



Complaints Handling Policy and Procedures

St Mark's Coptic Orthodox College

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose and Scope

This procedure applies to St Mark's Coptic Orthodox College in handling complaints made in respect of services provided by the school or against staff members, which includes employees, contractors and volunteers.

This procedure does not extend to personal grievances between parents, guardians or other members of the school community.

1.2 Whistleblowing Complaints

This procedure does not extend to complaints which are whistleblowing disclosures. The procedure for processing whistleblowing complaints are dealt with in the school's whistleblowing policy.

In summary a whistleblowing disclosure is a disclosure which:

- Is made by a board member, staff member, a person who supplies goods or services to the school, including a volunteer, an employer of a supplier or a relative of any of these people;
- involves alleged misconduct, an improper state of affairs or circumstances, or illegal activity, and
- is made to a senior staff member, or officer of the school, the school's auditor or a person who the school has authorised to collect such disclosures.

1.3 Related Policies

Complaints about reportable conduct will be addressed in accordance with the school's Child Protection Policy.

Complaints regarding a grievance between staff members about work matters, including work relationships and decisions made by other staff members which impact on their work, are addressed in accordance with the school's Staff Grievance Policy.

Complaints regarding unlawful discrimination, harassment or bullying between staff are generally addressed in accordance with the school's Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Statement.

1.4 Confidentiality

All parties involved in complaints handling are required to maintain appropriate confidentiality, including in relation to handling and storing records.

2 Complaints

A complaint or grievance is an expression of dissatisfaction made to the school about an educational and/or operational matter relating to services provided by the school or the behaviour or decisions of a staff member, contractor or volunteer, including misconduct.

If a parent/carer or student has a concern about the conduct of a staff member, they should raise their concern with the school in accordance with Section 3. If a complaint that concerns the behaviour of a staff member may constitute reportable conduct, the matter will be addressed in accordance with the school's Child Protection Policy in accordance with section 1.2. Please refer to the school's Child Protection Policy for information about reportable conduct. Complainants are not required to assess whether their concern meets the threshold of reportable conduct before making a complaint. Any concern about a child's wellbeing may be reported under this policy.

Complaints may be made by a student or parent/carer.

The school will seek to resolve complaints informally where possible but acknowledges that in some cases a person may wish to make a formal complaint.

3 Raising a Complaint

3.1 The Complainant

Informal complaints may be raised by a complainant directly with the person involved. However, if the complainant does not feel comfortable doing so or the matter is one where it may not be appropriate to do so a complaint can be made to the Deputy Head of College or Head of College. Any complaint about the conduct of a staff member should be raised directly with the Head of College in the first instance.

Should the matter not be resolved through informal processes, the complainant may raise the matter formally with the school. A formal complaint can be made in writing, or by submitting an SMC Concerns Proforma (available on the College website) to the Deputy Head of College via email: office@stmarks.nsw.edu.au

Where a person wishes to make a formal complaint concerning the Principal the complaint should be made in writing to the General Secretary of the College Board General Secretary via email copticeducationboard@gmail.com. In this situation, the references in this policy relating to the role of the Head of College should be read as references to the General Secretary of the College Board.

3.2 The College

The Head of College will generally acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint in writing as soon as practicable.

4 Complaints Handling

4.1 Assessing a Complaint

The Head of College generally will assess the complaint and determine:

- Whether the complaint is one to be addressed under this policy or is a staff grievance or reportable conduct matter which are dealt with by the relevant policies, see section 1.2 and 1.3,
- the priority of the complaint in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the matter raised; and
- whether the school may be required to report the matter to the Office of the Children's Guardian, Police, Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) or other relevant authorities should the complaint relate to possible unlawful conduct or other reportable matters.

4.2 Managing a Formal Complaint

The Head of College generally will manage a formal complaint by:

- A. advising the complainant of the likely steps that will be undertaken by the School in relation to the complaint;
- B. if appropriate, advising the relevant parties of the complaint at the relevant time and providing them with an opportunity to respond;
- C. collecting any additional information that the School considers necessary to assess the complaint;
- D. making a decision about how the complaint will be resolved ("resolution decision"); and
- E. advising the complainant and respondent in writing, and any other relevant parties as appropriate, of the resolution decision of the Head of College and if appropriate, any proposed action to be taken.

There may be circumstances where some of the steps outlined above are not appropriate and the school will determine, on a case by case basis, the most appropriate method of handling the complaint.

A complainant and the relevant parties that the complaint is about may choose to have an appropriate support person present at any meeting with representatives of the School

about the complaint. However, the School maintains the right to determine whether the person's preferred support person is appropriate and may not approve the attendance of a support person where they are determined by the School to be inappropriate.

The College will maintain a confidential record of all formal complaints, including the assessment, evidence gathered, outcome, and rationale, in the College Complaints Register.

4.3 Internal Appeals Process

If a complainant or respondent is dissatisfied with the resolution decision made by the Head of College under Section 4.2, they may request an internal review/appeal.

1. **Lodging an Appeal:** The request for appeal must be submitted in writing to the General Secretary of the College Board via email (copticeducationboard@gmail.com) within 14 calendar days of receiving the written resolution decision.
2. **Grounds for Appeal:** The appeal request must state the specific grounds for appeal, such as procedural unfairness, new evidence not previously available, or an unreasonable outcome.
3. **Appeals Assessment & Decision:** The College Board (or an appointed independent Appeals Panel) will review the matter to ensure procedural fairness and natural justice. The Board will issue a written notice of outcome ("final internal decision") to the appellant as soon as practicable.

For overseas student visa holders, the assessment of any internal formal complaint or appeal will commence within **10 working days** of being received by the College, and the written outcome will be provided as soon as practicable.

5 External Complaints and Appeals

While the College encourages all parties to engage with the internal resolution and appeals processes, complainants have the right to access external mechanisms if they believe the College has failed to follow due process, breached statutory requirements, or committed unlawful action.

5.1 Mandatory Referral to External Authorities

Where a complaint involves allegations of criminal conduct, child abuse, or reportable conduct, the Head of College or College Board will refer the matter directly to the

appropriate external authority in accordance with statutory reporting obligations:

- NSW Police Force: For matters involving alleged criminal offences.
- Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ): For matters involving children at risk of significant harm.
- Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG): For matters involving reportable conduct under child protection legislation.

5.2 External Regulatory and External Dispute Bodies

If a complainant considers that the College has not properly handled a complaint in accordance with its policies or relevant regulatory standards, they may lodge an enquiry or complaint with an external agency:

- NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA): Handles complaints regarding non-government school compliance with registration requirements and NESA standards (schoolrego@nesa.nsw.edu.au).
- Anti-Discrimination NSW / Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC): For complaints involving allegations of unlawful discrimination, sexual harassment, or human rights violations.

5.3 International Student External Appeals (CRICOS / Student Visa Holders)

For international students studying on a student visa (CRICOS):

1. **Right to External Review:** If an overseas student is unsuccessful in the College's internal complaints or appeals process, the College will notify them in writing within **10 working days** of concluding the internal review, advising them of their right to access an independent external appeals process at minimal or no cost.
2. **External Appeals Body:** Overseas students may lodge an external complaint or appeal with the **Commonwealth Ombudsman (Overseas Students Ombudsman)**:
 - a. **Website:** ombudsman.gov.au
 - b. **Phone:** 1300 362 072 (within Australia) or +61 2 6276 0111
3. **Maintenance of Enrolment:** The College will maintain the student's enrolment and status during the internal resolution and external appeals processes until all pathways are complete. If the external appeal process results in a decision or recommendation in favour of the student, the College will immediately implement the outcome or required corrective action.

6 Contact

If you have any queries about this procedure, you should contact the Head of College or Deputy Head of College for advice.

Policy Review

This plan will be reviewed annually or upon changes to legislation, best practice guidelines, or significant school structural changes.

Authorised By	
Head of College: Anthony Deans	Date: 11/08/2026
Next Review Date:	Date: 08/2027
Last Update:	Date: March 2021
Version Control:	Number: v3_
Location:	Policies and Procedures Drive -> Policies ->