



Complaints

Management Procedure

Endeavour Christian College

Context

This document is underpinned by Section 46 of the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 and needs to be read with the Complaints Management Policy.

Procedures

Matthew 18 teaches us that in the first instance we must personally seek to have conversations with the person causing us concern. Following no resolution, the following applies:

Any staff member can receive a complaint.

All complaints must be received in the following manner:

- Being respectful and helpful
- Giving the person your undivided attention
- Not being defensive, apportioning blame
- Not perceiving anger as a personal attack

Documentation

The College documents complaints. When receiving a complaint, Part 1 of the **Record of Complaint Form** should be provided to the complainant.

- Complaints can be made **after** first attempting to resolve complaints at the point where the problem or issue arose.
- Complaints are recorded and reported to the supervisor of an area from which the complaint arose as soon as practicable after receiving the complaint.

The record of the complaint needs to:

- Use objective language clearly stating the facts
- Contain information in chronological order as practically possible
- Use quotation marks, where appropriate and necessary
- Be neatly and legibly written in pen or print, in clear unambiguous language
- Include, where necessary, initialled and dated corrections
- Include signature, designation of the author, and time and date of the incident/ complaint.

Part 2 of the **Record of Complaint Form** should be completed.

If it is not resolved at the first point of contact, the complaint is acknowledged within five (5) working days by telephone, in person, by email or in writing.

Complaints Management Phases

There are four key phases in handling a complaint, with the option of a fifth phase for review of a complaint outcome:

1. Receiving and clarifying the complaint
2. Deciding how to handle the complaint
3. Finding out about the complaint
4. Making a decision about the complaint and advising complainant
5. Possible review.

Part 1 - Receiving and clarifying the complaint

Any member of staff can receive a complaint. When a staff member receives a verbal complaint they should seek to:

- Listen carefully to the issues being raised and thank them for their time taken
- Summarise the issues to clarify and check that they understand what the complainant is saying

- Empathise and acknowledge the complainant's feelings
- Find out what the complainant wants to happen as a result of the complaint
- Tell the complainant that they may use the support of a third party in progressing the complaint, if they feel this is needed
- Resolve the complaint if possible, or assure the complainant that an appropriate staff member will address their complaint
- Tell the complainant of what will happen with their complaint.

Complaints are sometimes made with the assistance of an advocate, interpreter or by a third party (as agreed between the complainant and the Principal). In this case, the Principal will seek to clarify to all people who are involved, where and when.

Many complaints are resolved at the first point of contact with information and/or an explanation, together with an apology and recognition of the effect the situation has had on a person. Some complainants may also want to know that action will be taken to prevent the problem recurring. Only provide assurances that are realistic.

When the complaint is not resolved immediately, the complaint is referred to the supervisor/ Principal as soon as is practicable (Part 2 of the Record of Complaint Form is to be used).

A member of staff who receives a verbal complaint that is not resolved informs the complainant of the further options of:

- Putting their complaint in writing, or
- Assisting the member of staff to record, in writing, the particulars of their complaint.

In general, if the complainant agrees to put the complaint in writing, the member of staff takes no further action until a written complaint is received. If the complaint relates to a report about harm of a student under 18 years attending the College, or the matter relates to possible criminal activity, the matter must be **immediately** reported to the Principal, advising them of all the particulars known (in relation to sexual abuse, as prescribed in Chapter 12, Part 11 of the Education (General Provisions) Act, 2006).

Once the complainant indicates that they would like to register a formal complaint verbally, the member of staff makes a written outline of the issues concerned (Page 3 of the Record of Complaint Form). The record is read to the complainant, with the opportunity for appropriate amendments and the complainant is asked to sign, where possible, the written version of the complaint. The staff member also signs and dates the complaint.

As much as possible, complaints are to be received in writing. No signature is required for complaints taken over the phone, but the complainant is asked to provide verbal confirmation of the issues that have been recorded.

If a complainant refuses to sign or confirm a written recording of a verbal complain, the staff member notes the refusal on the written complaint. The complainant is told that this refusal will be noted and that the process will be reliant on the staff member's interpretation and notes only. The complainant may not, at a later date, make another complaint based on a lack of satisfaction with this record of complain.

Receiving a written complaint

When a written complaint is received it is date-stamped and forwarded to the Principal

Receiving an Anonymous Complaint

When an anonymous complaint is received the complainant is told of the possible limitations associated with the making of an anonymous complain. Anonymous complains are usually not acted on in the same way as written 'owned' complaints.

Part 2 - Deciding how to handle the complaint

When a staff member receives a complaint, they:

- Begin the process of making an assessment about the complaint from the moment the complaint is received
- Make an assessment in the first instance about whether the issue can be dealt with as a concern or a complain
- If they are not the Principal, refer the complainant or the complaint to the supervisor for addressing
- Refer to the Principal for issues with a potentially controversial outcome.

The Supervisor/ Principal decides whether to:

- Take no further action
- Attempt to resolve the complaint through resolution strategies such as mediation
- Refer the complaint to the relevant internal or external agencies if required
- Initiate the investigation of the complaint if further information is required.

Coordination of complaints

- The Principal has final responsibility for the management of all complaints that relate to College management issues under their jurisdiction.
- The complaint can be delegated to another staff member in the College for action
- If the complaint is in relation to official misconduct, staff grievances or a perceived breach of privacy, the complaint is directed to Executive Principal

Record of Complaint

- The Principal ensures that records are kept of a complaint and any referral of a complaint for either internal or external review. A register of complaints is to be kept.

Part 3 – Finding out about the complaint

The Principal or delegate gathers all the necessary facts about the complaint while keeping in mind the principles of natural justice of all parties (use Part 3 of the Record of Complaint Form).

The Principal or delegate investigates complaints by:

- Collecting and analysing information relevant to the matter
- Working collaboratively with all people involved
- Finding the facts related to the matter
- Identifying any contributing factors to the matter
- Documenting the investigation report and outcome

Part 4 – Making a decision about the complaint and advising complainant

Based on the facts about the complaint gathered in Phase 3, the Principal or delegate makes a decision on the complaint and advises the complainant.

Notifying the complainant of the decision:

- Within 28 days of receipt of the complaint, the Principal provides the complainant with either:
 - A written response, including reasons for the decision, or
 - A written notification that their complaint has been referred to an internal or external agency.

Part 5 – Possible review

If the complainant is not satisfied with this response, they are encouraged to discuss it further with the Principal and/or advised to contact the Executive Principal.

The Executive Principal may call for a full report from the Principal, and will examine matters thoroughly before responding. This may result in a positive solution. The Executive Principal may invite you to discuss the matter. You may wish to have a support person with you for the discussion.

Supporting Documentation and Key Resources

ECC Complaints Management Policy

ECC Record of Complaint Form