



POLICY ON COMPLAINT AND DISPUTE RESOLUTION

1. Reflection Material

1. All Hallows' School Values
2. All Hallows' School Strategic Plan

2. Rationale

All Hallows' School ("the school") aims to be a welcoming, inclusive community in the spirit of Mercy and in accordance with the mission and values of the school. The school is committed to the highest standards of professional practice and conduct in the provision of high-quality educational programs.

This Policy aims to ensure that complaints from students, parents, employees and the community are handled in a responsive, efficient and fair manner, using the principles of procedural fairness and (where appropriate) a restorative approach.

3. Definitions

Complainant means the individual person or a group of people making the complaint.

Complaint or Dispute means a non-vexatious, formal expression of dissatisfaction or an allegation against a school employee, volunteer, other person performing services for the school, or student relating to their conduct or performance.

Complaint Management Process means the process by which complaints are investigated by the school. The process will be appropriate to the circumstances, and may be as confidential, transparent, accessible and efficient as is required, having regard to the nature of the Complaint. Complaints are managed in a way that ensures that complainants are not victimised because they have made a complaint, and the respondents (often persons holding authority to act on behalf of the school, primarily its employees and volunteers), are protected from vexatious and malicious complaints.

Investigation means the school's process to review complaints, and may include undertaking an impartial investigation of the complaint by gathering and evaluating all relevant facts regarding the complaint.

Policy means this Policy and the accompanying Complaint and Dispute Resolution Procedure.

Resolution or Decision means the decision, action or group of decisions or actions the school will take after considering the findings of the investigation.

Respondent means the person against whom the complaint is made.

4. Scope

4.1 This Policy applies to a range of complaints that may involve:

- dissatisfaction with the action, inaction or decision of the school;
- concerns relating to the conduct or performance of employees, volunteers and/or other persons performing services for the school;
- concerns regarding parents/caregivers or students or their behaviour that are contrary to the applicable school codes of conduct.

4.2 Matters Outside this Policy:

In certain circumstances, this Policy will not apply to complaints or conduct covered by a specific complaints process under another school policy or industrial instrument, or to other matters specified in this clause. These include:

- child protection concerns or risks of harm to children should be dealt with in accordance with the Policy on Child Safety and Wellbeing and the Student Protection Processes.
- complaints regarding breaches of the Student Protection Processes should be raised by completing a 'Record of Complaint about Non-Compliance with All Hallows' School Student Protection Processes (Form)' as outlined in the Complaints Procedure for Non-Compliance with Student Protection Processes.
- highly confidential or sensitive matters should be dealt with in accordance with the Whistleblower Policy.
- student or employee violence or criminal matters should be directed to the Principal, who will involve the police as appropriate.
- formal legal proceedings.

If required, the school can help complainants to determine how their complaint should be made. Any such enquiries should be directed to a member of the school's Leadership Team.

Nothing in this Policy prevents a person from taking other lawful action in connection with a complaint, such as seeking advice or making a claim or report to an external party.

5. Policy

5.1 The Policy is based on the principles of resolving complaints with as little formality and disruption as possible and views complaints as part of an important feedback and accountability process.

5.2 The school has the discretion to deal with complaints under this Policy as it deems appropriate, having regard to the circumstances of the complaint. The school reserves the right to determine a complaint as frivolous, vexatious and/or without merit, in which case the school may summarily dismiss or resolve the complaint as

it thinks fit. In some situations, it may be appropriate to consider early resolution of a complaint without undertaking a full assessment of its merit.

- 5.3 In keeping with the school's ethos and values towards restorative practice, the school is committed to resolving complaints at the level closest to where the complaint arises, wherever appropriate. The school may seek an early resolution through a direct private discussion between the complainant and the respondent, an impartial third person conveying information between those involved, or an impartial third person helping those involved to talk to each other and find a solution.
- 5.4 Complaints involving children will be child-focused and, where appropriate, have regard to the best interests of the child(ren) and their perspectives. This extends to the way in which any complaint is assessed, investigated or otherwise reviewed.
- 5.5 Complaints will be acknowledged, assessed and referred to the informal or formal process. Informal resolution may involve constructive discussion and negotiation between the complainant and the relevant staff member(s). Formal resolution may involve gathering additional information, investigation, interviews, and/or evidence review, and may have outcomes such as mediation, disciplinary measures, policy changes, referral to external agencies or other actions.
- 5.6 Depending upon the nature of the complaint, the complainant and the respondent may be offered access to professional support services, including but not limited to, counselling, mediation and restorative processes.

6. Responsibilities

6.1 Principal

In implementing this Policy, the Principal (or authorised delegate) has the following responsibilities:

- developing, implementing, promoting and acting in accordance with this Policy, including ensuring employees are appropriately trained on the processes under this Policy
- appropriately communicating this Policy to students, parents and employees and ensuring it is readily accessible on the school's portals, as well as being published on the school's website
- ensuring complaints within the scope of this Policy are managed in accordance with this Policy, as varied to meet the needs of those involved in the Complaint. The Principal retains the right to implement a review of complaints in a manner that they consider to be appropriate to the circumstance.
- ensuring appropriate support is available to all parties to a complaint
- consider how to prevent victimisation or action in reprisal against any party to a complaint, or any person associated with them
- appropriately implementing resolutions
- maintaining a complaints register and all relevant information relating to

complaints including, but not limited to, correspondence and actions taken / complaint resolution

- reporting to the school's insurer and external authorities when relevant, and
- reporting to the school's Board immediately upon any claim for legal redress, or other matters under this Policy as appropriate.

6.2 All **Employees** are responsible for:

- not being bystanders to incidents of inappropriate conduct which may be in breach of policies or professional expectations.
- receiving or escalating complaints (where applicable) and acting in accordance with this Policy
- providing complainants with support or assistance to assist them in lodging their complaint
- ensuring the complainant has access to a copy of this Policy
- maintaining confidentiality in accordance with this Policy
- keeping appropriate records in accordance with this Policy
- forwarding complaints to more senior employees, including the Principal, as appropriate, and
- not victimising or acting in reprisal against the complainant, the respondent or any person associated with them.

6.3 **Parties**

The party or parties to a complaint, being the complainant/s and the respondent/s, and witnesses are responsible for:

- complying with this Policy
- ensuring that complaints, responses and evidence are provided in good faith
- lodging a complaint as soon as possible after an issue arises
- providing complete and factual information in a timely manner
- not providing deliberately false or misleading information
- not making frivolous or vexatious complaints
- acting in good faith at all times and maintaining confidentiality about matters that are, or that they intend to be the subject of complaints
- acting in a non-threatening, calm and courteous manner
- acknowledging that a common goal is to achieve, where appropriate, an outcome acceptable to all parties
- recognising that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced
- maintaining and respecting the privacy and confidentiality of all parties, and
- not victimising or acting in reprisal against any party to the complaint or any person associated with them.
- When making a complaint, complainants should have regard to the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) and the school's Policy on Privacy. This may include:
 - Share personal information only with authorised school staff/persons involved in the complaint process. Do not disclose details (particularly of children) to other parents, students, or the public.

- Use official school channels (e.g., designated email, secure forms) and avoid informal platforms such as social media or messaging apps.
- Do not upload complaint details or personal information to AI tools, third-party apps, or unsecured systems.
- Provide only information relevant to the complaint and ensure it is factual to the extent possible.

7. Outcomes

- 7.1 The school will decide and take action in response to complaints and complaint processes, at its sole discretion. The school may communicate the findings and outcomes to the complainant and the respondent in a manner that respects the nature of the complaint matter and the rights, obligations and privacy of all involved parties.
- 7.2 The person making the decision on behalf of the school will substantiate an allegation or aspect of complaint if satisfied that it is 'more probable than not' that what is alleged to have happened did happen, in which case:
- The outcomes for the respondent may include disciplinary counselling, an official warning, a requirement to attend conduct or other training, a requirement to provide a formal apology to the complainant, disciplinary action (e.g. demotion, transfer, suspension, probation, dismissal, exclusion or any other action as appropriate) or participation in restorative practices or mediation to restore relationships between the parties. Any decision to engage in a restorative process must be made with the express consent of the parties, and where relevant, in a trauma-informed way, with the best interests of the victim of any alleged conduct in mind.
 - Complainants will be offered support throughout the process.
- 7.3 Where the school decides that the allegations are not substantiated, it may still be appropriate for the school to take some action as a result of the complaint. For example, it may be appropriate to provide refresher training for staff, parents/caregivers or students regarding appropriate conduct and behaviour and/or review other school policies. Such action is not to be taken as disciplinary.
- 7.4 A request to review the school's decision regarding a complaint may be made by a complainant or a respondent. Such a request must be made to the Principal within three business days of the decision being communicated in writing. If the decision was made by the Principal, the request to review must be made to the school Board Chair at BoardChair@ahs.qld.edu.au. The school (or Board Chair as the case may be) has discretion to deal with a review under this Policy as it deems appropriate, having regard to the circumstances and substance of the request to review and the school's obligations under this Policy and the law.
- 7.5 All documents associated with a complaint will be handled in accordance with the school's Policy on Privacy and this Policy.

8. Related Policies, Guidelines and Procedures

- 8.1 Employees Code of Conduct
- 8.2 School Community Code of Conduct
- 8.3 Student Code of Conduct
- 8.4 Policy on Workplace Bullying and Unlawful Discrimination
- 8.5 Policy on Workplace Sexual Harassment and Related Unlawful Behaviour
- 8.6 Policy on Privacy
- 8.7 Complaint and Dispute Resolution Procedures
- 8.8 Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL)

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