



COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

Introduction

Sydney Church of England Grammar School (Shore) grounds its culture and operations in Christian belief and ethics. The principles of justice and fair treatment of all within the Shore community is central to the process by which Shore operates. To ensure that Shore provides the best opportunity for fair outcomes for all members of the Shore community in relation to the School's operations, Shore has the following policy for dealing with complaints.

Policy Scope

This policy applies across all Shore sites from our Early Learning Centre (ELC), Preparatory and Senior School. It applies to the school itself as well as the Shore Parents Association.

This policy does not extend to employment disputes. Any issues around employment complaints are subject to our Grievance Handling Policy and Procedure.

Definitions

A complaint is generally defined as a statement of dissatisfaction. Within a childcare and educational setting, complaints may relate to an act, behaviour, course of conduct, omission, situation or decision. Complaints can range in degrees of concern and can include very complex areas such as Child Safeguarding concerns, school operations and financial matters. Complaints can relate to issues involving:

- students;
- staff;
- volunteers and contractors;
- a single or series of events;
- issues in all categories of severity;
- failure to comply with a published Code of Conduct for staff, students or parents and carers; and
- failure of legal obligation in any category which can apply to an educational or childcare setting.

Types of Complaints

Complaints may be made to Shore informally and formally, depending on the nature of the complaint. Complaints related to child protection and potential litigious situations are best raised under formal guidelines. (Please see our guide to reporting Staff Misconduct and Reportable Conduct on our [website](#).)

Informal complaints may be addressed to relevant staff. These approaches can be made either in person or in writing. If a constructive resolution can be achieved through this channel, with students, parents/ carers and staff satisfied that resolution has been reached, then the matter can be closed.



It is worth noting that informal complaints should not be made via the following means:

1. a parent or carer should not approach a student outside their custodial care to raise a matter:
2. complaints should never be raised via social media platforms whether they be branded as Shore content, staff personal pages, other affiliated pages or otherwise:
3. complaints should not be raised with a member of staff in a social setting unrelated to a school events; and
4. it is preferable that complaints be raised by the party involved or in the case of a student, his or her parents, rather than involving any third party.

If a resolution cannot be achieved via an informal approach, or a formal approach is preferred, then a formal complaint can be made. A formal complaint can be raised at any stage and by the following means:

1. organising a face to face meeting onsite with the relevant staff or leadership member based on the nature and complexity of the incident or situation to be discussed.
2. organising an online (Zoom or Teams) meeting or telephone conference with relevant staff or leadership members based on the nature and complexity of the incident or situation to be discussed.
3. sending a complaint, in writing via email or letter addressed to the appropriate staff, school leadership or Complaints Handling Officer.

If the nature of the complaint is about a Leadership member in a campus or entity and it is felt the matter will not be dealt with in a satisfactory manner, then the formal complaint process should be directed to the Honorary Secretary for the review by the Shore Council.

Complaints around Staff Misconduct & Reportable Conduct

Allegations of staff misconduct and reportable conduct are the most critical in the Complaints Handling prioritization process. These matters are treated as an absolute priority and with the appropriate care and confidentiality attached in the investigation process. Shore defines:

STAFF MISCONDUCT as:

- conduct that displays purposeful neglect of duties/responsibilities, or
- conduct impaired by alcohol and/or other substance abuse, or
- conduct which is physically, verbally or emotionally abusive, or
- conduct which endangers the safety or wellbeing of students, staff or other community members of Shore.

The Child Guardian Act 2019 (NSW) define *REPORTABLE MISCONDUCT* as:

- any sexual offence or sexual misconduct, committed against, with or in the presence of a child (including child pornography offences or an offence involving child abuse material) including grooming behaviour.
- any assault, ill-treatment or neglect of a child.
- any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child.

Some examples of conduct that would not constitute reportable conduct include touching a child to get their attention, guide them or comfort them, a teacher raising their voice to attract attention or restore order in a classroom, or conduct that is established to be accidental.

Procedures around making reports around staff misconduct and reportable conduct are extremely serious and procedures to make these reports are available on the [Shore website](#).

Questions

Any questions around this policy or Complaints Handling within Shore should be addressed to the Risk and Compliance Manager for the School.