

3.19 Policy

Victory College Community Complaints Handling and Feedback Policy



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Victory College Community Complaints Handling and Feedback Policy

Purpose:	<p>The purpose of this policy is twofold:</p> <p>(a) to ensure that student, parent and community complaints are dealt with in a responsive, efficient, effective and fair way.</p> <p>(b) to provide a pathway for constructive feedback.</p>	
Scope:	<p>This policy applies to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. This policy also applies to people in the wider community. • Employees who have complaints against other colleagues or feedback are required to address their concerns through the designated staff policy, 3.20 Complaints Handling and Feedback Policy (Staff). 	
References:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.55 Privacy Policy • 3.02 Anti-Discrimination Policy • 3.13 Student Protection Policy • 3.20 Complaints Handling and Feedback (Staff) Policy • 3.16 Code of Conduct (Staff) Policy • 3.17 Code of Conduct (Student) Policy • 3.57 Responsible Behaviour Policy • 3.59 Sexual Harassment Policy • 3.65 Performance Counselling Policy • 3.74 Disability Discrimination Policy • 3.90 Workplace Health and Safety Policy • 3.95 Workplace Bullying Policy 	
Legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth) • Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth) • Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) • Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth) • Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld) • Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) • Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999 (Cth) • The Corporation Act 2001 (Cth) as amended in Treasury laws Amendments (Enhancing Whistleblower Protections Act 2019 (Cth) • Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth) • Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth) • Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld) • Summary Offences Act 2005 (Qld) • Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (Qld) • Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld) • Industrial Relations Act 2016 (Qld) • Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2017 (Qld) 	
Status:	Approved	Supersedes: Previous
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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Victory College (the College) is dedicated to fostering a fair, safe, productive, and harmonious Christian work environment. We are committed to addressing complaints with sensitivity, promptness, transparency, and in compliance with both Biblical principles and legislation. At the heart of the College's Community Complaints Handling and Feedback Policy are the fundamental principles of justice and fairness, as expressed in Micah 6:8:

"He [God] has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?"

- 1.2 This policy not only aims to address complaints effectively but also encourages and values feedback from our community. We believe that feedback is crucial for continual improvement and ensuring that our practices align with the needs and expectations of our stakeholders.

2. DEFINITIONS

- I. **Complaint** is an expression of dissatisfaction made to or about the College, related to its services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.
- II. **Informal Complaint** is about a matter that is minor, where a discussion of the matter with a relevant staff member is likely to result in a simple resolution.
- III. **Formal Complaint** is about a matter that is serious, complex or may pose a threat to the health and safety of any person. Assessment of the complaint is required by a member of the College Executive, the Principal or the College Board.
- IV. **Complainant** is the person who makes a complaint on their behalf or on behalf of another person.
- V. **Respondent** is a person who is referred to in a complaint by a complainant as the person responsible for their concerns or who can best respond to their concern.
- VI. **Feedback** is information gathered from parents, students, visitors and the wider community that provides the College organisation with information that may be used for growth and improvement.

3. POLICY

- 3.1 The College is committed to ensuring that student, parent and community complaints are dealt with in a responsive, efficient, and effective way, ensuring fairness for all parties.
- 3.2 The College views complaints as part of an important feedback and accountability process.
- 3.3 The College acknowledges the right of student and parent to complain when dissatisfied with an action, inaction or decision of the College and the College encourages constructive criticism, positive feedback and complaints.
- 3.4 The College recognises that time spent on handling complaints can be an investment in better service to student and parent.
- 3.5 The College is committed to raising awareness of the process for resolving complaints at the College, including by the development and implementation of this policy and related procedures, and via the clear support and promotion of the policy and procedures.
- 3.6 **Complaints that may be Resolved under this Policy** – The College encourages students, parents and the wider community to lodge promptly any concerns regarding sexual



harassment, discrimination, workplace bullying and privacy breaches as well as more general complaints that include areas such as:

- I. the College, its employees or students having done something wrong;
- II. the College, its employees or students having failed to do something they should have done;
- III. the College, its employees or students having acted unfairly or impolitely;
- IV. issues of student or employee behaviour that are contrary to their relevant Code of Conduct;
- V. issues related to learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning;
- VI. issues related to communication with students or parents;
- VII. issues related to College fees and payments;
- VIII. issues related denial of admission or enrolment to the College;
- IX. general administrative issues; and
- X. general complaints from the wider community.

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

3.7 **Issues Outside this Policy** - The following matters are outside the scope of this policy and should be managed as follows:

- I. child protection concerns or risks of harm to children should be dealt with in accordance with the law and the College's Student Protection Policy;
- II. student bullying complaints should be dealt with under the College's Student Responsible Behaviour Policy and the Student Code of Conduct;
- III. student discipline matters, including matters involving suspension or expulsion, should be dealt with under the Student Code of Conduct;
- IV. employee complaints;
- V. student or employee criminal matters should be directed to the Principal who will involve the Police as appropriate; and
- VI. formal legal proceedings.

3.8 The College is committed to managing complaints according to the following principles:

- I. all complaints will be taken seriously;
- II. anonymous complaints will be treated based on the evidence available;
- III. complaints will be dealt with fairly and objectively and in a timely manner;
- IV. the College will determine the appropriate person to deal with the complaint in the first instance;
- V. mediation, negotiation and informal resolution are optional alternatives;
- VI. procedural fairness¹ will be ensured wherever practical, including the right of interested parties to the complaint to be heard;
- VII. confidentiality and privacy will be maintained as much as possible (in certain circumstances the College may be legally bound to disclose information);
- VIII. all parties to the complaints will be appropriately supported;
- IX. the College will give reasonable progress updates;
- X. appropriate remedies will be offered and implemented;
- XI. provide a review pathway for parties to the complaint if warranted;
- XII. 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;
- XIII. the College will keep records of complaints; and
- XIV. the College's insurer will be informed if a complaint could be connected to an insured risk.

¹ Procedural fairness focuses on the fairness of decision-making procedures rather than outcomes. It involves transparent, unbiased, and consistent processes that treat all parties fairly, allowing them to be heard and providing clear explanations. (*Good Decisions*, Queensland Ombudsman, 31 March 2023)



3.9 Responsibilities

3.9.1 **The College** has the following role and responsibilities:

- I. develop, implement, promote and act in accordance with the College's Complaints and Feedback Policy;
- II. appropriately communicate the College's Complaints and Feedback Policy to students, parents and employees;
- III. ensure that the College's Complaints and Feedback Policy are readily accessible by staff, students and parents;
- IV. upon receipt of a complaint, manage the complaint in accordance with the College's Complaints and Feedback Policy;
- V. ensure that appropriate support is provided to all parties to a complaint;
- VI. take appropriate action to prevent victimisation or action in reprisal against the complainant, respondent or any person associated with them;
- VII. appropriately implement resolutions;
- VIII. appropriately train relevant employees;
- IX. keep records;
- X. conduct a review/audit of the Complaints Register from time to time;
- XI. monitor and report to the College Board on complaints;
- XII. report to the College's insurer when that is relevant; and
- XIII. refer to the College Board immediately any claim for legal redress.

3.9.2 **All Parties to a Dispute** - The complainant and respondent both have the following role and responsibilities:

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

3.9.3 **Employees Receiving Complaints** have the following role and responsibilities:

- I. act in accordance with the College's Community Complaints Handling and Feedback Policy;
- II. inform the party lodging the complaint of how complaints can be lodged, when they should be lodged and what information is required;
- III. provide the complainant with information about any support or assistance available to assist them in lodging their complaint;
- IV. provide the complainant with a copy of the College's Community Complaints Handling and Feedback Policy;
- V. maintain confidentiality;
- VI. keep appropriate records;
- VII. forward complaints to more senior employees, including the Principal, as appropriate; and



VIII. not victimise or act in reprisal against the complainant, respondent or any person associated with them.

3.10 **Feedback**

- 3.10.1 The College value open and respectful communication as an essential component of the educational process. Feedback will be encouraged and received with respect and a commitment to address concerns in a timely and appropriate manner.
- 3.10.2 Formal written feedback and compliments will be recorded. Feedback will be utilised as a valuable resource to drive continuous improvement in the quality of education and overall school experience. It will be used to identify areas of strength and areas that require improvement.
- 3.10.3 The privacy and confidentiality of individuals providing feedback will be respected to the greatest extent possible, while ensuring the necessary information is shared with relevant parties involved in addressing the feedback.
- 3.10.4 Feedback may be of a negative nature. If this is the case the option to lodge a complaint is not negated by the submission of negative feedback.

4. **PROCESS**

- 4.1 The College will act to encourage students, parents and employees to contribute to a healthy College culture, promoting the resolution of complaints with minimal disruption.

4.2 **Guidelines for lodging complaints**

- 4.2.1 All complaints are confidential and are considered to be a matter between the parties concerned and those directly involved in the complaints handling process.
- 4.2.2 Members of the wider community not affiliated with the College may lodge complaints through the Formal Complaints Handling Procedure (Steps 4-7).
- 4.2.3 Recognizing that complaints can have varying natures, the College acknowledges that the steps involved in resolving them may also vary. Therefore, the steps outlined below serve as a guide and can be tailored to fit specific complaints. Any modifications made to the listed steps must be documented, along with a clear explanation of the reason behind the changes.
- 4.2.4 If the complaint is against a person listed in the steps outlined below or a conflict of interest is evident, an appropriate delegate will be appointed by either the Principal, the College Board or the National Executive of the International Network of Churches (INC). If an appropriate delegate cannot be found the College will have an outside impartial consultant address the complaint.
- 4.2.5 The following steps should be followed:
Steps 1 to 3 contain the process for the addressing of **Informal Complaints**. At any time during Steps 1 to 3 the complainant can escalate the complaint to **Step 4 – Commencement of Formal Complaint Handling Procedure**. The complainant is to be made aware of this during each step (Steps 1, 2 & 3). Throughout the process staff are to keep detailed records of their meetings with parents, students or member of the wider community. Likewise, the complainant can withdraw their complaint at any time during the process. If the complaint has been put in writing the withdrawal must also be in writing.
Step 1: The complainant, if appropriate, should contact the relevant teacher in the first instance to attempt mediation/informal resolution of the complaint.
Step 2: If a satisfactorily resolution cannot be found the parent and/or student can request the matter be referred to the Head of Primary, Head of Middle or the Head of Senior College.
NB: If it is deemed inappropriate by the complainant to contact the relevant teacher and/or Head of Primary/Middle or Senior College or the Head of Primary/Middle or Senior College concerning the complaint, the complainant can bypass Step 1 and Step 2 and commence at Step 3.



Step 3: If the matter cannot be resolved through the completion of Steps 1 and 2, the matter will be referred to the Principal for resolution.

Step 4 (Commencement of Formal Complaints Handling Procedure): If after the completion of Steps 1- 3 the complaint has been unable to be resolved. The complainant must notify the Principal in writing² of the nature and details of the complaint. To facilitate the complaint process, a "Complaint Form" is provided at the end of this policy for the Complainant's convenience. However, please note that complaints may be submitted in any written format. Rest assured that all complaints will be dealt with impartially, regardless of the format in which they are submitted.

Step 5: The Principal is to review the complaint. The Principal may form a Grievance Committee to assist with this review. The Grievance Committee can consist of supervisors relevant to the College area and other key stakeholders. Any conflict of interest, perceived or actual, would disqualify a person serving on a Grievance Committee. The Grievance Committee would limit itself to the complaint it was formed to address and the committee would be dissolved once the complaint was satisfactorily resolved.

Step 6: After the initial review, the complainant will have an opportunity to present the case before the Principal and/or Grievance Committee as part of the official investigation. A support person can be present at the meeting to assist with interpretation and providing support only.

Step 7: It is the aim of the College that the complaint will be investigated and addressed within 10 working days and an official response will be provided to the complainant within 20 working days. However, if the resolution is not acceptable to the complainant, the complainant can bring the matter to the attention of the College Board and in turn the National Executive of the International Network of Churches (INC). If the matter is still not resolved after review by the College Board and in turn the National Executive of the INC, the complainant can submit the matter to the Non- State School Accreditation Board for further review.

If the Principal deems that the student's health or well-being, or the well-being of others is at risk the Principal may decide to suspend or cancel the student's enrolment before the complaints process has been accessed or fully completed. In such cases, the parent and/or student may still lodge a complaint.

4.3 Role of the "Support Person"

- 4.3.1 The complainant will have the rights to request for the presence of a support person. A Support person is a person the complainant can have attend a meeting to assist the complainant, including assisting the complainant during the discussions at the meeting, which may include; assisting the complainant's preparations for the meeting, talking to the employee during the meeting, helping the complainant formulate what to say during the meeting, providing advice to the complainant during the meeting and also other supportive actions (for example, taking notes)³⁴.
- 4.3.2 The "support person" is as the term suggests "a support". This individual is not permitted to act as an advocate and does not speak on behalf of the complainant.

² Complaints can be:-

- Hand delivered to College Reception in a sealed envelope
- Emailed to info@victorycollege.com
- Mailed to Victory College, PO Box 308, Gympie, QLD, 4570

³ Fair Work Commission clarifies differences between a support person and advocate (2014), Parliament of Australia

https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/FlagPost/2014/May/FWC_support_person_and_advocates

⁴ Qantas Airways Limited v Carter [2012] FWA 5776 (17 July 2012)

<http://www6.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdoc/au/cases/cth/FWA/2012/5776.html>



4.4 Guidelines for Feedback

4.4.1 Feedback Channels

- I. **Student Feedback:** Students will have the opportunity to provide feedback through various channels. These may include suggestion boxes, student representative and leaders, surveys, classroom discussions, and individual meetings with teachers.
- II. **Parent Feedback:** Parents are encouraged to provide feedback through scheduled parent teacher meetings, surveys, email communication, or other designated channels of communication established by the College.
- III. **Other Stakeholders:** Feedback from other stakeholders, such as alumni, community members, and external providers, will be considered and collected through appropriate channels, such as surveys or designated contact points⁵.

4.4.2 **Review and Analysis:** Feedback will be reviewed by the appropriate personnel, such as teachers, administrators, College Leadership or relevant departments or committees. Feedback will be analysed to identify patterns, themes, and areas of improvement.

4.4.3 **Action and Response:** Not all feedback will require action or response. Feedback that requires action or response will be addressed promptly by the appropriate personnel within the College, as determined by the subject of the feedback.

4.5 Record Keeping and Staff Training

4.5.1 **Complaints:** The College will keep appropriate records of complaints, will monitor complaints and their resolution and will report on a high-level basis to the College Board on complaint handling at the College using a Complaints Register. The College Board is to approve the completed Complaint Forms annually.

4.5.2 **Feedback:** All actions, decisions, and outcomes resulting from feedback will be appropriately documented for future reference and accountability.

4.5.3 **Staff Training:** The College is also committed to appropriately training relevant employees (especially senior staff) on how to resolve complaints in line with this policy and the related processes.

5. POLICY REVIEW

5.1 This policy will be reviewed every 2 years unless otherwise advised.

⁵ For Example; Parent Surveys, ViCi, Parent Information Evenings



COMPLAINT FORM

The College subscribes to a process of fairness in receiving, assessing, investigating and addressing complaints made by staff, students, parents or the wider College community.

All complaints will be treated seriously and sensitively, having due regard to procedural fairness, confidentiality and privacy. Requirements relating to confidentiality and privacy extend to the use and storage of any information and records related to a grievance. Wherever possible, grievances should be resolved by a process of discussion, cooperation and reconciliation. The aim is to reach an acceptable outcome that minimises any potential detriment to ongoing relationships.

The College endeavours to resolve all complaints with an approach that is aligned with the Christian ethos of the College.

Including your name and contact is preferred for the purpose of validation of the complaint and any follow up correspondence. Your complaint may be escalated to the authorities if it is related to child protection matters.

Process

The formal process is to lodge an official written complaint to the College. The complaint will be reviewed by the Principal and Grievance Committee. After the initial review, the complainant will have an opportunity to present the case before the Principal/Grievance Committee prior to an official investigation. A support person can be present at the meeting to assist with interpretation and providing support only. It is the aim of the College that the complaint will be addressed within 10 working days and an official response will be provided to the complaint within 20 working days.

All complaints are private and confidential. They will be managed in accordance with the Privacy and Confidentiality policy of the College (2.55 Privacy Policy).



Complainant Details:

Name: _____ Relationship to the College: _____

Phone Number (mobile/home) _____

Email: _____

Address: _____

Date of Incident: _____ Date of complaint Submission: _____

Please provide details of the complaint:

Complaint's declaration and acknowledgement

- I confirm that the details I have provided are to the best of my knowledge.
- I authorise the disclosure of information to appropriate person(s) who may assist with the investigation.
- I permit the College to contact me should further clarification be required.

Signature / Date

Completed **COMPLAINT FORM** can be:

- Hand delivered to College Reception in a sealed envelope
- Emailed to info@victorycollege.com
- Mailed to Victory College, PO Box 308, Gympie, QLD, 4570