

Catholic Ladies' College



Complaints Handling Policy

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Initiated	2016	2016
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Under the Stewardship of
Mary Aikenhead Ministries



LOVE HOPE COMPASSION JUSTICE



Catholic Ladies' College Ltd

Complaints Handling Policy

Catholic Ladies' College is a Mary Aikenhead Ministry in the tradition of the Sisters of Charity. We seek to develop in each member of our community a contemporary understanding and application of the charism of Mary Aikenhead, the spirituality of the Sisters of Charity, the mission and vision of Mary Aikenhead Ministries and their values of justice, love, compassion and hope.

In responding to this call, Catholic Ladies' College is a Christ-centred community established to educate, in partnership with parents, women of faith, integrity, individuality and compassion, confident of their own worth as women and wholly involved in the transformation of society.

Catholic Ladies' College is committed to building a College community that features positive and respectful relationships. Within our College, relationships are founded on the gospel values of justice, compassion, reconciliation and kindness. Such relationships support the learning and development of students and value the innate dignity of each person. It is important that each member of the community, including staff, parents and students, are contributors to the building of the College community. A timely and professional response to complaints is an effective means of encouraging communication, building trust and resolving issues for the betterment of all concerned.

Catholic Ladies' College understands that from time to time complaints arise regarding aspects of our school's operation of programs and activities and that it is important that all members of the community have the opportunity to be heard. Catholic Ladies' College commits to ensuring procedural fairness is observed when dealing with complaints and grievances.

Positive, clear and effective procedures and processes for resolving grievances between the College and community members can assist in building strong relationships, dispelling anxiety and ultimately providing students with a settled and happy learning environment.

The College Codes of Conduct for parents and students outline the expectations of behaviour for members of our community. The following procedures relate to any concerns that members of the community may have – whether these are serious grievance issues, or relatively minor concerns.

Scope

This policy does not relate to critical incidents, emergency management, criminal offences, the imposition of School Community Safe Orders, or by the conduct of the clergy or other persons involved in religious ministry. This policy is not for use by staff or volunteers in relation to complaints about their workplace or employment conditions. In relation to School Community Safety Order Scheme, the internal review process regarding the decision to issue such orders will be outlined in the "School Community Safety Order Scheme Review Process" document for schools.

Principles

In receiving and responding to complaints, the following guiding principles will inform and direct Catholic Ladies' College actions:

- Complainants can expect their concern or complaint to be taken seriously and to be responded to in a respectful, thorough and timely manner.
- Staff members and volunteers will be informed of formal complaints that are made about them.
- Complainants and the person/s against whom the complaint is made have the right to be heard and to expect that procedural fairness will be observed.
- Confidentiality, protection of privacy, respect, access, dignity and impartiality will form the basis of the complaints resolution process.
- The complaints resolution process will seek to achieve the restoration of good and respectful relationships.
- The best interests of the school community together with the interests of the individual will be taken into account.
- Recordkeeping, reporting, privacy and employment law obligations will be complied with when receiving and handling complaints.



What is a Complaint?

A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction with an action taken, decision made, service provided or handling of an issue at Catholic Ladies' College.

Providing Feedback to Catholic Ladies' College

Catholic Ladies' College has procedures and processes in place by which parents/guardians/carers and the broader College community can confidently raise concerns in the knowledge that they will be listened to and their concerns will be professionally managed in a timely, confidential and appropriate manner.

Relationships with the College community are important to us. We take complaints raised by parents/guardians/carers and the broader College community seriously. There are many avenues to provide feedback to school staff. These include:

- formal surveys
- formally scheduled parent/guardian/carer feedback forums
- meetings with the Principal or other staff members to express concerns

Who to Contact to Make a Complaint

The nature of the complaint will determine who is the most appropriate person or body to manage the concerns raised. Complaints of a school-based nature are best received and managed with the parties involved expected to act in good faith and work together with respect to achieve an acceptable outcome. For complaints of a serious nature involving school staff, the following additional information is provided.

Informal Complaints

The vast majority of matters causing concern can be handled quickly and efficiently by addressing the issue with the appropriate staff member. Due to teachers' classroom and supervision duties, a complainant's first contact is best made by email, with an appointment request for either a phone conference or face-to-face meeting. The table below indicates the relevant staff member as the first point of contact:

Communication about....	Initial contact	Secondary contact
A specific subject, Assessment Task or class work	Subject teacher concerned	Learning Leader
A specific teacher	The teacher concerned	Deputy Principal Learning and Teaching
Student's work progress over a number of subjects, her lack of focus or motivation, peer relationships	Homeroom Teacher	Year Level Team Leader or Head of Students or College Counsellor
VCE rules	VCE Leader adrummond@clc.vic.edu.au	Director Curriculum and Assessment
Fees and charges	Accounts Receivable Parent Liaison fees@clc.vic.edu.au	Business Manager businessmanager@clc.vic.edu.au
Train or bus travel incidents	Head of Admissions registrar@clc.vic.edu.au	Head of Students
First Aid requirements	First Aid Manager attendance@clc.vic.edu.au	Year Level Team Leader or Deputy Principal Student Wellbeing
Staff member other concern	Principal	
Other concern	Please ask Reception to direct you to the appropriate staff member	

Misconduct or serious misconduct

All complaints of alleged misconduct or serious misconduct by a teacher or staff member should be reported to the Principal.



Complaints about teachers can also be reported to the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) – the regulator in relation to the registration and investigation of serious misconduct (including conduct which is of a physical or emotional nature) of all teachers in the state of Victoria. If unsure whether the complaint constitutes serious misconduct by a teacher, contact the VIT on 1300 888 067 or vit@vit.vic.edu.au.

In some cases, certain actions which involve physical or emotional misconduct, such as unlawful assault or threats to the person, may constitute a criminal offence. These types of offences should be reported to and investigated by the police. Initial consultation with the Principal may help to determine the appropriate course of action in these circumstances.

Child abuse (including sexual offences)

Child abuse includes any instances of physical or sexual abuse (including grooming), emotional or psychological harm, serious or significant neglect and family violence involving a child. Complaints of alleged child abuse (including sexual offences) of school students should be reported to the Principal. There are legal obligations on all adults to report child abuse to police once a reasonable belief is formed that a sexual offence may have been committed against a child.

Failure to disclose a sexual offence against a child is a criminal offence under section 327 of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.) (Crimes Act) and applies to all adults (18 years of age and over) in Victoria.

Communication with children under 16 years of age by teachers, staff or any other person to prepare or groom a child for future sexual activity is a criminal offence under section 49M(1) of the Crimes Act and must be reported to the police. The offence of grooming applies to any person aged 18 years or over and does not apply to communication between people who are both under 18 years of age.

Complaints against the Principal of Catholic Ladies' College

In the case of a complaint involving the Principal, contact the office of Mary Aikenhead Education Ltd on 03 9389 3116.

Complaints against the clergy or other persons involved in religious ministry

If the complaint relates to the clergy or other persons involved in religious ministry with Catholic Ladies' College, the complainant should contact and seek advice from the Professional Standards unit of the Vicar General's Office in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, 383 Albert Street, East Melbourne. Visit www.melbournecatholic.org or contact 03 9926 5677. If the person is a member of a religious order, the complainant should also contact the provincial head or professional standards office of that congregation or religious order.

Anonymous complaints

Catholic Ladies' College endeavours to address and respond to all complaints. In some situations, we may not be able to fully address complaints that are made anonymously or without sufficient detail being provided to enable an inquiry or resolution of the matter. To ensure procedural fairness, respondents have a right to know the particulars of the allegations being made against them and be given an opportunity to respond to them. Where possible, complainants are encouraged to give their names and to be reassured that we will deal with complaints professionally and in accordance with procedural fairness and confidentiality. If the complainant wishes to remain anonymous, it is at the Principal's discretion what, if any, action will be taken. Anonymous complaints will be recorded in the same manner that all other complaints are recorded.

Complaints in relation to Information Sharing Schemes

Catholic Ladies' College is a prescribed Information Sharing Entity (ISE) that may share information under the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) and the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS). The College, as an ISE, may receive complaints from individuals in relation to its conduct as an ISE under the CISS or FVISS. It may also receive a complaint from another ISE. The following information is recorded where a complaint is received under the CISS or FVISS:

- the date the complaint was made and received
- the nature of the complaint
- the action taken to resolve the complaint
- the action taken to lessen or prevent the issue from recurring
- the time taken to resolve the complaint
- further action taken if the complaint was not resolved.



Complaints relating to reportable conduct

Legal obligations are imposed on the Principal of Catholic Ladies' College to report to the Commission for Child and Young People (CCYP), and investigate allegations of reportable conduct, where those allegations are based on a person's reasonable belief that reportable conduct or misconduct involving reportable conduct has occurred. Reportable conduct includes the following:

- sexual offences against, with or in the presence of a child
- sexual misconduct against, with or in the presence of a child
- physical violence against, with or in the presence of a child
- behaviour that causes significant psychological or emotional harm
- significant neglect.

Complaints relating to a reportable conduct allegation which meets the requisite threshold and which involves an employee (which amongst others, can include a teacher, principal, volunteer or contractor) must be reported.

Further information can be found in the Reportable Conduct Policy located on the College website.

Procedures for Complaints about Issues at Catholic Ladies' College

Catholic Ladies' College has developed and maintains a fair, effective and efficient complaints-handling procedure so that complaints about events or decisions at Catholic Ladies' College can be addressed. The following steps can guide the procedure in making a complaint about issues arising at Catholic Ladies' College.

Clarify the issue

- Be clear about the topic or issue to be discussed.
- Be mindful of the need to ascertain all the facts relating to the circumstances of the topic or issue.
- Think about what would be an acceptable outcome.
- Check and observe the College's complaints handling policy.

Making the complaint

- Write an appropriate note or email to the relevant person (e.g. classroom teacher) outlining your concerns.
- Make an appointment to speak via phone or in person with the relevant person/s.
- Arrange meeting times or phone calls through reception 9439 4077.
- Ensure the relevant person/s is given a reasonable amount of time to take the steps required to resolve or address the concerns.

Contact the Principal or Deputy Principal

- If the issue remains unresolved after discussion with the relevant person/s at the school, request an appointment, through reception, to discuss the concern with the Principal or Deputy Principal(s).
- The Principal may be represented by another senior staff member. If the relevant staff member is going to be present at the meeting, the meeting time is more likely to occur outside classroom hours.

Expectations of and Information for Parents/Guardians/Carers

In making a complaint, Catholic Ladies' College requests and expects that the complainant will:

- raise the concern or complaint as soon as possible after the issue has arisen
- communicate and respond in ways that are constructive, fair and respectful
- provide complete and factual information about the concern or complaint
- observe confidentiality and a respect for sensitive issues
- act in good faith to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
- have realistic and reasonable expectations about possible outcomes/remedies.

If a parent/guardian's concern/complaint relates to the treatment or their daughter's treatment by another student, students or family member while at Catholic Ladies' College, we expect that they should refer the complaint directly to the Homeroom Teacher, Year Level Team Leader, Deputy Principal or Principal. Under no circumstances should a parent/guardian approach another student in the care of the College to discuss the issue or chastise them. Direct contact with parents to resolve the matter is also discouraged if the complaint pertains to issues or incidents that have arisen at the school.

Parents/guardians/carers making complaints are to be respectful, confidential and courteous. Parents/guardians/carers who are unreasonable, threatening or discourteous can expect their discussions with the Principal to be terminated until such time as an alternative discussion time is arranged by the school.



Process for Dealing with Complaints

The College will record the details of all complaints including the name and contact details of the persons making the complaint. The College will then refer the complaint to the most appropriate person to undertake an inquiry. There will be many occasions that this will be someone other than the Principal. The staff member conducting the inquiry may conduct a preliminary inquiry or communicate with the parent to discuss the matter further.

If the scope of the inquiry is beyond the capacity or jurisdiction of the College, the matter will be referred to the Mary Aikenhead Education Ltd and the parent/guardian/carer will be informed of the referral.

Parents/guardians/carers discussing complaints with the Principal may be accompanied by a support person. The support person can be a family member, a friend or a professional with knowledge of the student. Any person acting in a professional capacity on behalf of the parents/guardians/carers must provide their occupational details and full name prior to the meeting being held. It is at the Principal's discretion if an external professional is a participating member of any College meeting. The support person may encourage and facilitate sharing of parent/guardian/carer knowledge, perception and issues. The support person should support a positive working relationship between all parties. The support person does not speak on behalf of parents/guardians/carers when discussing complaints with the Principal. In exceptional circumstances, and as negotiated with the Principal, the support person may be able to speak for the parent.

Any inquiry conducted by the College will be done so in a timely, efficient and confidential manner, ensuring the fair principles on natural justice are applied for all. Parents/guardians/carers will be provided with an anticipated timeframe for a resolution. The staff member conducting the inquiry will record the details of the inquiry.

Privacy laws may prohibit information being provided to the complainant of any specific action that has been taken in relation to individuals about whom the complaint has been raised. The College will ensure that all records are maintained in accordance with its obligations under the [Public Record Office Victoria Recordkeeping Standards](#).

Outcomes of Complaints

Outcomes of complaints and grievances can include the following:

- an apology – either verbal or written
- mediation – with an internal or external mediator
- an official warning
- disciplinary action
- a behavioural contract (in the case of a student)
- pastoral or spiritual care
- an understanding that the behaviour will not be repeated
- a change in policy or procedure.

Complaint Escalation

If the matter cannot be resolved at the College, or if the complaint is about the Principal of Catholic Ladies' College, complainants may contact Mary Aikenhead Education for review.

If the complaint is unable to be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, but the matter is however finalised, the complainant has the right to seek alternative independent or other advice, or contact other entities such as the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, or the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. Complaints related to the minimum standards for school registration can be referred to the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA).

Withdrawal of a Complaint

A complaint can be withdrawn at any stage during the complaint management procedures. A complaint should be retracted in writing by the complainant and addressed to the Principal of Catholic Ladies' College.

Mary Aikenhead Education Ltd Contact Details

Marist Centre
1 Dawson Street
BRUNSWICK VIC 3056
Ph: 03 9389 3116



Intended Audience College community

Related Documents CLC Staff (Bullying) Policy
CLC Staff Grievances and Dispute Resolution Policy
CLC Privacy Policy
CLC Student Positive Relationships Policy: Bullying Prevention and Intervention
Community Safe Orders