



Adopted by College Council

Date: March 2017

Last Review: June 2022

COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES POLICY

Explanation for this Update

This policy and its procedures were updated in June 2022 to comply with the latest Ministerial Order relating to Child Safety; Min 1359.

Rationale

Because Melton Christian College seeks to follow the teachings of Christ, everyone is to be treated with respect, including staff, students, parents and others who connect with the school-community. Therefore, where there are complaints, formal complaints or more serious expressions of grievance, members of the school-community are expected to respond in ways that uphold respect for all. Additionally, because Melton Christian College even by its title represents Christ and the Christian faith, members of the school-community are expected to respond to complaints and grievances in ways that follow the teachings of Jesus in the Christian Bible.

Intention

This policy is intended to be accessible, child-focused, culturally safe and easily understood by the school community and clearly to outline:

- the process for making a complaint about MCC or the behaviour of any person within MCC (for example staff, volunteers, contractors, families, or students)
- the roles and responsibilities of leadership, school staff, and volunteers in relation to handling complaints
- the process for dealing with different types of complaints, breaches of relevant policies or the Child Safe code of conduct and obligations to act and report.

Purpose

The procedures within this policy provide guidelines for:

- receiving and responding to complaints and grievances at Melton Christian College
- steps to be followed in investigating the validity of complaints and grievances
- providing a fair, equitable and productive work environment for all employees
- resolving grievances without ascribing blame, victimisation or discrimination, because complainants should not suffer any disadvantage as a result of raising a grievance: notwithstanding that, seeking redress of a trivial or vexatious issue through a grievance procedure will not be tolerated
- all persons to have the right to make a complaint to their teacher, coordinator, manager or another member of the College at an appropriate level, and to expect to be treated with respect, impartiality, and to be supported

Scope

This policy applies to College staff, trainee-staff on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians, students, trustees and others involved the programs and activities of Melton Christian College. Every trustee, manager, employee, student and family member has a responsibility to comply with this policy and to treat everyone who is part of this school community with dignity and respect.

Melton Christian College Workplace Standards

Staff at Melton Christian College are expected to exemplify professionalism in their roles. This will include elements of everyday professionalism that are expected at schools, such as collegiality, but will also extend to the standard set by Biblical instructions for those who live and work in Christian community. The fruit of

the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, are the standards that staff are to demonstrate in daily work together.

Definitions

Complaint or General Complaint: For this policy a general complaint is defined as an issue of a minor nature that can be resolved relatively promptly usually within a week of school-days. These do not require detailed investigation. General complaints are expressions of dissatisfaction, for example; relating to service(s), communications, calendar omissions, fees, lost items, misunderstandings, etc.

Grievance: For this policy, a grievance is a formal statement of complaint that cannot be addressed immediately and involves matters of a more serious nature, for example; the complaint that the College has breached its own policies.

Grievances Register: For this policy this register records grievances received at the College, together with a record of the correspondences and outcomes. This register is kept by the Principal's secretary in a secure file, accessed only by Management staff and Trustees.

Mediation: For this policy, it is an attempt to bring about a peaceful settlement or compromise between disputants through the objective intervention of a neutral party.

Victimise: For this policy, it is to act or omit to act towards a person in a way which is intended to cause disadvantage to that person because they have made a complaint, or may make a complaint, or may be or are the subject of a complaint.

Four Intentions of these Procedures

These procedures are to (1) ensure complaints are taken seriously and responded to promptly and thoroughly. The procedures are intended to (2) cover ways of reporting complaints and concerns to relevant authorities, whether or not the law requires reporting, and cooperating with law enforcement. These procedures are intended to (3) guide recordkeeping, reporting, privacy and employment law obligations when responding to complaints and concerns. And the procedures are intended to (4) clarify the ways of responding to complaints or concerns relating to child abuse.

How these Procedures relate to Child Safety

Overview

These procedures cover and include all forms of child abuse.

These procedures are to be implemented with sensitive to the diversity and characteristics of the school community.

To protect all children, this policy and its procedures are always publicly available and accessible to children, students, staff, volunteers and the school community.

This policy and its procedures apply to complaints and concerns relating to child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, school staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors, or other persons while connected to a school environment.

Roles and Responsibilities

These procedures identify the roles and responsibilities of school staff and leadership to act and report on complaints and concerns relating to child abuse.

It is the responsibility of the principal and all staff, as well as the Governing Body to ensure that complaints or concerns are taken seriously, and that the response of the school is prompt and thorough.

The principal and all staff are responsible to respond appropriately to a child or student who raises or is affected by the complaint or concern.

The principal and Governing Body are responsible for regularly monitoring overall compliance of the school with the procedure; and managing an alternative procedure for responding to the complaint or concern if any person allocated responsibility cannot perform their role.

These Procedures do not Override other Reporting or Responsive Obligations

It is noteworthy that fulfilling the roles and responsibilities in the procedure does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of child abuse.

Procedures for staff

The principal and his/her staff will:

- comply with legislative and statutory requirements, and implement transparent and consistent practices that produce satisfactory resolution of complaints and grievances
- nurture a culture of mutual respect and constructive communication
- respond to complaints and grievances appropriately and at the earliest opportunity
- treat all complainants respectfully, fairly and equitably
- provide a Grievances Register to record grievances along with outcomes
- where appropriate, records of grievances and outcomes will also be kept in Child Safety Record Register, OHS Register, student files, staff files, within the intention of this and other MCC policies
- respond in writing or by email to complaints and grievances that are raised in writing or by email, and; in writing or by email communicate the outcomes to the complainants: these correspondences as documents are to become part of the record in the Grievances Register
- comply with the College's other policies and maintain professionalism and integrity
- for unresolved grievances implement mediation if appropriate, and investigation
- provide information as requested by the Principal, and co-operate with the Principal in any investigations related to grievances about MCC, its programs or staff
- revise this policy and its procedures within the policy review cycle

Procedures for staff, students, parents or others who come under this policy

- resolve problems as they arise if possible; informally, verbally, in person, respectfully
- using prudence and sensitivity, discuss minor complaints directly with the party involved as a first step towards resolution. The intention is that parties are encouraged to discuss the matter professionally and openly work together to achieve an appropriate and mutually supportive outcome that aligns with other College policies
- communicate serious concerns relating to the operation of the College
- raise unresolved issues or serious concerns directly with the College, via the leading staff and Principal as appropriate
- assist in escalation of unresolved concerns to the next level as appropriate, within the intention of this policy, and other policies governing communications and relationships throughout MCC (see below for steps)
- maintain confidentiality as appropriate, and in such a way that other policies such as "Child Safe Policy" are not breached

Procedures if the matter is not resolved

If the complainant wishes to pursue a matter further, there are a number of means:

- If the complainant wishes to pursue a matter that they see as unresolved, the issue will be referred to the Principal. The Principal reserves discretion as to making a final decision as to how the complaint or grievance will be resolved, and this must be done so as to uphold all other College policies.
- In the event that the complaint or grievance involves the Principal, the Board Chair will be given discretion as to how the matter will be resolved, again, in a way that upholds all other College policies.
- Similarly, if the matter has been raised with the Principal and the complainant still sees it as unresolved then the Board Chairperson will be given discretion as to how the matter will be resolved.
- If the matter has been raised with the Board of Directors through the Chairperson and the complainant still sees it as unresolved, the complainant may choose to seek further resolution through relevant independent authorities, such as Christian Education National (CEN), Independent Schools Victoria (ISV), Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA).

Procedures Specifically Relating to Complaints regarding Child Safety

The actions the school will take to respond to a complaint or concern relating to child abuse, include:

Reporting

Staff, Governance Body, and volunteers are responsible to report allegations, suspicions or disclosures to relevant authorities. And in accordance with Min 1359, this is regardless of whether there is a legal obligation to report. The reporting methods are listed in POL 15 CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING POLICY which is also a public policy on the MCC website. This policy (POL 08) and its procedures never prohibit or discourage school staff or volunteers from reporting a complaint or concern relating to child abuse to a person external to the school.

Protecting Children

Staff, Governance Body, and volunteers are responsible to protect any child or student connected to a complaint or concern relating to child abuse until the complaint or concern is resolved. This policy (POL 08) and its procedures will never state or imply that it is the victim's responsibility to inform the police or other authorities of an allegation relating to child abuse. Nor will they require school staff or volunteers to make a judgment about the truth of a complaint or concern relating to child abuse.

Keeping Records

Staff, Governance Body, and volunteers are responsible to make, secure, and retain records of the complaint or concern and the response of the school or provider of school boarding services. This policy (POL 08) and its procedures will never prohibit school staff, school boarding premises staff or volunteers from making records in relation to a complaint or concern relating to child abuse.