

Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure

Purpose:	The purpose of this policy and procedure is to ensure that student, parent and employee complaints and disputes are dealt with in a responsive, efficient, effective and fair way.	
Scope:	Students, parents and employees, including full-time, part-time, permanent, fixed-term and casual employees, as well as contractors, volunteers and people undertaking work experience or vocational placements.	
Status:	Approved	Supersedes: Nil
Authorised by:	Board Chair	Date of Authorisation: 03/06/2021
References:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulations 2017</u> • <u>Australian Education Regulations 2013</u> • <u>Fair Work Act 2009</u> • <u>Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld)</u> • <u>Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)</u> • <u>Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld)</u> • <u>Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)</u> • <u>Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)</u> • <u>Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth)</u> • <u>Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)</u> • <u>Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)</u> • Compass Independent School Enterprise Bargaining Agreement Policy • Compass Independent School Complaints Handling Procedure • Compass Independent School Work Health and Safety Policy • Compass Independent School Anti-Discrimination Policy • Compass Independent School Sexual Harassment Policy • Compass Independent School Disability Policy • Compass Independent School Workplace Bullying Policy • Compass Independent School Privacy Policy 	
Review Date:	Annually	Reviewed: 07/09/2022 Next Review: 07/09/2023
Policy Owner:	School Governing Body	

Part A: Complaints Handling Policy

Policy Statement

Compass Independent School is committed to ensuring that student, parent and employee complaints are dealt with in a responsive, efficient, and effective and fair way.

Compass Independent School views complaints as part of an important feedback and accountability process.

Compass Independent School acknowledges the right of students, parents and employees to complain when dissatisfied with an action, inaction or decision of the school and the school encourages constructive criticism and complaints.

Compass Independent School recognises that time spent on handling complaints can be an investment in better service to students, parents and employees.

Complaints that may be Resolved under this Policy

Compass Independent School encourage students, parents and employees to lodge promptly any concerns regarding sexual harassment, child protection, discrimination, workplace bullying and privacy breaches as well as more general complaints that include areas such as:

- the school, its employees or students having done something wrong
- the school, its employees or students having failed to do something they should have done
- the school, its employees or students having acted unfairly or impolitely
- issues of student or employee behaviour that are contrary to their relevant code of conduct
- issues related to learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
- issues related to communication with students or parents or between employees
- issues related to school fees and payments
- general administrative issues.

Student complaints may be brought by students or by parents on behalf of their children, as appropriate in the circumstances.

Issues Outside this Policy

The following matters are outside the scope of this policy and should be managed as follows:

- Child protection concerns or risks of harm to children should be dealt with in accordance with the law and the school's Child Protection Policy.
- Employee complaints related to their employment should be directed to their supervisor.
- Student or employee violence or criminal matters should be directed to the Principal who will involve the Police as appropriate.
- Formal legal proceedings.

Complaints Handling Principles

Compass Independent School is committed to managing complaints according to the following principles:

- complaints will be resolved with as little formality and disruption as possible
- complaints will be taken seriously
- anonymous complaints will be treated on their merits complaints will be dealt with fairly and objectively and in a timely manner
- Compass Independent School will determine the appropriate person to deal with the complaint in the first instance. Complaints should be resolved with as little formality and disputation as possible
- mediation, negotiation and informal resolution are optional alternatives
- procedural fairness will be ensured wherever practicable, including the right of interested parties to the complaint to be heard
- confidentiality and privacy will be maintained as much as possible
- all parties to the complaints will be appropriately supported
- Compass Independent School will give reasonable progress updates
- appropriate remedies will be offered and implemented
- provide a review pathway for parties to the complaint if warranted
- complainants, respondents and people associated with them will not be victimised as a result of lodging the complaints and they will not suffer any other reprisals
- the school will keep records of complaints
- the school's insurer will be informed if a complaint could be connected to an insured risk.

School Responsibilities

The school has the following role and responsibilities:

- develop, implement, promote and act in accordance with the school's Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure
- appropriately communicate the school's Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure to students, parents and employees
- ensure that the Complaints Handling Procedures are readily accessible by staff, students and parents
- upon receipt of a complaint, manage the complaint in accordance with the Complaints Handling Procedure
- ensure that appropriate support is provided to all parties to a complaint
- take appropriate action to prevent victimisation or action in reprisal against the complainant, respondent or any person associated with them
- appropriately implement remedies
- appropriately train relevant employees
- keep records
- conduct a review/audit of the Complaints Register from time to time
- monitor and report to the governing body on complaints
- report to the school's insurer when that is relevant
- refer to the school's governing body immediately any claim for legal redress.

All Parties to a Dispute

The complainant and respondent both have the following role and responsibilities:

- apply and comply with the school's Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure
- lodge the complaint as soon as possible after the issue arises
- expect that the complaint will be dealt with fairly and objectively; in a timely manner; with procedural fairness wherever practicable; that confidentiality and privacy will be maintained as much as possible
- provide complete and factual information in a timely manner
- not provide deliberately false or misleading information
- not make frivolous or vexatious complaints
- act in good faith, and in a calm and courteous manner
- act in a non-threatening manner
- to be appropriately supported
- acknowledge that a common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
- recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced
- maintain and respect the privacy and confidentiality of all parties
- not victimise or act in reprisal against any party to the dispute or any person associated with them.

Employees Receiving Complaints

Employees receiving complaints have the following role and responsibilities:

- act in accordance with the school's Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure
- inform the party lodging the complaint of how complaints can be lodged, when they should be lodged and what information is required
- provide the complainant with information about any support or assistance available to assist them in lodging their complaint
- provide the complainant with a copy of the school's Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure
- maintain confidentiality
- keep appropriate records
- to forward complaints to more senior employees, including the Principal, as appropriate
- not victimise or act in reprisal against the complainant, respondent or any person associated with them.

Implementation

Compass Independent School is committed to raising awareness of the process for resolving complaints at the school, including by the development and implementation of this policy, and via the clear support and promotion of this policy.

Compass Independent School is also committed to appropriately training relevant employees (especially senior staff) on how to resolve complaints in line with this policy and procedure.

Compass Independent School will keep appropriate records of complaints, will monitor complaints and their resolution and will report on a high-level basis to the school Board on complaint handling at the school.

Compass Independent School will act to encourage students, parents and employees to contribute to a healthy school culture where complaints are resolved with as little formality and disruption as possible.

Compass Independent School will appoint an appropriate Liaison Officer to provide information to the complainant about the school's relevant policies and processes. This person will be trained in the school's relevant policies and procedures.

The Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure will be communicated and accessed by staff, students and parents through the school website.

Part B: Complaints Handling Procedure

Informal Complaints Resolution

The vast majority of issues causing concern in schools can be handled quickly and in an informal manner. In most cases these issues can be resolved through informal discussions with appropriate staff members. Even if an issue is able to be resolved informally, all staff are required to submit issues through our complaints management system so we are able to identify any systemic issues arising, and take appropriate rectification action.

How Do I Make a Formal Complaint?

If you have been unable to resolve a matter informally, or simply wish to make a formal complaint you can do so by writing a letter to the School addressed to the Principal.

All formal complaints will be submitted into our complaints management system and the below procedure is a guide for how the complaint may be managed:

Step 1 - All formal complaints are to be lodged to the Principal in writing.

Step 2 - Valid complaints will be acknowledged in writing, as soon as practicable and a Liaison Officer will be assigned.

Step 3 - The School will determine an appropriate method for responding to the complaint and investigating the issues raised. This may involve the relevant parties being required to engage in discussions with the School. The principles of procedural fairness will be adhered to.

Step 4 - The School will make a determination in relation to the Complaint and propose a resolution, as appropriate.

Step 5 - The School will communicate the determination and resolution to the involved parties, as appropriate.

This procedure is to act as a general guideline for responding to formal complaints. The school will decide in its absolute discretion whether all steps are necessary or appropriate given the nature of the complaint and Compass Independent School may be required to deviate from this procedure to suit the given circumstances.

If the complainant is unhappy with the resolution to their complaint, the complainant may refer their complaint to the Board of Directors.



Whenever a complaint is received, Compass Independent School will respect confidentiality as much as possible, and adhere to the principles of procedural fairness and natural justice.