



COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY AND PROCEDURES

POLICY

At St Rita's College (the College) complaints will be resolved in a manner that affirms the dignity of those involved and delivers outcomes that foster reconciliation and personal growth. The policy seeks to give a voice to all parties and to deal with all complaints in a timely manner so that justice prevails. The aim is to ensure that all complaints are dealt with promptly and sensitively in a manner that embodies the principles of fairness, accessibility, responsiveness, efficiency and integration. The complaint processes seek to be conciliatory where appropriate, but the principles of natural justice and due process will be carefully adhered to.

RATIONALE

St Rita's College is committed to ensuring that all members of the College community are treated justly and have the right to lodge a complaint and have their concerns addressed in a manner that promotes equity, accountability and transparency.

Consistent with its Christian ethos, Catholic heritage and Presentation charism, the College community is called to foster an atmosphere characterised by mutual respect for all. The College's core values are expressed in the Mission Statement and the six Pillars. The College community strives to model these values in its relationships. Jesus instructed "Love one another as I have loved you." (John 13:34-35, 15:12, 17) and challenged his followers to be forgiving (Matthew 5:25, 18:15-22). Christian values of justice, love, compassion, respect for individual dignity, and reconciling forgiveness lie at the heart of procedures designed to resolve complaints and grievances.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all students, staff, parents/guardians of students, volunteers and any other member of the St Rita's College community.

A complaint covered by this policy is distinguished from some cases where other legislation applies e.g.:

- Matters relating to Student Protection (see Student Protection Policy);
- Staff grievances (for all staff the complaints handling procedure as outlined in the Enterprise Agreement between the College and the QIEU will be honoured);
- Breaches of the Code of Conduct (see Directors/Staff/Student Codes of Conduct);
- Complaints in relation to any breaches of privacy (see Privacy Policy); and
- Requests for feedback or information.

FRAMEWORK AND PROCESS

St Rita's is committed to seeking and receiving feedback and complaints about our services, practices, procedures and complaint handling. The College will take all reasonable steps to respond in a timely manner and to ensure that people making a complaint are not adversely affected because a complaint has been made by them or on their behalf.

Anyone making a complaint will be provided with information about our complaint handling procedures as detailed in this policy. The College will ensure that our processes to manage complaints are easily understood and accessible to everyone. People wishing to make a complaint will be provided with multiple and accessible ways to do so. They will be treated with respect by staff and will be actively involved in the complaint process where possible and appropriate.



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Complaints Framework

The College will follow the process outlined below in responding to a complaint:

ACKNOWLEDGE all complaints quickly

ASSESS the complaint and prioritise

RESOLVE at the frontline or **ESCALATE** the complaint

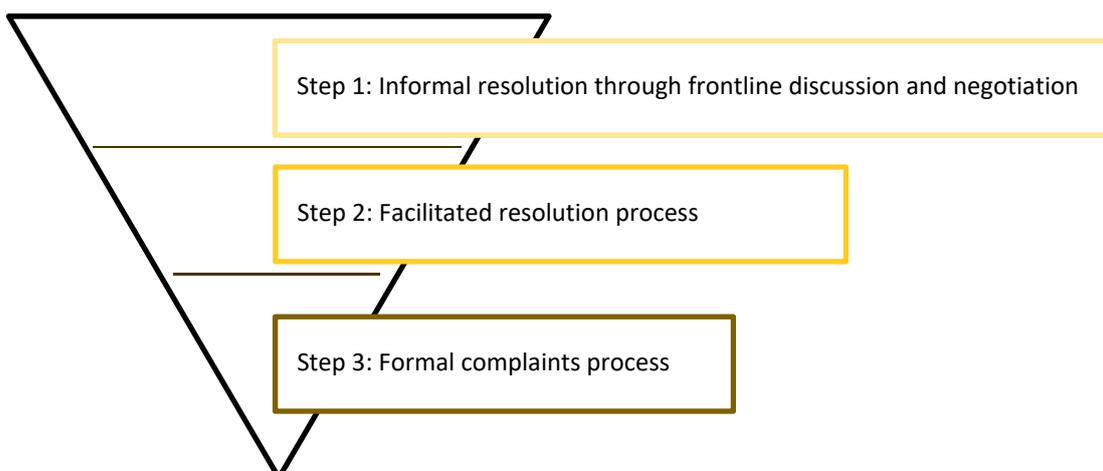
PLAN the investigation and facilitation

INVESTIGATE the complaint and facilitate between parties

RESPOND to the complaint with clear actions and decisions

Complaints Process

There are three steps to the complaints handling process at St Rita's College.



A flowchart for complainants to follow is shown at [Appendix A](#).



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PROCEDURES

1. Making a Complaint

The College encourages informal resolution of complaints through direct frontline discussion and negotiation. This does not prevent a complainant from deciding, at any time, to follow the facilitated resolution process or to make a formal complaint to the Principal.

For contact details please refer to 'Contacts' on page 6.

Step 1 – Informal resolution through frontline discussion and negotiation

Wherever possible the College aims to resolve complaints informally through frontline discussion and negotiation (Step 1). Most complaints will be able to be satisfactorily remedied through communication with staff, curricular and pastoral leaders and the College leadership team. Ideally, a person wishing to make a complaint is encouraged to approach the staff member concerned and attempt to resolve the issue through dialogue using an open, non-defensive and objective process. Staff are trained and empowered to resolve complaints that are relevant to their roles and responsibilities. The approach may be made either in person, by phone or by e-mail.

In order to give the process the greatest chance of success, the parties should:

- Adopt an open, non-defensive and unbiased communication process.
- Focus on the issue or complaint and not on the personality.
- Have a clear idea of what the issue is and the grounds on which it was made.
- Work cooperatively to determine how best to resolve the issue.
- Look for constructive solutions.

Step 2 – Facilitated resolution process

Step 2 provides for a facilitated resolution process. This options seeks to assess and investigate the complaint and facilitate a resolution.

If the issue was unable to be resolved through initial dialogue and discussion, either party can request a facilitated resolution process. The facilitator may be one of the following people:

- Head of Faculty for a curriculum/academic issue.
- Head of House for a pastoral issue.
- Deputy Principal-Studies, if the complaint is against a Head of Faculty.
- Deputy Principal-Students, if the complaint is against a Head of House, Guidance Counsellors or Chaplain.
- The Principal, if the complaint is against a Deputy, Assistant Principal or Business Manager.
- The Chair of the Board, if the complaint is against the Principal.
- Business Manager, if the complaint relates to administrative support staff.

The facilitator is responsible for:

- Firstly, discussing the issue with a member of the Leadership Team.
- Informing the staff member that a complaint has been referred to her/him.
- Facilitating resolution of the issue through an open and transparent process of dialogue, mediation and negotiation. Parties concerned will cooperate in seeking a mutually acceptable solution to the issue.
- Preparing a written record of the issue, its resolution and actions taken. A copy will be provided to all parties and to the Principal who will place a copy in the confidential employee file.

Step 3 – Formal resolution process

A complainant may also decide to follow the formal complaints process and write directly to the Principal (Step 3). The procedure to be followed when lodging a formal complaint is detailed in [Appendix B](#). The Principal will make a written record of the issue, decisions made and any action taken, and provide a copy to each of the parties.



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2. Responding to complaints

In order to manage complaints effectively and to meet people's expectations, the College will inform the complainant as soon as possible of the following:

- the complaints process (as detailed in this policy);
- the likely timeframe for our review and any actions to be taken;
- the complainant's involvement in the process; and
- the possible or likely outcome and rights of appeal.

The College recognises that some complaints can be resolved promptly and will therefore adopt a flexible approach in order to maximise a timely resolution. Each complaint will be assessed on its merits and where possible the complainant will be involved in the resolution process. The complainant will be advised as soon as possible if the College is unable to deal with any part of the complaint and the reasons for this. In such cases, the College will provide advice about where the complaint should be directed (if known and appropriate).

3. Assessment and investigation of complaints

Following receipt of a complaint the College will undertake an initial assessment. When assessing complaints, the College will consider the following:

- the seriousness or urgency of the complaint;
- whether the complaint relates to people's the health and safety;
- how the person making the complaint is being affected;
- the risks involved if resolution is delayed or unable to be reached internally;
- who needs to be notified about the complaint;
- any investigations to be undertaken; and
- the appropriate levels of involvement of the parties in the resolution process.

If the issue relates to an immediate risk to safety or security the response will be immediate and it will be escalated appropriately. Particular attention will be paid to:

- the health, safety and security of our staff;
- our ability to allocate resources fairly across all complaints; and
- the need to work in the most effective and efficient way possible.

Each complaint will be addressed with integrity and in an objective and unbiased manner. Any conflicts of interest, will be managed responsibly. The person handling the complaint will be different from any staff member whose actions are the subject of the complaint. The College will maintain the appropriate levels of privacy and confidentiality as far as practical and within all relevant laws and regulations before sharing our findings with the parties involved in the complaint.

Complaints involving staff members or volunteers (For contact details please refer to 'Contacts' on page 6)

Complaints made against a staff member or volunteer that cannot be resolved informally at Step 1 will be managed by an appropriate facilitator in accordance with Step 2 of the Complaints Handling Process or may be escalated to Step 3 by either party if necessary.

Complaints involving the Principal (For contact details please refer to 'Contacts' on page 6)

Complaints involving the Principal will be managed by the St Rita's College Board of Directors.

Complaints involving the St Rita's Board of Directors (For contact details please refer to 'Contacts' on page 6)

Complaints made against a Director will be referred to the Chair of the St Rita's College Board who will:

- notify the Director that a complaint has been made about them and confirm the nature of the complaint;
- investigate the complaint and provide the Director with an opportunity to respond to the issues raised; and
- attempt to resolve the complaint through facilitation with both parties.



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If the matter remains unresolved, the Chair will raise the matter at the next Board meeting. Depending on the nature of the complaint, the Board may deal with the matter at the meeting or refer the matter to the Member (Mercy Partners). If the complaint relates to the Chair, it will be referred to the Chair of Mercy Partners.

The College will not normally investigate an anonymous complaint unless it raises a serious matter and there is enough information in the complaint to carry out an investigation. Complainants are encouraged to provide relevant names of people involved with the complaint so that it can be addressed fairly and effectively. When faced with people who behave unreasonably or complaints that are found to be vexatious, the College will take proactive and decisive action to manage any conduct that unreasonably affects the College and staff will be supported to do the same.

Once the complaint has been fully investigated, the College will respond to the complainant confirming the following:

- the outcome of the investigation and any action taken;
- the reason for decisions taken;
- any corrective actions that have been proposed or implemented; and
- options for review by the complainant.

4. Appeals

Any persons dissatisfied with the outcomes of the informal process in Step 1 or Step 2 may make a formal approach to the Principal.

In the event of a dispute or where the complainant remains dissatisfied they may refer the complaint to the St Rita's College Board of Directors for review.

For contact details please refer to 'Contacts' on page 6.

5. Complaints Register

Where a complaint is not resolved informally, a record of the complaint will be recorded on the College Complaints Register together with any supporting documentation. Each record will contain the following information:

- name and contact information of the complainant;
- date of complaint;
- issues raised in the complaint and, if stated, the outcomes being sought;
- any other relevant information;
- agreed actions; and
- date resolved.

6. Continuous Improvement

Complaints can provide a valuable source of information about the College's performance and any areas that need improvement. The College will ensure that complaints are recorded in a way that enables suitable analysis.

The College will prepare reports on complaints that will include:

- The number of complaints received in a given period;
- The outcomes of the complaints including implementation of improvements;
- Any systemic issues identified;
- Timeliness of responding to and resolving complaints; and
- Any unresolved complaints.



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CONTACTS

Complaints can be made face to face, by e-mail or in writing directly to the staff member concerned via their College e-mail address or by mail to:

Staff member name
St Rita's College
41 Enderley Road
Clayfield QLD 4011
College email: administration@stritas.qld.edu.au
College Reception: 07 3862 1615

Complainant	Initial approach to
Student	Teacher, Coach, House Group Teacher, Head of House, Head of Faculty or Student Protection Contacts
Parent/Guardian	Teacher, Head of House or Head of Faculty
Staff	Principal, Deputy Principal – Studies, Deputy Principal - Students, Head of Faculty, Head of House (if it is a House Group Teacher making the complaint) or the Chair of the Board if the complaint is about the Principal.
Community Members	Business Manager or Principal

Complaints to the Principal

Complaints addressed to the Principal may be sent to:

The Principal
St Rita's College
41 Enderley Road
Clayfield QLD 4011
Email: principal@stritas.qld.edu.au

Complaints to the Chair of the Board

Complaints about the Principal or a Director should be addressed to:

The Chair of St Rita's College Board
St Rita's College
41 Enderley Road
Clayfield QLD 4011

External lodgement of a complaint

Please refer to the NSSAB website for more information on how to lodge a complaint and the jurisdiction of NSSAB in handling complaints.

Non-State School Accreditation Board
NSSAB
PO Box 15347
City East QLD 4002
Email: Admin@nssab.qld.edu.au
Web: www.nssab.qld.edu.au



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ACCOUNTABILITY

<i>Role</i>	<i>Responsible for</i>
Board	Oversight
Principal	Implementation of this policy. Reporting to the Board on complaint trends and issues arising from complaints. Ensuring training and adequate support is provided to all staff who deal with complaints.
Leadership Team	Compliance with this policy and the complaints handling process. Facilitating complaint resolution as appropriate. Ensuring adequate reporting is completed for any complaint received. Implementing changes identified from individual complaints.
All staff	Treating all people with respect, including those making a complaint. Complying with this policy. Assisting people to make a complaint if needed. Providing feedback to the leadership team on issues arising from complaints.

ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

<i>Description</i>	<i>Document Type</i>
Student Protection Policy	Policy
Privacy Policy	Policy
Staff / Student Code of Conduct	Code of Conduct
Complaints Register	Register

APPENDIX

<i>No.</i>	<i>Description</i>
A	Resolving Complaints Flowchart
B	Formal complaint process

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

<i>Term (Listed Alphabetically)</i>	<i>Definition</i>
<i>Complaint</i>	A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to or about the College, our service and/or our staff or the handling of a complaint where the response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.
<i>Complainant</i>	The person making the complaint.
<i>Complaints Manager</i>	A person appointed by the Principal to manage a specific complaint.
<i>Dispute</i>	A dispute is an unresolved complaint which is escalated for resolution either within the College or externally.
<i>Staff Grievance</i>	A staff grievance is a clear, formal written statement by a staff member specifically in relation to unfair treatment.

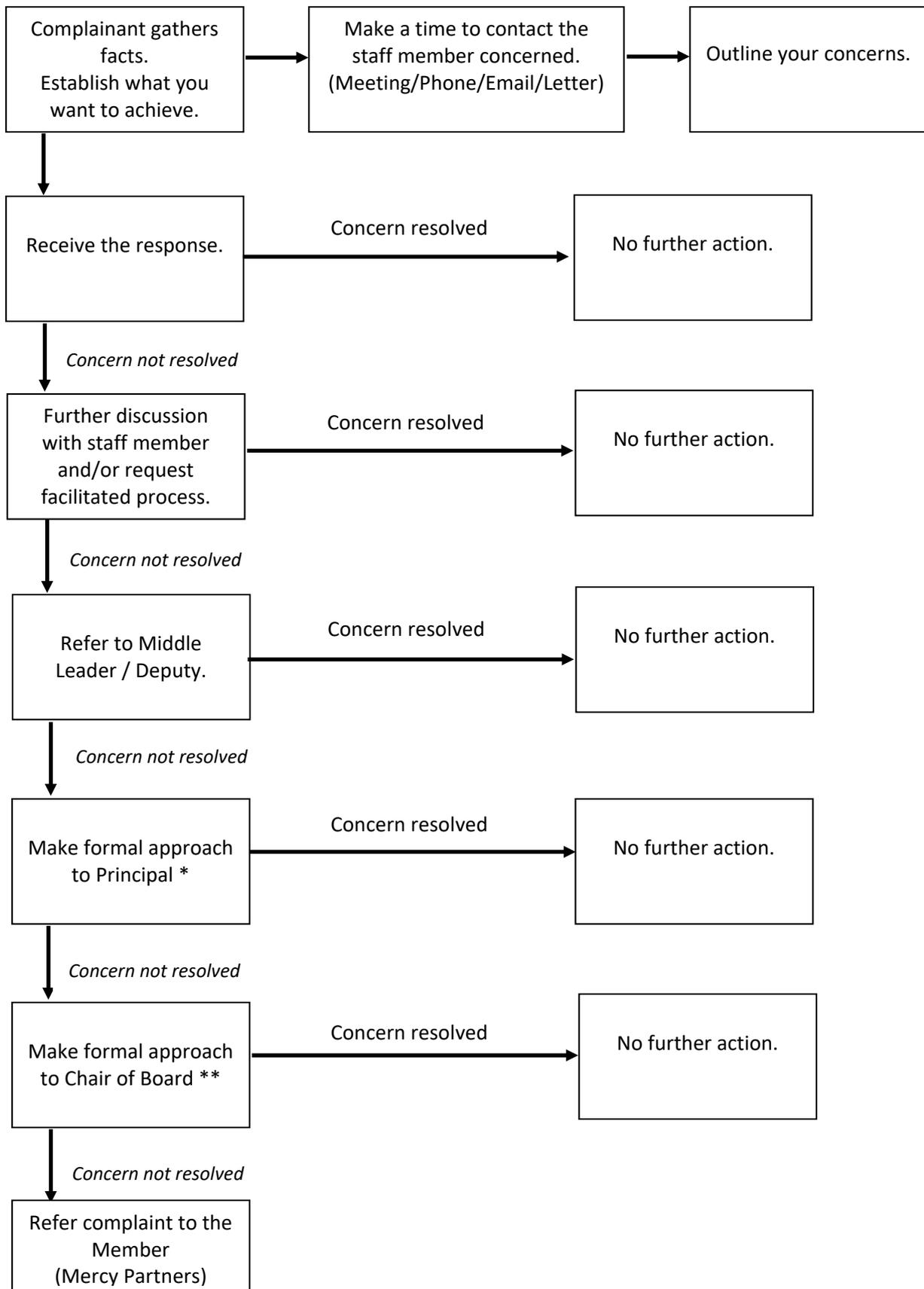


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Term (Listed Alphabetically)	Definition
<i>Feedback</i>	Feedback relates to opinions, comments and expressions of interest made directly or indirectly, to or about the College, where a response is not explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.
<i>Leadership Team</i>	The College Leadership Team is made up of the Principal, Deputy Principal – Students, Deputy Principal – Studies, Assistant Principal – Mission, Assistant Principal – Learning and Teaching and the Business Manager.
<i>Mercy Partners</i>	Mercy Partners is the sole member of St Rita’s College Limited. It is incorporated under the Roman Catholic Church (Incorporation of Church Entities) Act 1994 (Qld) and given status as a Public Juridic Person by the Congregation for Institutes of Religious Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. www.mercypartners.org.au
<i>Natural Justice</i>	Natural justice protects against arbitrary exercise of power by ensuring fair play. It is based on two fundamental rules: (1) Audi alteram partem (Latin for, hear the other side): no accused, or a person directly affected by a decision, shall be condemned unless given full chance to prepare and submit his or her case and rebuttal to the opposing party's arguments; (2) Nemo iudex in causa sua (Latin for, no man a judge in his own case): no decision is valid if it was influenced by any financial consideration or other interest or bias of the decision maker
<i>Non State Schools Accreditation Board (NSSAB)</i>	The NSSAB is an independent statutory body under the Education (Accreditation of Non State Schools) Act 2017. The Board monitors whether non-State schools continue to comply with the requirements for accreditation.
<i>St Rita’s College Board</i>	The governing body of the College.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Version	Author	Authorisation	Approval Date	Next Review
1.0	Dale Morrow	Board	19 June 2018	2021



*A formal approach to the Principal can be made at any time

** Where resolution has not been reached with the Principal

Formal Complaint Process (Step 3)

A complainant may decide to follow the formal process at any time. Informal procedures (Steps 1 and 2) are encouraged but do not have to be attempted first.

	Description
1.	The complainant submits the complaint in writing. This should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complainant name and contact details; • date and time; • circumstances; • what the complainant heard, saw or experienced; • what the reaction was; • who was involved; • whether there were any witnesses; and • other relevant information.
2.	The College will acknowledge receipt of the complaint.
3.	The Principal, in consultation, will decide who will manage the investigation (the Complaints Manager). If the complaint relates to a staff member they will be informed promptly by the Principal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that there will be an investigation; • that it will follow the Complaints Handling Policy and/or other relevant Policies; • who the Complaints Manager will be; • the general nature of the complaint and full particulars of the alleged offences.
4.	The Complaints Manager will undertake an initial assessment and decide on the most appropriate course of action.
5.	The Complaints Manager will advise both parties of the process to be followed to resolve the complaint.
6.	The Complaints Manager will make a written report to the Principal of findings (whether or not each separate allegation is substantiated) on the evidence from the parties and witnesses. A copy will be provided to each of the parties. If the complaint relates to a staff member, a copy will also be placed in the confidential employee file held by the Principal.
7.	If an investigation process is decided: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an outside Investigator may be engaged as Complaints Manager; • the Investigator will attend the College to interview the parties to the complaint; • all interviewed will be asked to treat the matter sensitively and with the appropriate levels of confidentiality; • all statements taken will be cited as a “true record” of information given. All procedures will be undertaken with discretion and confidentiality to protect the reputation of the person being investigated (the Respondent).
7.1	The Complaints Manager will interview the Complainant and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain the process of investigation including the desirability of having a support person; • ensure confidentiality; • obtain/request written documentation in support of the allegations, to be provided to the Respondent; • ask the Complainant what they would like to have happen as a result of the investigation; and • keep a detailed record of all information and statements made by the Complainant.
7.2	The Complaints Manager will interview the Respondent and inform the Respondent: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • of the general nature of the allegations; • that allegations will be provided for written Response as soon as they are available; • of the right to have a person of their choice present; and

	Description
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> of the nature of the process of the investigation and meeting. <p>The Principal will consider whether the attendance of the Respondent is an unacceptable risk to the wellbeing of staff or students. If so, the Respondent can be stood down on pay for the duration of the investigation.</p>
7.3	<p>The Complaints Manager will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> put the allegations to the Respondent; invite the respondent to respond then and there, if he/she wishes but also, allow the Respondent time to respond to the allegations in writing; record all responses in detail.
7.4	The Complaints Manager will interview all relevant witnesses who are nominated.
7.5	The Investigator will provide a report of the Investigation to the Principal and advise whether or not the allegations in the Complaint can be substantiated, with findings and recommendations.
8.	The Principal will decide on the most appropriate outcomes and will inform the parties in writing. This will include reasons for the outcomes and any rights of appeal.
9.	The Principal will put in place any outcomes resulting from the decision. These may include disciplinary outcomes for Staff and Students.

An aggrieved Complainant or Respondent is able to access any external processes available to them by law at any time.