



Presbyterian Ladies' College

MELBOURNE

PLC COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES POLICY (PARENT, STUDENT, COMMUNITY)

1. Rationale

- 1.1 Occasionally, misunderstandings, grievances and conflicts occur within our College community, which require a clear process for resolution. When problems arise we welcome contact to achieve a fair and efficient resolution, recognising that dealing with complaints in a timely and professional manner is of utmost importance.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy details how the College manages complaints and grievances received from students, parents/guardians and members of the College community. Staff grievances are handled under our suite of Human Resources policies.
- 2.2 This policy relates to Quality Area 7 of the [National Quality Standard](#) for Early Childhood Education and Care (for complaints and grievances arising in respect of the College's Early Learning Centre).
- 2.3 This policy is communicated to the College community via our website. A link is included in the Weekly Newsletter on a six-monthly basis requesting that the College community read and re-familiarise itself with the content of this policy.

3. Aims

- 3.1 The primary aim of this policy is to ensure procedural fairness in the management of complaints, by:
- (a) Maintaining a fair, inexpensive complaints and appeals process that includes access to an independent external mediator, if necessary
 - (b) Giving both sides of a dispute the chance to be heard at minimal or no cost
 - (c) Allowing the complainant to be assisted or accompanied by a support person
 - (d) Maintaining a written record if the complaint or appeal cannot be resolved informally
 - (e) Completing a written statement of the outcome, with details and reasons for the decision
 - (f) Maintaining confidentiality at all times, for the protection of everyone involved
 - (g) Finalising all grievance procedures within a reasonable timeframe.
 - (h) Treating all parties to a dispute fairly and equally
 - (i) Providing adequate notice to all parties to a dispute regarding procedures and outcomes
 - (j) Ensuring that neither party is discriminated against as a result of the complaint process.
- 3.2 To ensure that the College community is aware of the processes employed by the College to achieve resolution of any complaint. This policy is available on our public website.

4. Guiding principles for all complaints

Making a complaint and acknowledgement

- 4.1 Prior to making a formal complaint, complainants are encouraged to discuss the grievance informally with the person involved in an attempt to resolve the issue directly. If this discussion leads to a resolution then no further steps need to be taken.
- 4.2 A formal complaint may be made in person, via telephone or in writing (post or e-mail).
- 4.3 Where possible, a complaint should include the following information:
 - (a) Name and contact details of the complainant
 - (b) Dates and times of any specific incidents relevant to the complaint
 - (c) Names of any students or staff relevant to the complaint
 - (d) Any outcome being sought.
- 4.4 Complainants will receive written acknowledgement of their complaint within 5 business days which will:
 - (a) Confirm the nature of the complaint and the details provided
 - (b) Advise of the Grievance Officer(s) handling the complaint and provide their full contact details
 - (c) Confirm any initial steps being undertaken to resolve the complaint
 - (d) Provide a copy of this policy.

Investigation and Response

- 4.5 In order to provide a considered response to any complaint, Grievance Officer(s) will undertake an investigation of the complaint and provide a response of their findings to the complainant within a period of 7 to 10 working days.
- 4.6 If the complaint is of an urgent nature the College will endeavour to provide a considered response as soon as practicable after receipt of the complaint.
- 4.7 The considered response will include the following:
 - (a) Any investigations undertaken and the findings, subject to our [Privacy Policy](#)
 - (b) The College's position with respect to the complaint
 - (c) A recommended resolution.

Resolution

- 4.8 Resolutions will vary from case to case depending on the nature and circumstances of each complaint. Resolutions could include, but are not limited to:
 - (a) Acknowledgement of the complaint circumstances
 - (b) Reassurance of the complainant
 - (c) A verbal or written apology
 - (d) Disciplinary action

(e) Any other resolution that may be appropriate in the circumstances.

4.9 A communication confirming the resolution of the complaint will be sent to the complainant.

Appeal

4.10 Appeals against a resolution must be made in writing and addressed to the Principal.

4.11 Receipt of the appeal will be acknowledged in writing within 5 business days, and the process to consider the appeal will commence within 10 working days of receiving the appeal.

4.12 The Principal will convene a review panel of two or three senior staff members to further investigate the original complaint and appeal.

4.13 Where a hearing is required, adequate notice will be given (and a convenient time arranged) for the complainant and accompanying or support person to be present at the College.

4.14 When the Principal has received advice from the review panel and has made a decision regarding the complaint / appeal, the complainant will be informed in writing of the outcome and reasons for the outcome.

4.15 For complaints relating to the Junior School or Senior School, the complainant may seek further resolution through relevant independent authorities, such as the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA), in the event they are not satisfied with the resolution of the complaint. The VRQA cannot intervene in contractual, financial or personal disputes between a complainant and the College.

4.16 In the event a complainant is not satisfied with the resolution of a complaint relating to the legislative requirements of the Early Learning Centre's operations, the complainant may seek further resolution through the Victorian Department of Education and training – North Eastern Region, Eastern Metropolitan Area, Level 3, 295 Springvale Road, Glen Waverley 3150; Telephone 1300 651 940 to speak with a Children's Services Authorised Officer; e-mail emr.qar@edumail.vic.gov.au

Records management and reporting

4.17 The strictest confidentiality must be maintained with respect to all documentation received and generated by the College relating to complaints. All documentation must be stored securely, with physical and electronic access restricted to appropriate users.

4.18 Completed *Record of Grievance* forms must be forwarded to the Principal for review. The Principal will determine distribution requirements to additional Grievance Officers, and store the form securely.

4.19 When deemed necessary, the Principal will notify the Chairperson of the College Council of the details of a complaint and will report annually on complaints received and resolved as appropriate.

5. Student specific grievance resolution procedures

5.1 If a student feels uncomfortable approaching a staff member informally to discuss a grievance, or the informal approach does not lead to a resolution of the grievance, a formal complaint should be made following the guiding principles outlined in Section 4. Complaints should be directed to:

(a) Year Level Co-ordinator

(b) Head of the Boarding House

(c) Counsellor responsible for the student's year level

- (d) Deputy Principal (Pastoral, Staff and Students)
 - (e) Deputy Principal (Curriculum, Learning and Administration)
 - (f) Head of the Junior School
 - (g) Deputy Head of the Junior School
 - (h) Director of Christian Ministries.
- 5.2 A staff member accepting a verbal complaint must complete the *Record of Grievance* form. A formal interview with a student must adhere to the following:
- (a) staff interviewing students should do so with the knowledge of the Year Level Co-ordinator or Director of Wellbeing in the Senior School, or class teachers in the Junior School; or the Deputy Principal (Pastoral, Staff and Students)
 - (b) no aggrieved students should be interviewed by a teacher with whom there is a dispute without a Year-Level Co-ordinator, the Senior School Director of Wellbeing, the Deputy Principal (Pastoral, Staff and Students), or in the Junior School, the Head of the Junior School being present
 - (c) when interviewing students, all staff should be within the line of sight of passersby
 - (d) another member of staff will act as note-taker.
- 5.3 Throughout any complaints or appeals process, the student is required to maintain enrolment and complete coursework as normal even though she may have elected not to attend class.
- 5.4 If the College has determined that it is appropriate for the student not to attend school, she will be provided with work at home until the appeal process is completed.

6. Additional requirements for International Students

- 6.1 The Deputy Director of Admissions must be informed if an International Student lodges a complaint or appeal and updated on the progress and outcome.
- 6.2 In accordance with the [National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018](#), where the internal complaints and appeals process is being accessed because the student has received notice from the College that the College intends to report the student for unsatisfactory course attendance, unsatisfactory course progress or suspension or cancellation of enrolment, the student has twenty working days (from the date of notification) in which to lodge a written appeal before her enrolment may be cancelled.
- 6.3 If the grievance procedure finds in favour of the student, the College will immediately implement the decision and any corrective and preventative action required.
- 6.4 An International Student may lodge an external appeal or complain about a decision by contacting the [Overseas Students Ombudsman](#).

7. Parent, guardian or community member specific grievance resolution procedures

- 7.1 If the informal approach does not lead to a resolution of the grievance, a formal complaint should be made following the guiding principles outlined in Section 4. Complaints should be directed to one of the College's Grievance Officers:
 - (a) Deputy Principal (Curriculum, Learning and Administration)
 - (b) Deputy Principal (Pastoral, Staff and Students)
 - (c) Head of the Junior School

- (d) Deputy Head of the Junior School
- (e) Head of the Early Learning Centre
- (f) Business Manager
- (g) Director of Development.

7.2 A Grievance Officer will meet with the complainant and discuss with them the College's formal response. The Grievance Officer will record details of the grievance on the *Record of Grievance* form and provide a copy to the Principal.

7.3 If appropriate, a written record of the outcome will be provided to the parent/guardian.

7.4 In no circumstances will members of the College Council be approached, or become involved in hearing, assessing or adjudicating disputes between parents/guardians and the College.

7.5 If resolution cannot be achieved using the procedures outlined in this policy, an approach will be made to an external mediator.

8. Notification requirements for complaints in the Early Learning Centre

8.1 The Head of the Early Learning Centre is required to notify the Department of Education and Training in writing of any complaint that:

- (a) may impact on DET's consideration of approving the PLC Early Learning Centre as a provider of early childhood education
- (b) alleges that a serious incident has occurred or is occurring while a child was or is being educated and cared for by the PLC Early Learning Centre (within 24 hours of the complaint)
- (c) alleges that the Education and Care Services National Law Act 2006 (Vic) has been contravened (within 24 hours of the complaint).

9. Legislation and Sources

- *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth)
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*
- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (Vic)
- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic)
- *Health Records Act 2001* (Vic)
- ACECQA: www.acecqa.gov.au
- VRQA: vrqa.vic.gov.au

10. Definitions

Term	Definition
Appeal	A request for reconsideration by someone in authority of a decision thought to be unfair or ill-considered

Term	Definition
Complaint	An expression of discontent about an aspect of life at the College specifically relating to the tuition, curriculum, assessment, application of College policies, or life in the Boarding House.
Support person	A friend/teacher/relative not involved in the grievance. Lawyers and/or education agents are not acceptable support persons.

11. Related policies and documents

- [PLC Privacy Policy](#)

Approved: Cheryl Penberthy, Principal

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