

COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

POLICY STATEMENT

Ormiston College acknowledges the right of students, parents, employees and others to complain when dissatisfied with an action, inaction or decision of the College and the College encourages constructive criticism and complaints. Ormiston College is committed to ensuring that complaints are dealt with in a responsive, efficient, consistent, effective, transparent and fair way.

Ormiston College will ensure staff can recognise, receive and appropriately refer complaints to the informal and formal complaints procedure.

Ormiston College recognises that time spent on handling complaints can be an investment in better service to students, parents and employees. Ormiston College views complaints as part of an important feedback and accountability process.

Ormiston College promotes a safe, inclusive and culturally responsive environment for all students, ensuring their safety and wellbeing are prioritised. Ormiston College is committed to students exercising their right to speak up and participate in school processes and decisions that affect them.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING

Ormiston College is unwavering in its commitment to providing a safe, supportive, and empowering environment for every child and young person in its care. The College recognises its moral and legal responsibility to ensure the safety, wellbeing and inclusion of all students, and actively upholds the Universal Principle and Child Safe Standards in Queensland.

The College is committed to:

- Leading and governing a child-safe culture with diligence, ensuring that everyone shares the responsibility to keep children and young people safe and well.
- Creating welcoming and nurturing environments where everyone belongs.
- Listening to children and young people, valuing their voices and involving them in decisions that affect them.
- Standing against all forms of abuse, neglect and harm. Always.
- Valuing and celebrating the cultural diversity, identity and background of every child and young person, ensuring its practices are culturally safe and responsive.
- Providing an environment that promotes and upholds the right to cultural safety of students who are Aboriginal persons or Torres Strait Islander persons.
- Making sure College staff and volunteers are rigorously selected, well-trained, caring and ready to act if something isn't right.
- Always looking for ways to do better, learn and grow as a community.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to provide written processes about receiving, assessing, investigating and otherwise dealing with complaints.¹

SCOPE

This Policy is directed at any person affected by the subject of a complaint. Examples may include staff, students, parents or guardians, volunteers, visitors, contractors or community members.

LEGISLATION and REFERENCES

- *Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2017*
- *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000*
- *Fair Work Act 2009*
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld)*
- *Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)*
- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld)*
- *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)*
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)*
- *Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth)*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*
- *Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)*
- *Child Safe Organisations Act 2024 (Qld)*
- Standards Australia, Guidelines for Complaint Management in Organisations (ISO100002:2022, NEQ)
- Child Safe Organisations | Queensland Family and Child Commission

Ormiston College Related Documents

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Reporting Concerns of Harm and Abuse Policy
- Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing
- Safeguarding Code of Conduct
- Ormiston College Workplace Agreement
- Work Health and Safety Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy – Respectful Behaviours Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct Policy
- Anti-Discrimination Policy
- Sexual Harassment Policy
- Disability Discrimination Policy
- Workplace Bullying Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Board Charter
- Student Behaviour Management Strategy
- Student Expectations and Behaviour Code

¹ *Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2017, s.7*

DEFINITIONS

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| Complaint | An expression of dissatisfaction made to or about the College, related to the College's services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required. ² |
| Informal Complaint | A complaint about a matter that is likely to be simple, straight forward, easily manageable, or minor, where a simple or quick resolution is appropriate such as discussion of the matter with a relevant staff member. |
| Formal Complaint | A complaint about a matter that is serious, complex or may pose a threat to the health and safety of any person. Examples include serious allegations or breaches of policy, complaints against a senior staff member, including the Headmaster or an informal complaint that could not be resolved informally. Assessment of the complaint is required by a member of the College's Senior Executive. |
| Complainant | The person, organisation or their representative making a complaint. ³ |
| Respondent | The person who is referred to in a complaint by a complainant as the person responsible for their concerns or who can best respond to their concern. |

COMPLAINTS HANDLING PRINCIPLES

Ormiston College will manage complaints according to the following (which include principles of procedural fairness):

- complaints will be taken seriously, dealt with fairly and objectively, without judgement and addressed in a reasonable timeframe
- complaints should be resolved with as little formality and disruption as possible, having regard to the nature of the complaint
- interested parties to the complaint (for example, the complainant and any respondent) will be heard and/or may provide relevant information in relation to the complaint
- confidentiality and privacy will be maintained as much as possible
- a child-centred approach will be maintained, and all complaints will be managed in a manner that prioritises the student's safety, wellbeing and voice
- a trauma-informed and culturally safe approach to managing complaints will be prioritised
- the complainant and any respondent will be offered support as appropriate
- victimising behaviour towards a complainant, respondent or other people associated with the complaint will not be tolerated
- complainants that lodge a complaint on reasonable grounds will not suffer any other reprisals on the basis of the lodging the complaint.

Complaints that may be resolved under this Policy

Ormiston College encourages anyone who feels impacted by an issue involving the school to file a complaint. Complaints can address matters such as:

- the school, its staff or students having done something wrong
- the school, its staff or students having failed to do something they should have done
- the school, its employees or students having acted unfairly or impolitely
- issues relating to sexual harassment

² Standards Australia, Guidelines for complaint management in organizations (ISO 10002:2018, NEQ), s.4.3

³ Standards Australia, Guidelines for complaint management in organizations (ISO 10002:2018, NEQ), s.4.2

- issues of student or staff behaviour that are contrary to the Behaviour Management Policy or Code of Conduct, including inappropriate staff conduct as reported by a student.⁴
- issues related to learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
- issues related to communication with students or parents or between staff
- issues related to school fees and payments
- general administrative issues
- issues relating to non-compliance with a process outlined in school policies or procedures, for example the Child Protection Policy, Discrimination Policy or Privacy Policy.⁵

Student complaints may be brought by students or by parents on behalf of their children, as appropriate in the circumstances.

Issues Outside this Policy

The following matters are outside the scope of this Policy and should be managed as follows:

- Child protection concerns including allegations of sexual abuse, likely sexual abuse or harm to children should be dealt in accordance with the College's Reporting Concerns of Harm and Abuse Policy.
- Student bullying complaints should be dealt with under the Anti-Bullying Policy
- Student discipline matters, including matters involving suspension or expulsion, should be dealt with under the Behaviour Management Policy
- Student or staff violence or criminal matters should be directed to the Headmaster who will involve the Police as appropriate.
- Disputes relating to a staff member's employment should be directed to their Line Manager and dealt with under the Workplace Agreement and/or employment law. This does not include disputes or complaints about relevant unlawful conduct under the Sexual Harassment Policy, which may be dealt with under the College's Complaints Handling Policy.
- Disputes between Board members, should be dealt with in accordance with the Board Charter.
- Formal legal proceedings should be managed as appropriate in the circumstances.
- Complaints relating to the education and training services provided by the College to an overseas student should be dealt with in accordance with the *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* and National Code, and the College's Overseas Student's Complaints and Appeals Policy and Process.

RESPONSIBILITIES

College

The College has the following roles and responsibilities:

- develop, implement, promote, and act in accordance with the College's Complaints Handling Policy
- appropriately communicate the College's Complaints Handling Policy to staff, students and parents
- ensure that the Complaints Handling Policy is readily accessible by staff, students, and parents
- upon receipt of a complaint, manage the complaint in accordance with the Complaints Handling Policy

⁴ Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2017 s.16(2)(a)

⁵ Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2017 s.16(5)

- ensure that appropriate support is provided to all parties to a complaint
- take appropriate action to prevent the victimisation or action in reprisal against the complainant, respondent or any person associated with them
- appropriately implement remedies
- appropriately train relevant employees
- keep records
- conduct a review/audit of the Complaints Register at regular intervals
- monitor and report to the governing body on complaints
- report to the College's insurer when that is relevant
- refer to the College's governing body immediately any claim for legal redress.

All Parties to a Dispute

The complainant and respondent both have the following roles and responsibilities:

- comply with the College's Complaints Handling Policy
- provide complete and factual information in a timely manner
- not provide deliberately false or misleading information
- not make frivolous or vexatious complaints or retaliatory complaints
- act in good faith, and maintain a mutually beneficial relationship of trust and cooperation
- act in a calm and courteous manner and non-threatening manner
- acknowledge that a common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
- recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced
- maintain and respect the privacy and confidentiality of all parties
- not victimise or act in reprisal against any party to the dispute or any person associated with them.

Staff Receiving and/or Managing Complaints

Staff receiving and/or managing complaints have the following roles and responsibilities:

- act in accordance with the College's Complaints Handling Policy
- refer the complainant to the College's Complaints Handling Policy and provide additional information as necessary
- maintain confidentiality as far as possible
- keep appropriate records
- forward complaints to more senior staff, including the Headmaster, if the complaint cannot be resolved at the initial level or if it involves serious issues that require the involvement of more senior staff
- not victimise or act in reprisal against the complainant, respondent or any person associated with them.

IMPLEMENTATION

Ormiston College is committed to raising awareness of the process for resolving complaints at the College, including by the development and implementation of this Policy and via the clear support and promotion of the Policy. This policy is publicly available on the College [Website](#).

Ormiston College is also committed to regularly training relevant staff on the implementation of this Policy.

Ormiston College will keep appropriate records of complaints, will monitor complaints and their resolution, and will report on a high-level basis to the College's governing body on complaint handling at the College.

Ormiston College will act to encourage staff, students and parents to contribute to a healthy school culture where complaints are resolved with as little formality and disruption as possible.

Complaints Register

The College will maintain a Complaints Register with details such as the date, source and description of complaints, the staff managing the complaint, the actions taken, the outcome and the date the complaint was closed.

All complaints shall be entered onto the Complaints Register as soon as practicable after the complaint is received. The Complaints Register will not contain complaints about the Headmaster. Records of complaints about the Headmaster will be maintained by the Board, with access restricted to the Board.

To safeguard confidentiality and maintain the integrity of the complaint process, access to the entire Complaints Register will be limited to the Headmaster and Executive Assistant to the Headmaster.

The Headmaster may authorise the sharing of specific, relevant entries from the Complaint Register with other designated staff members (such as Senior Executive), provided measures are taken to protect the confidentiality of all parties involved, particularly ensuring the respondents to a complaint do not gain inappropriate access to information about the allegations against them.

The Complaints Register will be stored securely.

COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE

Lodging a Complaint

- a) Complaints can be lodged with the most appropriate staff member at the local level, for example, the initial contact point for many complaints is the student's relevant classroom teacher.
- b) Complaints about the Headmaster must be lodged with the Board
- c) Complaints can be lodged via lodging the Complaint Form available on the College [Website](#).
- d) If the complainant is unsure where to direct their complaint, they can contact the College's Administration Office for guidance.
- e) If the complainant is uncomfortable directing the complaint to the most appropriate member at the local level, or wants to make a formal complaint, they can submit a complaint by:
 - i. Completing the online Complaint Form (available on the College website)
 - ii. Using the anonymous reporting system
 - iii. Report to a member of the executive.
- f) Where an anonymous complaint is lodged, the school will follow the Complaints Handling Policy; when there is sufficient information to do so.
- g) If a student is a complainant, respondent or victim, or the child of a complainant, respondent or victim of a matter being managed through this Policy, the College may offer the student support where appropriate, e.g. discussing suitable adjustments with parents/caregivers.
- h) The recipient of the complaint will offer support to the complainant as appropriate, which may include assistance with completing forms or understanding procedures.

STAGE 1

Informal Complaint

Wherever possible, the College will aim to resolve concerns and complaints informally through informal discussion and negotiation. A person wishing to make a complaint is encouraged to approach the staff member concerned and attempt to resolve the complaint, taking into consideration the Parent Code of Conduct and Staff Code of Conduct. This may be conducted in person, via phone or in writing.

Wherever possible, stakeholders will attempt to directly resolve a concern or complaint raised by the complainant by providing feedback or relevant information. Stakeholders will also attempt to resolve issues and concerns with other staff, face to face.

The informal process is designed to resolve issues promptly and collaboratively at the local level.

| STEP | PROCEDURE |
|------|--|
| 1 | The informal process begins with the assessment of the complaint by a designated staff member (e.g., HOD, SAC or a member of the Senior Executive) |
| 2 | <p>Acknowledgement, Assessment and Referral</p> <p>The staff member receiving the complaint will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Acknowledge the complaint within two (2) business days, outlining the next steps and, where possible, the estimated timeframes. ii. Assess the complaint, using the definitions of informal and formal complaints in this Policy. |
| 3 | It may involve constructive discussion and negotiation between the complainant and the relevant staff member(s). |
| 4 | The recipient of the complaint will enter the complaint into the Complaints Register. |
| 5 | A written report with findings and recommendations will be submitted to the Headmaster. The findings and reasons are provided to the Complainant and the Respondent. |

If the complaint cannot be resolved informally, it will be escalated to the formal process.

STAGE 2

Formal Complaint

Where informal resolution is not appropriate or unsuccessful, a formal complaint may be lodged.

Timelines and steps in the procedure can be adjusted to meet the requirements of the complaint; however, any changes must preserve the conditions of natural justice and procedural fairness. Wherever practical, the case manager or designated decision maker will keep both the complainant and respondent informed of timelines.

Where a concern/complaint cannot be resolved informally:

| Step | Procedure |
|------|--|
| 1 | The formal process begins with the assessment of the complaint by a designated staff member (e.g., HOD, SAC or a member of the Senior Executive) or if an informal complaint has not been resolved |
| 2 | <p>Acknowledgement, Assessment and Referral</p> <p>The staff member receiving the complaint will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Acknowledge the complaint within two (2) business days, outlining the next steps and, where possible, the estimated timeframes. ii. Assess the complaint, using the definitions of informal and formal complaints in this Policy. |
| 3 | The recipient of the complaint will enter the complaint into the Complaints Register. |

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| 4 | <p>The staff member may gather additional information through:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Investigation ii. Interviews iii. Evidence review <p>The staff member may consult with appropriate members of the student's or the family's community.</p> |
| 5 | <p>The staff member will determine appropriate action, which may include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Mediation ii. Disciplinary measures iii. Implementation of policy changes iv. Referral to external agencies (e.g., police) v. Provision of written updates to the complainant throughout the process vi. Other actions the staff member determines as appropriate in the circumstances. |
| 6 | <p>If an investigation takes place:</p> <p>The College will determine if an internal or external investigator is required:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. If an internal investigation takes place, a member of the Leadership Team will conduct the investigation. A written report with findings and recommendations will be submitted to the Headmaster. The findings and reasons are provided to the complainant and the respondent. ii. If an external investigator is engaged, they will interview both parties and relevant witnesses listed by the complainant, respondent and any identified by the investigator. iii. The external investigator will prepare a written report with findings and recommendations, which will be submitted to the Headmaster. The findings and reasons are provided to the complainant and the respondent. |
| 7 | <p>Complaint Closure</p> <p>The Headmaster or member of the Leadership Team will inform the parties in writing of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. The decision taken by the College ii. A summary of the reasons for the decision made, and iii. What and when follow-up action, if any, is to be taken. <p>If disciplinary outcomes are required, this may involve a formal warning, request for an apology, termination of enrolment or termination of employment.</p> |
| 8 | <p>The Complaint Register will be updated with the date the complaint is closed and a summary of the outcome.</p> |

The College's decision following the complaint process constitutes the conclusion of the matter under the Complaints Handling Policy. If the matter remains unresolved or in the event of a dispute, the complainant may pursue external resolution alternatives or refer the complaint to the Board as outlined below.

STAGE 3

Unresolved at Stage 2, or the Complaint Relates to the Headmaster

- a) Complaints must be in writing and addressed to the Chairman of the Board
- b) The Chairman of the Board will address the issue with the Headmaster.
- c) Should the complaint involve a breach of legislation, the Chairman of the Board will engage the appropriate legal authorities.
- d) The Chairman of the Board may seek the assistance of the College Senior Executive Team or an external 3rd party to assist in investigating the complaint.
- e) The Chairman of the Board will decide upon the most appropriate outcome in view of the investigation and will provide the complainant and the Headmaster with a record of findings and reasons.
- f) The complaint will be entered it onto the Complaints Register.

STAGE 4

Appeals Process

- a) Complainants may appeal the outcome of a complaint by writing to:
 - i. the Headmaster (for complaints not previously managed by the Headmaster)
 - ii. the Board Chair (for complaints previously managed by the Headmaster, or complaints about the Headmaster).

Version and Review Control Register

| Version | Policy Document Owner | Policy Document Approver | Approval Date | Changes History/ Superseded Documents | Next Review Date |
|---------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|--|------------------|
| V230124 | Ormiston College Governing Body | Headmaster | 12/03/24 | | January 2026 |
| V130326 | Ormiston College Governing Body | Headmaster | 15/04/2026 | New template, review compliance with relevant legislation and updated complaint process. | March 2028 |
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