Complaints Handling Policy & Procedure

1. Executive Summary & Purpose

Mosman Church of England Preparatory School welcomes feedback from all members of the School community and takes all complaints or concerns raised seriously. We are committed to handling complaints effectively, efficiently, and at no cost to complainants.

This Complaints Handling Policy is designed to assist parents, guardians, students, and community members in understanding how to raise concerns and formal complaints, and outlines our structured multi-stage process for resolution.

2. What is a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to Mosman Church of England Preparatory School, related to our services, operations, or the complaints handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.

> **Important Note:** Complaints and allegations regarding **Child Protection**, **Staff Misconduct**, or **Reportable Conduct** are managed separately under specific legal and regulatory obligations . Please refer to Section 6 of this document for specific direction.

4. General Principles

- **Confidentiality:** Confidentiality applies to both the complainant and any person against whom a complaint is made. Personally identifiable information is protected from disclosure and will only be shared on a strict need-to-know basis to address the issue, unless consent is granted or disclosure is required by law.

- **Support Persons:** During formal meetings, all parties may be accompanied by a support person (such as a relative or friend). The role of the support person is to provide emotional support and advice; they act as an observer rather than an active spokesperson or advocate.

- **Student Concerns:** Students may raise a concern with any staff member with whom they feel comfortable. That staff member is responsible for passing the concern to the appropriate Deputy or Headmaster.

- **Peer/Student Issues:** If a concern relates to another student at the School, parents/guardians must raise the issue directly with the School. Under no circumstances should parents contact another student or their parents directly.

5. Multi-Stage Complaints & Resolution Process

STAGE 1: Informal & Local Resolution

Step 1 — Identify the Concern

Prior to reaching out, clarify the core details of your concern:

- Define the key facts: *Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How*.
- Identify the specific outcome or solution you are seeking to achieve.

Step 2 — Raise the Concern with the School

- The School believes concerns are best resolved closest to their source. We encourage parents/guardians to raise matters directly with the relevant class teacher or staff member in the first instance.

- Depending on the nature or severity of the issue—or if there is a conflict of interest—concerns may be raised directly with the appropriate Deputy.

Step 3 — Acknowledgement & Recording

- Once raised, staff will record the details (via electronic file note or written correspondence), including contact information and the context of the issue.

- Focus will be placed on understanding the nature of the issue, the parties involved, and identifying mutually agreeable solutions.

Step 4 — Stage 1 Outcome

- When an agreeable solution is reached, it will usually be communicated in writing .
- If a mutually agreeable solution cannot be reached informally, the managing staff member will make a decision aligned with School policy and legal obligations. This decision will be communicated in writing and retained on the relevant file.

STAGE 2: Formal Complaint to the Headmaster

Step 1 — Submit a Formal Complaint

If you are not satisfied with the outcome at Stage 1, or if the matter is serious, you may submit a formal complaint. Formal complaints should ordinarily be lodged within **1 month** of the initial Stage 1 response.

Formal complaints should be addressed to the **Headmaster** via:

- **Email:** headmaster@mosmanprep.nsw.edu.au
- **Letter:** Addressed to "The Headmaster", Mosman Church of England Preparatory School
- **Phone / Meeting:** Contact Reception at (02) 9968 4000 to request a meeting. Reception staff will collect brief details of the matter to schedule a meeting as soon as practicable.

(Note: If the formal complaint directly concerns the Headmaster, it should be put in writing and addressed to the **Chair of the School Council**).

Step 2 — Acknowledgement

The Headmaster (or delegate) will acknowledge receipt of the formal complaint in writing as soon as practicable.

Step 3 — Review & Investigation

When managing a Stage 2 formal complaint, the Headmaster will:

1. Clarify the substance of the complaint and review the steps taken at Stage 1.
2. Identify whether there is non-compliance with any School policy or statutory standard
3. Determine if the matter requires management under a separate procedure (e.g., Child Protection).

4. Communicate with relevant parents, students, and staff to seek resolution by mutual agreement where practical.

5. Failing mutual agreement, investigate the matter in accordance with procedural fairness and natural justice.

The Headmaster may delegate aspects of the investigation to a senior executive or external specialist, though final determinations remain with the Headmaster. You may request to have a support person present during any interview.

Step 4 — Stage 2 Outcome

- The Headmaster will work to resolve and communicate the final written outcome with due diligence.

- De-identified summaries of formal complaints are reported periodically to the School Council to support operational oversight and compliance.

- At the Headmaster's discretion, formal complaints may be referred to the Chair of the School Council for advice.

Stage 3 — School Council Review & External Options

- **Review by Chair of Council:** If a complainant remains unsatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2, they may request a final internal review by writing to the **Chair of the School Council**. The Chair will review procedural fairness and determine whether the decision stands or alternative action is warranted. The Chair's decision is the final step in internal escalation.
- **External Resolution:** If the complaint remains unresolved following internal processes, complainants may seek independent external resolution alternatives.

If a complaint relates to:

- **A key staff member**: the complaint should be directed to the Deputy Head or Headmaster.
- **A member of the Senior Executive Team**: the complaint should be put in writing to the Headmaster or an appointment made with the Headmaster to discuss the matter.
- **The Headmaster**: the complaint should be put in writing and forwarded to the Chair of the School Council at the School postal address.
- **Where the Council Chair requires further advice**, the Independent Schools Association is contacted to ensure legal obligations are being met.

- **Where the Council Chair requires wider Council member consideration**, a small specific Council Advisory group is selected by the Chair (considering aspects such as background experience, understanding of context, and potential conflict of interest).

6. Specialised Complaints & Escalation Matrix

Complaint Category	Initial Contact Pathway	Senior Responsible Officer
Child Protection & Safety	Headmaster (or Deputy if Headmaster is unavailable)	Headmaster / Relevant Statutory Authorities
Staff Misconduct / Reportable Conduct	Headmaster/Chair of School Council if Headmaster is the subject	Headmaster / Chair of School Council/ Independent Schools NSW and/or Council Advisory Group
Academic & Curriculum Matters	Class Teacher / Deputy	Deputy / Headmaster
Student Pastoral & Behaviour	Class Teacher / Deputy	Headmaster
Operations, Risk, Facilities & Fees	Director Business Operations	Headmaster
Complaints Against the Headmaster	Written to the Chair of the School Council	Chair of the School Council/ Independent Schools NSW and/or Council Advisory Group

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Mosman Church of England Preparatory School

Complaints Handling Policy & Procedure — Visual Flowchart

COMPLAINT OR CONCERN ARISES

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Child Protection & Misconduct

- **Child Protection / Safety:** Direct to Headmaster or Statutory Authorities.
- **Staff Misconduct:** Direct to Headmaster.
- **Against Headmaster:** Direct in writing to Chair of School Council.
- *Bypasses standard 3-stage process.*

General Concerns Pathway:

Covers Academic, Pastoral, Student Behaviour, Operations, Facilities, and General Complaints. Follow the 3-Stage Resolution Process below.

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STAGE 1: Informal & Local Resolution

Step 1: Identify
- Clarify facts (Who, What, When, Where, Why).
- Define specific sought outcome.

Step 2: Raise Issue
- Contact Class Teacher or relevant staff member.
- Escalate to Deputy if severe or conflict exists.

Step 3: Record
- Staff log details & context.
- Focus on mutually agreeable resolution.

Step 4: Outcome
- Agreement or staff decision.
- Communicated in writing & filed.

✓ Resolved: Matter Closed

✗ Unresolved: Submit Formal Complaint within 1 Month ↓

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STAGE 2: Formal Complaint to the Headmaster

Step 1: Submit
- Written to Headmaster (Email/Letter/Meeting).
- (If against Headmaster → Chair of Council).

Step 2: Acknowledge
- Prompt written acknowledgement issued by Headmaster or delegate.

Step 3: Investigate
- Review Stage 1 steps & policy compliance.
- Investigate with procedural fairness & support persons.

Step 4: Outcome
- Written decision sent.
- De-identified summary reported to Council.

✓ Resolved: Matter Closed

✗ Unresolved: Request School Council Review ↓

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STAGE 3: School Council Review & External Resolution

Final Internal Step: Council Review

- Submit written request to **Chair of School Council**.
- Chair reviews procedural fairness & validity of decision.
- Chair may consult Council Advisory Group or AISNSW.
- Final internal determination issued in writing.

External Resolution Pathway

- If complaint remains unresolved following internal processes.
- Complainant may seek independent external resolution options or relevant statutory bodies.

Quick Reference: Responsibility & Escalation Matrix

Complaint Category	Initial Contact Pathway	Senior Responsible Officer
Child Protection & Safety	Headmaster (or Deputy if Headmaster unavailable)	Headmaster / Statutory Authorities
Staff Misconduct / Reportable Conduct	Headmaster (or Chair of Council if Headmaster involved)	Headmaster / Chair of Council / AISNSW
Academic & Curriculum	Class Teacher / Deputy	Deputy / Headmaster
Student Pastoral & Behaviour	Class Teacher / Deputy	Headmaster
Operations, Facilities & Fees	Director of Business Operations	Headmaster
Complaints Against Headmaster	Written letter to Chair of School Council	Chair of School Council / Council Advisory Group