



COMPLAINTS POLICY and PROCEDURES

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COMPLAINTS POLICY and PROCEDURES

Policy Objective

This policy is intended to ensure that Esslemont College handles complaints fairly, efficiently, and effectively.

This policy provides guidance to staff receiving or managing complaints from our students, parents and carers made to or about us, regarding our programs, services, staff, and complaint handling. It also outlines the policy and procedure for students and parents/carers when filing a grievance or complaint.

Our complaint management system is intended to:

- enable us to respond to issues raised by students, parents and carers making complaints in a fair, effective and efficient way.
- enhance confidence in our administrative process; and
- provide information that can be used by us to deliver quality improvements in our programs, services, systems and complaint handling.

Policy Scope

Esslemont College is committed to seeking and receiving feedback about our services, systems, practices, procedures, products, and complaint handling. Any concerns raised in feedback or complaints will be dealt with within a reasonable time frame.

This policy does not extend to personal grievances between parents, carers, or other members of the School community.

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 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 and Procedures.

Please refer to the School's Child Protection Policy and Procedures 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 or carer.

Raising a complaint

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 Principal. Any complaint about the conduct of a staff member should be raised directly with the Principal in the first instance. If the complaint pertains to the safety and well-being of a child the Principal should be contacted as soon as possible, including in person or by phoning the School (02 9030 0433).

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 to the Principal, via email admin@esslemont.nsw.edu.au.

Where a person wishes to make a formal complaint concerning the Principal, the complaint should be made in writing to the Chair of the Board via email to EsslemontBoard@esslemont.nsw.edu.au In this situation, the references in this policy relating to the role of the Principal should be read as references to the Chair of Board.

The School

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

Handling complaints

Assessing a complaint

The Principal 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; and
- 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 Ombudsman, Police, Family and Community Services or other relevant authorities should the complaint relate to possible unlawful conduct or other reportable matters.

Managing a formal complaint

The Principal 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 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 in writing, and any other relevant parties as appropriate, of the resolution decision of the Principal 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.

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 Grievance Procedures (Staff).

Complaints, concerns or reporting of matters by parents, carers and community members that relate to Child Protection are outlined in the Child Protection Awareness for Parents, Carers and Community Members document which will be available on the School’s website.

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

Complaints regarding data breaches are generally addressed in accordance with the School’s Privacy policy.

Confidentiality

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

If you have any queries about this procedure, you should contact the Principal for advice.

Other complaints

The ‘steps’ outlined below will involve only as many people as is thought necessary to deal thoroughly with any matter.

Parent/Carer Initiated communication with Teachers

Parents/carers should have regard to the fact that our teachers are professionals and have multiple responsibilities outside of their direct teaching commitments, including their family. Therefore, meetings at short notice during a school day cannot be scheduled. Teachers cannot engage in “Doorway” conversations at any time including while the teacher is teaching or just before school - as it is a disruption to children and teaching/preparation.

Ways to communicate with teachers:

Step 1

When seeking to arrange a meeting with a classroom or specialist teacher, parents/carers should make a formal appointment for a face-to-face meeting.

The class teacher is the first "port-of-call" for all concerns regarding student educational, social and behavioural matters.

Parents should arrange a meeting sooner rather than later, to facilitate early resolution to the satisfaction of all.

Appointments with teachers can be made at a mutually convenient time with the class teacher via email or by telephoning the School office on 02 9030 0433, or by email admin@esslemont.com.au

Where possible the school will endeavour to arrange relevant meetings at a mutually convenient time after receiving a request.

Please note:

- Enquiries relating to specific performance or educational issues should be addressed to a student's teacher.
- General curriculum enquiries should also be addressed to the class teacher.
- Welfare matters should be addressed to a student's class teacher who may then contact the School's Principal.

If a parent/carer is dissatisfied with the response of a teacher they should request an appointment with the Principal who will suggest ways that the matter can be handled or determine what process is most appropriate to the circumstances.

For a formal and serious complaint an action timeline will be communicated to you in writing.

It is to be noted that when a complaint is made in writing about the performance of an individual staff member, that staff member shall receive documentation of the complaint.

The Principal will notify the Board Chair who will assist in resolution if the matter remains unresolved after a period of time which, in the opinion of the Principal, warrants such intervention.

If the Principal is the subject of complaint the Chair of the Board of Directors should be contacted for assistance in resolving the issue.

Written records and documentation of all complaints are filed ESL Admin - Complaints

Board of Directors Responsibility

The role of the Directors is one of providing information and advice when requested by the Principal and, if necessary, undertaking a role in the resolution of complaints at the school level.

In the first instance, the Board Chair will be notified if there is a dispute escalation.

Esslemont College will make this policy publicly available on the school's website.

Related Documents

- Grievance Procedures (Staff)
- Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Statement
- Privacy Policy
- Child Protection Policy and Procedures