COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

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ST RITA'S COLLEGE LTD
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POLICY

In keeping with our mission, vision, and Presentation charism, St Rita's College aims to be a welcoming and inclusive community. The College is committed to upholding the highest standards of professional conduct to deliver outstanding educational programs. Complaints raised by students, parents/carers, employees or the community are handled in a manner that affirms the dignity of those involved and delivers outcomes that foster reconciliation and personal growth.

The College views feedback, concerns, and complaints as vital tools for continuous improvement. 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.

SCOPE

This Policy applies to a range of complaints that involve dissatisfaction with the action, inaction or decision of the College relating to the conduct or performance of employees, parents/carers or students, or issues of student, parent/carers or employee behaviour that are contrary to the applicable codes of conduct.

This Policy covers concerns and complaints regarding:

- Errors, omissions or wrongdoing by the College, its employees, or students
- Unfair or disrespectful treatment by the College, its employees, or students
- Matters relating to students or employee behaviour that breach their relevant code of conduct
- Matters relating to academic programs, including student learning, assessments, and reporting
- Matters relating to cocurricular programs, including sport and cultural programs
- Matters relating to communication between employees, parents/carers or students
- College fees and related payment matters
- General administrative concerns

This Policy does not apply to matters covered by other specific College policies, industrial instruments, or legal frameworks. These exclusions include:

- Student protection concerns: Managed under the Student Protection Processes.
- Whistleblower disclosures: Managed under the Whistleblower Policy for highly confidential or sensitive matters.
- Staff employment grievances: Handled under our Internal Staff Grievance policy.
- Criminal activity or violence: Referred directly to the Principal, who will involve the police.
- Formal legal proceedings: Handled through external legal channels.

The College will assist complainants in understanding how a complaint should be made. Nothing in this policy restricts individuals from pursuing lawful action or seeking independent advice or making a claim or report to an external party.

OUR EXPECTATIONS OF A PERSON RAISING A CONCERN OR COMPLAINT

The College expects anyone raising a concern or complaint to:

- Act promptly - Lodge a complaint as soon as possible after the issue occurs.
- Be factual - Provide complete, accurate, and objective information and do not provide deliberately false or misleading information.
- Maintain confidentiality - Respect the privacy and confidentiality of all individuals involved.
- Focus on a resolution - Focus on achieving a mutually acceptable outcome.
- Act in good faith - Communicate in a calm, courteous, non-threatening and respectful manner.
- Avoid social media - Refrain from posting or commenting about the matter online or to the media.
- Value different perspectives - Listen with understanding rather than jumping to judgment or blame.
- Balance rights - Recognise that the rights and responsibilities of all parties must be balanced.
- Respect natural justice - Acknowledge that the College must provide the respondent with full details of the allegations and allow them a fair chance to respond.
- No victimisation - No victimisation or acting in reprisal against any party to the complaint or any person associated with them.

OUR EXPECTATIONS OF THE COLLEGE

The College aims to resolve all concerns and complaints:

- Respectfully - Complaints are managed in a way that is respectful, culturally safe and sensitive to the diverse circumstances of students and their families.
- Efficiently - Managing processes smoothly without unnecessary delays.
- Justly - Applying the core principles of natural justice.
- Compliantly - Following all relevant legislative and regulatory guidelines.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

The College must afford privacy and confidentiality to all parties to the extent required by and permitted by law. Parties must afford privacy and confidentiality to one another to the extent required by law. The College requires and expects that all parties will, when addressing concerns and complaints:

- maintain the confidentiality of all parties in accordance with confidentiality and privacy policies and legislative requirements;
- acknowledge that their common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties;
- show respect and understanding of each other's point of view and value difference, rather than judge and blame; and
- recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced.

COMPLAINT RESOLUTION PROCESS

a) The College aims to resolve complaints with minimal formality and disruption and has the discretion to deal with complaints made under this policy as it deems appropriate, taking into consideration the circumstances of the complaint.

b) The nature of complaints differs widely and the process that will be adopted by the College must respond to the unique elements of the concerns and complaints. Upon receipt of a concern or complaint, the College will assess the matter to determine the appropriate process to implement.

c) Consistent with our Catholic ethos and values, the College is committed to informal resolution at the level closest to where the complaint arises wherever possible. Informal resolution typically involves constructive discussions and negotiations directly between the complainant and the relevant staff member(s). The College may seek prompt resolution though private discussions between the parties, an impartial third party conveying information to the parties involved, or by involving an impartial mediator to guide a collaborative solution. Resolution of complaints that are not resolved informally may require additional information gathering, investigations, interviews and review of evidence.

d) Complaints will be acknowledged, assessed and referred to the appropriate pathway to be processed. If the College determines a complaint is frivolous, vexatious, or lacks merit, it may dismiss the matter immediately or deal with the matter under the appropriate Code of Conduct. Where appropriate, the College may also seek an early resolution without conducting a full assessment.

e) 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 and mediation.

f) The College will determine the appropriate action and, wherever possible, will share the findings, decision and remedial actions with both the complainant and respondent. This communication will be dependent on the sensitive nature of the complaint while protecting the privacy, rights, and duties of everyone involved.

g) The person making the decision on behalf of the College will substantiate the complaint if satisfied that it is more probable than not that what is alleged to have happened did happen. Where a complaint is substantiated, the outcome may include any of the following: remedial action, disciplinary measures, requirement to attend relevant training or counselling, requirement to provide a formal apology and/or participation in mediation to restore relationships between the parties.

h) Where the College decides that the complaint is not substantiated, it may still take proactive measures. For example, the College may provide refresher training on our codes of conducts or update existing College policies. These corrective actions are not treated as disciplinary action against any individual or admission of responsibility.

i) If the complainant does not accept the outcome, a request to review the decision may be made. The request must be made to the Principal within three working days of the decision being communicated in writing. If the decision was made by the Principal, the request to review may be made to the Chair of the Board. The College (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 College's obligations under this policy and the law. The decision of the College following this complaint process constitutes the conclusion of the matter in terms of the College's Complaints Handling policy. If the matter remains unresolved or in the event of a dispute, the complainant can pursue external resolution alternatives.

HOW TO RAISE A COMPLAINT

1. Wherever possible, complainants should raise concerns directly with the staff member closest to the issue via phone, email, or a scheduled meeting. (e.g., Teacher, Coach, House Group Teacher, Head of House, Head of Faculty).

2. Either party can request a facilitated resolution process. The facilitator may be one of the following people:

Area of concern	**Facilitator**
Curriculum/academic issue	Head of Faculty
Cocurricular issue	Head of Cocurricular activity
Pastoral issue	Head of House
Complaint is against a Head of Faculty	Dean of Teaching and Learning
Complaint is against a Head of House or Guidance Counsellors	Dean of Students
Complaint relates to administrative support staff	Director of Business and Finance
Complaint is against a member of the College Leadership Team (excluding the Principal)	Principal
Complaint is against the Principal	Chair of the Board

3. Written complaints should be lodged in writing to:

Area of complaint	**Written complaints to**
Curriculum/academic issue Cocurricular issue Pastoral issue Complaint is against a Head of Faculty Complaint is against a Head of House or Guidance Counsellors Complaint relates to administrative support staff	complaints@stritas.qld.edu.au
Complaint is against a member of the College Leadership Team (excluding the Principal)	The Principal St Rita's College 41 Enderley Road, Clayfield QLD 4011 principal@stritas.qld.edu.au
Complaint is against the Principal	The Chair of St Rita's College Board St Rita's College, 41 Enderley Road, Clayfield QLD 4011 Email: boardchair@stritas.qld.edu.au

A written complaint should clearly outline the nature of the complaint and specify individuals involved. It should include all relevant supporting material available such as details of the time and place of the incident(s), emails and notes of verbal communication including, where appropriate, the names of witnesses and any actions already taken and the resolution being sought.

TIMELINE FOR PROCESSING COMPLAINTS

As the nature of concerns and complaints differs widely, the timeline that will be adopted must be responsive to the specific elements of the concern or complaint. Timelines for resolving complaints must therefore be flexible. At times, events may occur that are out of the College's control, and those events may extend anticipated timeframes. For example, people may be uncontactable or key staff may be absent or on leave. Additionally, the College operates on a restricted schedule or closes outside of Term time which may affect response times.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Board

- Oversight and review of this policy.

Board Chair

- Board Chair or delegate manages complaints involving the Principal.
- Board Chair reviews outcomes of complaints requested by the complainant.

Principal (or authorised delegate)

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

- Developing and implementing processes and acting in accordance with this policy, including ensuring employees are appropriately trained on complaint handling processes.
- Appropriately communicating this policy to students, parents/carers and employees and ensuring it is readily accessible on the College's portals, as well as being published on the College website.
- Ensuring complaints are managed in accordance with this policy.
- Ensuring appropriate support is provided to all parties to a complaint.
- Taking appropriate action to prevent victimisation or action in reprisal against any party to, or associated with, a complaint.
- Appropriately implementing resolutions.
- Maintaining a confidential complaints register and all relevant information relating to complaints.
- Reporting to the College's insurer and external authorities when relevant.
- Reporting to the College Board immediately upon any claim for legal redress.

Employees

All Employees are responsible for:

- Accepting complaints (where applicable) and undertaking their duties in compliance with this policy.
- Providing complainants with the necessary support or guidance to help them lodge their complaint.
- Ensuring the complainant is provided with or has clear access to a copy of this policy.
- Maintaining strict confidentiality throughout the process in accordance with this policy.
- Keeping accurate and appropriate records as mandated by this policy.
- Escalating complaints to senior management whenever appropriate.

- Ensuring no victimisation, retaliation, or reprisal occurs against the complainant, the respondent, or any associated individual.

All parties to the complaint

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

- Complying with this policy.
- Lodging a complaint as soon as possible after an issue arises.
- Providing complete and factual information in a timely manner and not providing deliberately false or misleading information.
- Not making frivolous or vexatious complaints.
- Acting in good faith and 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.
- Not victimising or acting in reprisal against any party to the complaint or any person associated with them.

ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS/LEGISLATION

Description	***Document Type***
Child Safety Policy	Policy
Anti Bullying Policy	Policy
Complaints Register (Internal)	Register
College Community Code of Conduct	Code of Conduct
Employee Code of Conduct (Internal policy)	Code of Conduct
Code of Behaviour for Students	Code of Conduct
Internal Grievance Policy and Procedures (Internal policy)	Policy
Privacy Policy	Policy
Whistleblower Policy	Policy
Complaints Resolution Procedure (Internal)	Procedure
Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL)	Professional Standards

LEGISLATION

- Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2017 (Qld) – Reg 7

REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Version	*Review Update*	*Author*	*Authorisation*	*Approval Date*	*Next Review*
5.0	Review to incorporate Child Safe Standards	Principal	Board	21 October 2026	2029
4.0	Timetabled Review. Update Continuous Improvement and Board Chair email.	Principal	Board	23 October 2024	2027
3.0	Timetabled review	Principal	Board	20 October 2021	2024
2.0	Review to include information on Whistleblowing	Principal	Board	18 February 2020	2021
1.0	Original	Principal	Board	19 June 2018	2021