

## COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS, PARENTS AND COMMUNITY

Next review date: July 2021

Last reviewed: September 2019

By: Principal

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### THE NATURE OF COMPLAINTS

There are essentially four areas of complaints: parents (and guardians), students, the public and staff. This document deals with procedures for parents, students and the public.

While parents will often wish to raise issues on behalf of their children, there are other issues which students may choose to raise on their own behalf and which are best raised by them.

Complaints from members of the public will be treated in a similar way to complaints from parents, although most complaints from the public would be referred directly to the Principal or a member of the Executive.

Complaints treated as constructive suggestions can facilitate rectification and improvement and may prevent cause for further complaint. Even an unjustified complaint may indicate an area that can be improved.

### WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A COMPLAINT AND A CONCERN UNDER THIS POLICY?

A **concern** is the expression of a worry, something that has made a person troubled or anxious about an issue and is expressed at a 'first level' i.e. to a class teacher at the classroom door in the Junior School or by telephone or email directly to the relevant staff member. Depending on the nature of the concern, it can often be resolved at this 'first level' in a more informal manner.

A **complaint** is *"an expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organisation, related to its products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or required"* (AS/NZS 10002:2014)

A complaint may be made if a parent thinks that the School has, for example:

- done something wrong;
- failed to do something it/they should have done; or
- acted unfairly or impolitely.

A complaint may be made about the School as a whole, a specific department in the School, about a particular School activity, about an individual member of staff, about one or more students, or about another member of the School community.

All complaints need to be handled seriously.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE HANDLING OF COMPLAINTS

St Mary's aims to ensure that:

- students, parents and the community wishing to make a complaint know how to do so;
- the School is open to the concerns of parents and students;
- complaints are received in a positive manner;
- parents and students can expect to be taken seriously and can approach any member of staff about their concerns;
- concerns are dealt with as speedily as possible and those who have raised them are kept informed about progress;
- it is not acceptable for students to receive adverse treatment because they or their parents have raised a complaint;

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- confidentiality is respected and maintained so far as is possible;
  - clear confidential files and a record are kept;
  - resolution of the matter is sought;
  - communication from the School is clear and unambiguous;
  - staff are trained in the handling of complaints.

### **INFORMATION FOR PARENTS**

St Mary's Anglican Girls' School welcomes suggestions and comments from parents and takes seriously complaints and concerns that may be raised. This information will show you how to use our complaints system.

A complaint will be treated as an expression of genuine dissatisfaction that needs a response.

#### **“How should I complain?”**

Members of staff will be happy to help. It may be best to start with the person most closely concerned with the issue – for example, matters referring to the Year 6 class should be raised with the Year 6 teacher, concerns about House matters with the Head of House, sports concerns with the Head of Physical Education, etc. They may be able to sort things out quickly, with the minimum of fuss.

However, you may prefer to take the matter to a more senior member of staff, for example the Head of Junior School, one of the Deans, Deputy Principal, or the Principal.

#### **“I don't want to complain as such, but there is something bothering me”**

The School is here for you and your child, and we want to hear your views and your ideas. Contact a member of staff, as described above.

#### **“I am not sure whether to complain or not”**

If as parents you have concerns, you are entitled to raise them. If in doubt, you should contact the School, as we are here to help.

#### **“What will happen next?”**

If you raise something face to face or by telephone, it may be possible to resolve the matter immediately and to your satisfaction.

If you have made a complaint or suggestion in writing, we will contact you within a week, to respond to your concerns and explain how we propose to proceed.

In many circumstances, the person you contact will need to discuss the matter with a colleague and consider it further before responding. You will be given a date by which time you will receive a response. If a detailed exploration of the issue is needed, a further meeting will be required to explain the conclusion, the reasoning for it, and any action taken or proposed.

Parents need to be aware that in some cases the School will not be able to discuss the details of action taken as it would be inappropriate. For example, if the action involved staff discipline.

#### **“What happens about confidentiality?”**

Your complaint or concern will be treated in a confidential manner and with respect. Knowledge of it will be limited to the Principal and those directly involved. The Chair of the School Board of Governors may also need to be informed. It is the school's policy that complaints made by parents should not rebound adversely on their child(ren).

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We cannot entirely rule out the need to make third parties outside the school aware of the complaint and possibly also the identity of those involved. This would only be likely to happen where, for example, a child's safety was at risk or it became necessary to refer matters to the police or other external authority. If information is passed to a third party, you will be informed, unless this is prevented by legal obligation.

While information relating to specific complaints will be kept confidentially on file, we would point out that anonymous complaints might not be pursued.

**“What if I am not satisfied with the outcome?”**

We hope that you will feel satisfied with the outcome, or at least that your concerns have been fully and fairly considered.

Should this not be the case, the Principal will offer to refer the matter to the Chair of the School Board of Governors. Alternatively, you may wish to write directly to the Chair via the school. This should be marked “confidential” and addressed to:

The Chair of the Board of Governors,  
St Mary's Anglican Girls' School  
PO Box 105  
Karrinyup WA 6921

Alternatively, an email can be sent to [chair@stmarys.wa.edu.au](mailto:chair@stmarys.wa.edu.au).

The Chair will call for a full report from the Principal, and will examine matters thoroughly before responding, to ensure that the complaint has been handled in accordance with the School's policy and procedure as well as to give further consideration.

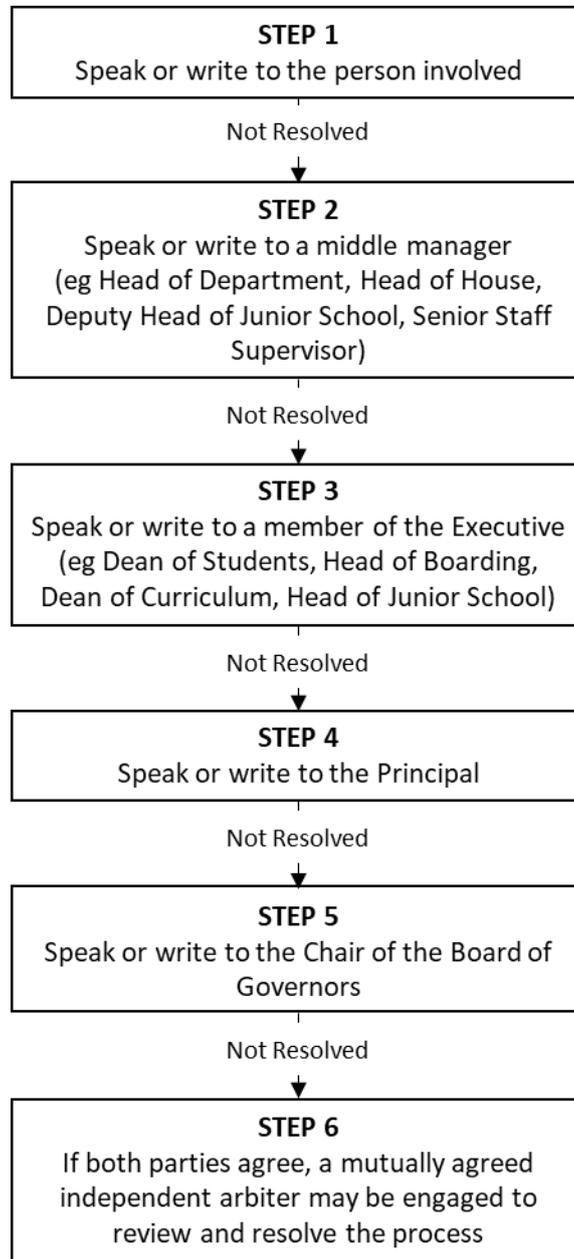
A positive solution will hopefully be achieved, but when notified of the outcome of the Chair's review and consideration, the opportunity of a meeting with the Chair will be offered if you remain concerned. You may wish to be supported by a friend, but legal representation would not be appropriate at this stage.

If you are not satisfied then an independent arbiter, by mutual agreement, can be utilised. It is their task to look at the issues in an impartial and confidential manner.

**The School recognises and acknowledges your entitlement to express your concerns and we hope to work with you in the best interests of the young people in our care.**

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**PARENTS - STEPS IN MAKING A COMPLAINT**



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## INFORMATION FOR JUNIOR SCHOOL STUDENTS

### ***Any Problems, Complaints, or Suggestions?***

*If so, the School would like to hear.*

#### **What can you complain about?**

- Are you unhappy about the way you have been treated?
- Have we made a mistake?
- Are you feeling unsafe?

#### **How do I make a complaint?**

- By talking about it – or by writing it down if you find that easier.
- You can do it by yourself, or as part of a group, or through your parents.

#### **To Whom?**

- To anyone on staff. Some students may wish to discuss the issue with their teacher, others with a psychologist, the Deputy Head of Junior School or the Head of the Junior School.
- By discussing it, you may come up with some positive ideas.

#### **Does it matter what the issue is?**

- No, it can be a big problem or a small one.

#### **What will happen next?**

- If possible, the staff member will deal with it in person.
- If not, he or she will go on your behalf to someone who can help.

#### **Do others have to know?**

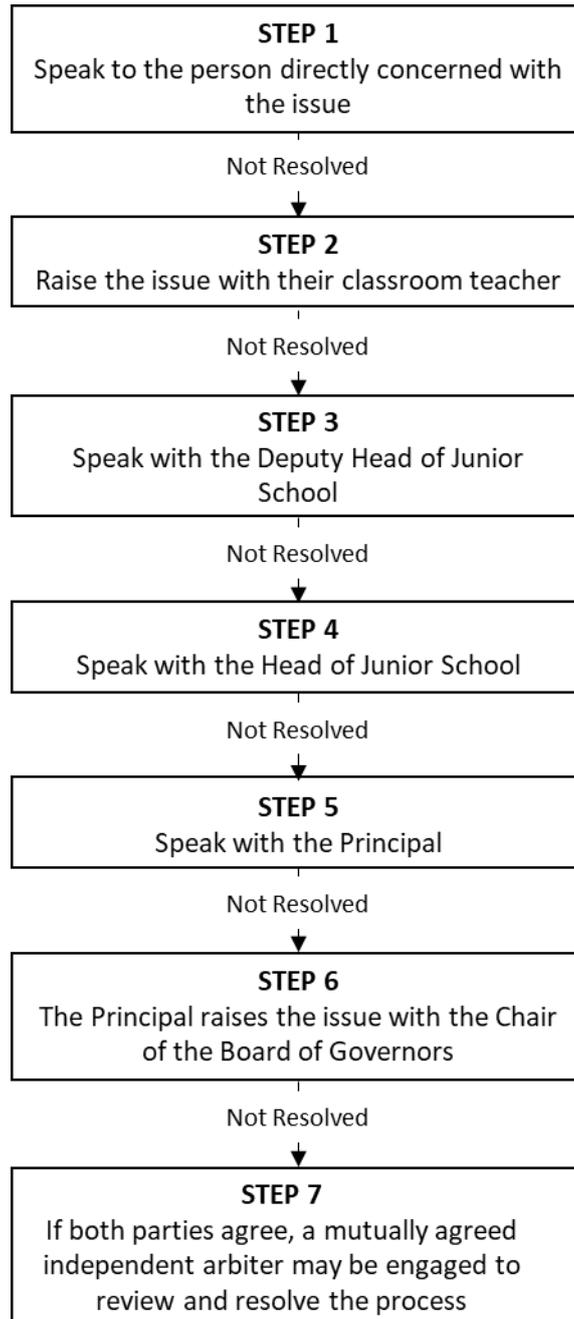
- You need to trust that your complaint will be dealt with discreetly and in the best interests of those involved.

Even if you find the issue hurtful or embarrassing, don't worry – it will only be discussed by staff who can help you.

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### JUNIOR SCHOOL STUDENTS - STEPS IN MAKING A COMPLAINT

Usually, Junior School students speak with their classroom teacher if they have a concern or a complaint. If it is not resolved by the classroom teacher, then it is most likely that a parent accompanies their daughter to go through the following steps



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## INFORMATION FOR SENIOR SCHOOL STUDENTS

### *Any Problems, Complaints, or Suggestions?*

*If so, the school would like to hear.*

#### **What can you complain about?**

- Are you unhappy about the way you have been treated?
- Have we made a mistake?
- Are you feeling unsafe?

#### **How do I make a complaint?**

- By talking about it – or by writing it down if you find that easier.
- You can do it by yourself, or as part of a group, or through your parents.

#### **To Whom?**

- To anyone on staff. Some students may wish to discuss the issue with a teacher, others with a psychologist, Head of Year, Head of House, Head of Department, one of the Deans, Head of Boarding, the Deputy Head or the Principal.
- By discussing it, you may come up with some positive ideas.

#### **Does it matter what the issue is?**

- No, it can be a big problem or a small one.

#### **What will happen next?**

- If possible, the staff member will deal with it in person.
- If not, he or she will go on your behalf to someone who can help.

#### **Do others have to know?**

- You need to trust that your complaint will be dealt with discreetly and in the best interests of those involved.

**Even if you find the issue hurtful or embarrassing, don't worry – it will only be discussed by staff who can help you.**

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### SENIOR SCHOOL STUDENTS - STEPS IN MAKING A COMPLAINT

Usually, Senior School students speak with a member of staff if they have a concern or a complaint. If it is not resolved by the member of staff, the student's parent may become involved in the following steps. If it is a serious issue, the School will contact the parent. The student may commence the process at any one of the steps.

