Complaints Handling Policy & Procedures

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose and scope

This policy applies to *Mount Sinai College* in handling complaints made in respect of services provided by the college or against staff members, which includes employees, contractors and volunteers.

This policy does not extend to personal grievances between parents, guardians or other members of the college community.

Our ability to identify, manage and promptly resolve complaints is an important aspect of our College's management practices.

We have adopted the definition of "complaint" from the Australian Complaints Handling Standard (AS 10002:2-22) which defines a complaint as an:

"expression of dissatisfaction made to or about and organisation related to its products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required." This policy is further informed by NSW Child Safe Standards, NESA Registered and Accredited Individual Non-Government School Manual (NSW) and guidance from Independent Schools NSW (ISNSW) on complaints handling and governance.

The term "complaint" is used to refer collectively to any enquiry, comment, complaint or dispute raised by a person expressing dissatisfaction as to a particular circumstance, or situation, related to our services or operations.

1.2.Whistleblowing complaints

This policy does not extend to complaints which are whistleblowing disclosures. The procedure for processing whistleblowing complaints are dealt with in the college's *Whistleblowing Policy and Procedures*.

In summary a whistleblowing disclosure is a disclosure which:

- is made by a board member, staff member, a person who supplies goods or services to the college, including a volunteer, an employer of a supplier or a relative of any of these people.

- involves alleged misconduct, an improper situation or circumstances, or illegal activity, and
- is made to the Director of Finance and Operations, President of the Board or Principal of the college, or a person who the college has authorised to collect such disclosures.

1.3. Related policies

Complaints about reportable conduct and staff misconduct will be addressed in accordance with the college's *Child Safe Policy*.

1.4. Confidentiality

All parties involved in complaints handling are required to maintain appropriate confidentiality, including in relation to handling and storing records.

2. Complaints

A complaint or grievance is an expression of dissatisfaction made to the college about an educational and/or operational matter relating to services provided by the college or the behaviour or decisions of a staff member, contractor or volunteer, including misconduct.

If a parent/carer or student has a concern about the conduct of a staff member, they should raise their concern with the college in accordance with section 3.

If a complaint that concerns the behaviour of a staff member may constitute reportable conduct, the matter will be addressed by the college's Child Safe Policy in accordance with section 1.3.

A complaint about a reportable conduct matter may be current or historical. Timeframes for investigation of complaints relating to reportable conduct are dependent on the individual matter and may be over an extended period of time, particularly in the case of a historical allegation. The college is bound by privacy or other confidentiality requirements when conducting investigations of reportable conduct allegations, which may limit the information that can be shared with the complainant regarding the outcome of an investigation. Please refer to the college's Child Safe Policy for information about reportable conduct.

Complainants are not required to assess whether their concern meets the threshold of reportable conduct before making a complaint. Any concern about a child's wellbeing or the conduct of an employee, volunteer, contractor or member of the

college community may be reported under this policy.
Complaints may be made by a student or parent/carer or any member of the college community.

The college will seek to resolve complaints informally where possible but acknowledges that in some cases a person may wish to make a formal complaint.

3. Raising a complaint

3.1. The complainant

Complaints may be raised directly with the person involved. However, if the complainant does not feel comfortable doing so, or if it is not appropriate in the circumstances, the complaint may instead be directed to the relevant Class Teacher, then to the Director of Students, Primary & Teacher Accreditation or the Director of Staff Hebrew, Jewish Studies or Infants, and ultimately the Principal if necessary. Any complaint regarding the conduct of a staff member should, in the first instance, be directed to the Director of Staff (Hebrew, Jewish Studies or Infants).

Should the matter not be resolved between the parties directly in the first instance, the complainant may raise the matter with the college. A complaint can be made in writing to the *Principal* via email to gforman@mountsinai.nsw.edu.au .

Where a person wishes to make a complaint concerning the Principal, the complaint should be made in writing to the *President of the Board/Delegate*, via email *president@mountsinai.nsw.edu.au*. In this situation, the references in this policy relating to the role of the *Principal/Delegate* should be read as references to the *President of Board/Delegate*.

3.2. The College

The ***Principal/Delegate*** will generally acknowledge receipt of a complaint raised with the college in writing as soon as practicable.

4. Handling complaints

4.1. Assessing a complaint

The ***Principal/Delegate*** generally will assess the complaint and determine:

- whether the complaint is one to be addressed under this policy or is a staff grievance or reportable conduct matter,; and
- the priority of the complaint in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the matter raised; and
- whether the college may be required to report the matter to the Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG), Police, Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) or other relevant authorities should the complaint relate to possible unlawful conduct or other reportable matters.
- A person who makes a complaint in good faith will not be subjected to victimisation or adverse treatment.

4.2. Managing a formal complaint

The ***Principal/Delegate*** generally will manage a complaint by:

a) advising the complainant of the likely steps that will be undertaken by the College in relation to the complaint.

b) if appropriate, advising the relevant parties of the complaint at the relevant time and providing them with an opportunity to respond.

c) collecting any additional information the College considers necessary to assess the complaint.

d) making a decision about how the complaint will be resolved ("resolution decision"); and

e) if appropriate, advising the complainant in writing, and any other relevant parties as appropriate, of the resolution decision of the ***Principal/Delegate*** and if appropriate, any proposed action to be taken.

The College will ensure procedural fairness by ensuring all parties of the substance of the complaint, providing reasonable opportunity to respond and ensuring decisions are made without bias. There may be circumstances where some of the steps outlined above are not appropriate and the college will determine, on a case-by-case basis the most appropriate method of handling the complaint.

A complainant and the relevant parties that the complaint is about may choose to have an appropriate support person present at any meeting with representatives of the College about the complaint. However, the College maintains the right to determine whether the person's preferred support person is appropriate and may not approve the attendance of a support person where they are determined by the College to be inappropriate.

Where practicable, the College will aim to:
a) Acknowledge complaints within 2 – 5 working days
b) Provide and initial response within 10 working days
c) Resolve complaints within 30 working days, where possible.

The College will take reasonable steps to ensure that the complaints process is accessible to all members of the community, including those requiring assistance with language, literacy, disability or cultural understanding.

Complaint data will be regularly reviewed by the College leadership to identify trends, address systemic issues and improve policies and practices.

5. Contact

If you have any queries about this policy, you should contact ***the Directo of Finance and Operations or Principal*** for advice.

Policy & Procedures Review

Name of Policy	Complaints Handling Policy & Procedures
Owned By	Garron Forman
Date of Implementation	29-8-24
Changes	25-5-26
Review date	25-5-27