investigation of a formal complaint will commence within five college operational days of receipt of the complaint and wherever possible be resolved within 20 college operational days of receipt of the complaint. If a resolution is not achieved within 20 college operational days, the complainant will be provided with an update on the status of their complaint. It is the responsibility of the Complaints Officer to ensure Assigned Managers work within these timeframes.

17. Support

All employees participating in the complaints process may access a confidential counselling service which is made available by contacting the Employee Assistance Program. The complainant may access the support services of **Acacia's EAP Program - Phone 1300 364 273**.

18. Management Reporting

All complaints will be entered into the College Incident Management System and from there a de-identified complaints report can be extracted for the Executive and College Board. This information will be analysed to identify systemic, recurring and single incident problems and trends in order to identify key risk areas and eliminate the underlying causes of complaints through corrective actions. This is the responsibility of the Complaints Officer.

19. Overseas Student Complaints

For the purposes of this policy, an overseas student is a student who is not an Australian resident, requires a student visa to attend an Australian college and is a full fee-paying student of College. An overseas student, their parent(s) or legal guardian can access this policy should they have a complaint. While it may not be possible for parents or legal guardians to come to the College and speak with the relevant member of staff, they are encouraged to try to resolve the complaint informally by first contacting the Overseas Student Coordinator.

Should informal resolution not be possible, the complaint will be escalated to the Principal.

If an overseas student isn't satisfied with the outcome of College's internal complaints handling process, they may lodge an external appeal through the Overseas Students Ombudsman (OSO) which investigates complaints about problems that overseas students or intending overseas students may have with private education and training in Australia. The services of the OSO are free. The contact details for OSO are as follows:

Website: www.ombudsman.gov.au use the online form.

Call: 1300 362 072

Enquiries: 10:00am to 4:00pm on weekdays (Monday to Friday), Australian Eastern Standard Time (Australian Eastern Daylight Time when daylight savings is in effect)

College agrees to be bound to the OSO's recommendations and will ensure that any recommendations made are implemented within 30 days of receipt of the report.

20. Allegations of Staff Misconduct or Reportable Conduct

Complaints and allegations of staff misconduct and/or reportable conduct are managed by College in a different manner to other complaints. This is because College has legal obligations to report certain staff misconduct to external authorities. Staff misconduct is a broad term that can include breaches of professional boundaries, codes of conduct or standards of behaviour, whereas reportable conduct is a term defined in law as including:

- any sexual offence or sexual misconduct, committed against, with or in the presence of a child (including child pornography offences, sexual touching or an offence involving child abuse material) including grooming behaviours;
- any assault, ill-treatment or neglect of a child;
- any behaviour that causes psychological harm to a child (whether or not, in any case, with the consent of the child).

If you would like to make a formal complaint or allegation of staff misconduct or reportable conduct, you can do so by:

- Writing a letter to the College addressed to the Principal at:
**Principal
Seymour College
546 Portrush Road
Glen Osmond SA 5069**
- Emailing the Principal at principalsoffice@seymour.sa.edu.au
- Phoning the College and asking to speak to the Principal at: +61 8 8303 9000

Where complaints are made in circumstances where an alleged crime may have been committed or the matter falls under the Reporting Abuse and Neglect provisions, the Police or similar outside agencies (e.g. Child Abuse Report Line) will be contacted and formally advised.

If the complaint is in relation to the Principal, the Chair of the Board should be notified.

21. Privacy Complaints

Information about the way College manages personal information is contained in the Privacy Policy.

22. Withdrawal of a Grievance

A person may withdraw a grievance at any stage of the resolution process. If a grievance is withdrawn, the matter will be deemed to be closed. Any documentation collated will be filed confidentially for seven years.

