



De La Salle College Complaints Handling Procedures



Purpose

This procedure sets out the processes used by Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS) to manage and respond to complaints to:

- promote the health, safety and wellbeing of students
- ensure consistent and fair complaints management
- improve the outcomes of complaints with a focus on collaboration and resolution
- meet its legal and regulatory obligations

This procedure should be read in conjunction with De La Salle College's Complaint Handling Policy.

Procedures for complaints about issues arising at MACS schools



Call 9508 2100 or dlsadmin@delasalle.vic.edu.au and let us know if you need an interpreter. We will organise one for you.

MACS schools are committed to receiving, managing, and responding to complaints in a manner that achieves the best possible outcome for our students and fosters good relationships with parents/guardians/carers.

Procedures for complaints about issues at De La Salle College

De La Salle College has developed and maintains a fair, effective and efficient complaints-handling procedure so that complaints about events or decisions at De La Salle College can be addressed. The following steps can guide the procedure in making a complaint about issues arising at De La Salle College.

Informal Options

Many complaints and concerns are minor in nature, or the complaint has been the result of a lack of communication or misunderstanding. Complaints of this nature are best resolved through an informal process therefore we ask that, where appropriate, complaints are initially raised directly with the relevant staff member. The following informal options could be considered:

- **Self-Resolution:** The parties themselves may resolve concerns in open discussion with the provision of relevant information or the clarification of issues. This option involves reflection, restorative practices and conversations respectful of each person's needs in the College.
- **Supported Self-Resolution:** The parties may be assisted to resolve a possible misunderstanding, miscommunication or lack of clarity about the issue in question by a support person such as a colleague, supervisor, principal, leader or counsellor providing professional advice or support.
- **Facilitated Mediation:** The parties may be assisted by a facilitator who is trained in mediation and/or restorative practices to identify issues, explore options and consider alternatives to find a resolution. The facilitator may be an external mediator, a senior colleague, a principal, a school leader or a counsellor.

Formal Options

In circumstances where no mutually acceptable resolution to the matter is reached through informal resolution, or in cases where the matter is considered to be serious, formal procedures can include:

- Intervention: The Principal may meet with the party, or parties separately or jointly. If this does not resolve the issue then the Principal makes a decision and notifies the parties of that decision.
- Investigation: A complaint about a person concerning an alleged serious breach of legislation, school policy or procedure (e.g. student bullying, student drug and alcohol issues) may require an investigation.

Note: This process is not applicable in a complaint of a child protection nature, which must be addressed in accordance with child protection laws and reporting obligations.

Process for Dealing with Complaints

Our formal complaints process is made up of four internal steps: the making and receiving of a formal complaint, the investigating of the complaint, the determination of a finding and suitable resolution and the communication of the determination or resolution of the complaint and potentially the escalation of the complaint.

Step 1: The making and receiving of a formal complaint in writing

Formal complaints should be made in writing to the relevant contact person as follows:

- for all matters involving Student Wellbeing – in the first instance should be directed to the relevant Directors of Students or Head of Campus, escalating to the Assistant Principal – Students
- for all matters involving the Academic Program of the College – in the first instance should be directed to the relevant Director of Learning Development, escalating to the Assistant Principal – Learning and Teaching
- for all mattering involving interactions between staff members – the Executive Deputy Principal.

All formal complaints will be acknowledged in writing by the relevant Director of Students, Head of Campus, Director of Learning Development or Executive Deputy Principal as soon as possible and within seven business days of receipt. Appropriate Assistant Principal to be notified.

All formal complaints should be logged by the relevant Director of Students, Head of Campus, Director of Learning Development or Executive Deputy Principal via: [De La Salle complaints register](#).

Step 2: The investigating of the complaint

In investigating the complaint, the relevant contact person must:

- establish the precise nature of the complaint
- investigate the complaint for substance, and decide if the complaint should be upheld
- notify the respondent in writing of the complaints against them
- advise both the complainant and respondent of their right to have a support person with them at all interviews and discussions
- interview the complainant and respondent separately
- give both the complainant and respondent appropriate opportunity to contribute their views on, and responses to, the issues raised in the complaint
- keep written accounts of all interviews and discussions.

If it is established that the complaint is vexatious, malicious or has no substance, or that the evidence is vague or ill-defined, then the complaint can be immediately dismissed. In these instances, a letter outlining the outcome of the investigation must be sent to both the complainant and the respondent and counselling may be offered.

If the evidence is clear and the relevant contact person can substantiate the complaint, they must then make a determination, formulate a resolution and provide a written response to the complainant and respondent.

Step 3: Communicating the determination and resolution of the complaint

A written response outlining the concerns raised as well as the outcome of the complaint will be sent to both the complainant, the respondent and the relevant Assistant Principal. The complaint will be closed if the resolution is accepted.

Step 4: Escalation of the complaint

It may not always be possible to resolve all complaints to the complainant's satisfaction. This could happen when the nature of the issues raised in the complaint is governed by De La Salle College policies or procedures or if the complainant has unrealistic expectations about the outcome of their complaint.

If the matter cannot be resolved by the implementation of Steps 1–3 above, then the matter may, on the written request of the complainant or respondent, be reviewed again by:

- for all matters that were referred to the Assistant Principals in the first instance, the Executive Deputy Principal; or
- for all matters that were referred to the Executive Deputy Principal, the Principal.

A written response outlining the review decision made and the outcome of the complaint should be sent to both the complainant and the respondent. The complaint will be closed if the resolution is accepted.

Step 5: External escalation

If the matter cannot be resolved at the College level, or if the complaint is about the principal of De La Salle College, complainants may contact the relevant MACS Regional Office. Alternatively, parents/guardians/carers may lodge a complaint online at www.macs.vic.edu.au/Contact-Us/Complaints.aspx.

When a complaint is serious or the complaint is not resolved after the involvement of the MACS Regional General Manager, it may be referred to the MACS Executive Director for review.

If the complaint is unable to be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, but the matter is however finalised, the complainant has the right to seek alternative independent or other advice or contact other entities such as the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, or the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. Complaints related to the minimum standards for school registration can be referred to the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA).

MACS schools' recordkeeping and privacy statement

When handling all complaints, MACS regional offices and all MACS schools will keep and maintain any records as required in accordance with information and records management policies and procedures, relevant retention and disposal schedules and any applicable Public Record Office Victoria Recordkeeping Standards.

MACS schools will handle personal, sensitive and health information in accordance with the MACS office's Privacy Policy and requirements under the Child Information Sharing Scheme and the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme.

Privacy laws may prohibit information being provided to the complainant of any specific action that has been taken in relation to individuals about whom the complaint has been raised.

MACS schools will ensure that it will create, maintain, and dispose of records relevant to child safety and wellbeing in accordance with the policies and procedures for recordkeeping in MACS offices.

Outcomes of complaints

Potential outcomes of complaints can include:

- an apology – either verbal or written
- mediation – with an internal or external mediator
- an official warning
- disciplinary action
- a behavioural contract (in the case of a student)
- pastoral or spiritual care
- an understanding that the behaviour will not be repeated; and/or
- a change in policy or procedure

Complainants will also be provided with the reasons for the outcome/decision.

Complaint escalation

A complainant may escalate their complaint to the relevant MACS regional office via the following details:

Eastern Regional Office 39 Hewish Road CROYDON VIC 3136 Ph: 03 9427 6400 Email: manager.ero@macs.vic.edu.au	Northern Regional Office 25 Norwood Crescent MOONEE PONDS VIC 3039 Ph: 03 8387 3200 Email: manager.nro@macs.vic.edu.au
Southern Regional Office 602 South Road MOORABBIN EAST VIC 3189 Ph: 03 8301 7400 Email: manager.sro@macs.vic.edu.au	Western Regional Office 47 Synnot Street WERRIBEE VIC 3030 Ph: 03 8412 2400 Email: manager.wro@macs.vic.edu.au

Alternatively, a complainant may lodge a complaint online at www.macs.vic.edu.au/Contact-Us/Complaints.aspx.

When the regional office will become involved

The regional office is responsible for responding to complaints when:

- a complainant is not satisfied that a matter has been addressed in accordance with the school's complaints handling policies and processes
- a complainant is not satisfied that an acceptable resolution has been reached
- the subject of the complaint relates to policy outside the responsibility or management of the school
- a school requests assistance to resolve a complaint
- the subject of the complaint is the principal of a school.

The regional office will generally not become involved when:

- issues have not been raised with the school
- the school is continuing to address the issues in the complaint
- issues raised are the responsibility of the school (e.g. school uniform, tuck shop duty, parking)
- issues raised should be able to be resolved at the school level

Role of the regional office

The regional office will:

- acknowledge receipt of a complaint within two working days
- contact the complainant to ensure they are aware of the complaint handling procedures, to confirm and clarify their issues and provides an indicative time for resolution
- raise the issue with the school, if the complainant has not done so to assist with initiating discussions with the school, if appropriate
- work with the school and the complainant to achieve a mutually agreed resolution
- If a mutually agreed resolution cannot be achieved, the regional general manager will review the issues raised by the complainant and communicate the outcome of this review to the complainant.

In undertaking the above procedure, the regional office will:

- ensure that any student affected by the complaint remains engaged in education
- support families and school staff in the complaint process by providing appropriate or additional supports; and
- document the actions taken to achieve the outcome.

When a complaint is not resolved after the involvement of a regional general manager, it may be referred to the Executive Director for review by emailing execdirector@macs.vic.edu.au

If the complaint is unable to be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, but the matter is however finalised, the complainant has the right to seek alternative independent or other advice or contact other entities such as the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission.

Complaints related to the minimum standards for school registration can be referred to the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA).

Students raising complaints and concerns

MACS schools encourage students to raise any concerns they may have with a trusted adult staff member at the school. Complaints made by students will be taken seriously.

A trusted adult at the school may include a teacher, support staff or other adult. The staff member will explain to the student what steps they will take to try to resolve the issue and what the school can do to support the student.

Students can also ask their parent/guardian/carer or another trusted adult outside the school to talk to the school about the issue. Other ways students can raise a concern or complaint with the school may include but are not limited to:

- talking to a member of the student representative council about the student's concern and any suggestions for resolving it
- participating in student forums held within the school
- writing a note for an anonymous student suggestions box at the school.

MACS schools will ensure students know/are informed of who to approach and relevant processes to raise complaints by providing information via methods such as posters distributed within the school, information provided at assemblies, or discussions during wellbeing curriculum. For specific information, please speak with your school.

Students may also be assisted/accompanied by a support person when raising a complaint. The support person can be a family member, a friend or a professional with knowledge of the student. The support person can also assist with ensuring the cultural safety of students and families in the complaints process. Further information about support persons can be found below. Additional resources to support students to raise issues or concerns are available at:

- [Report Racism Hotline](#) (call 1800 722 476) – this hotline enables students to report concerns relating to racism or religious discrimination
- [Reach Out](#)
- [Headspace](#)
- [Kids Helpline](#) (call 1800 55 1800)
- [Victorian Aboriginal Education Association](#) (VAEAI)

Support for complainants

Support persons

Parents/guardians/carers discussing complaints with the principal may be accompanied by a support person. The support person can be a family member, a friend or a professional with knowledge of the student.

Any person acting in a professional capacity on behalf of the parents/guardians/carers must provide their occupational details and full name prior to the meeting being held. It is at the principal's discretion if an external professional is a participating member of any school meeting.

The support person may encourage and facilitate sharing of parent/guardian/carer knowledge, perception, and issues. The support person should support a positive working relationship between all parties. The support person does not speak on behalf of parents/guardians/carers when discussing complaints with the principal.

Multicultural Services and Interpreters

MACS can provide for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Officers to support families/carers to raise complaints to the school if required.

Please speak with your MACS school to discuss the specific support that they are able to provide.

Translation and interpreting services can be provided to assist all complainants. Please contact your MACS school or relevant region for assistance to access to these services.

Withdrawal of a complaint

A complaint can be withdrawn at any stage during the complaint handling process. A complaint should be withdrawn in writing by the complainant and addressed to the principal.

Definitions

Complaint

A formal expression of dissatisfaction with an action taken, decision made, service provided or handling of an issue.

Complainant

The person or persons who have raised a complaint with the MACS office.

Related policies and documents

Related MACS policies and documents

Bullying Prevention Policy for MACS Schools
Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
Child Safety and Wellbeing Recordkeeping Policy
Code of Conduct – Parent/Guardian/Carer
Code of Conduct – Students
Privacy Policy
Complaints Handling Policy
PROTECT – Identifying and Responding to Abuse – Reporting Obligations Policy
Reportable Conduct Policy
Community Safety Order Scheme Internal Review Process
Suspension of Students Policy
Expulsion of Students Policy
Whistleblower Policy

Policy information table

Responsible director	Director, Governance, Legal and Compliance
Procedure owner	General Manager, Legal and Professional Standards
Approving authority	Director, Governance, Legal and Compliance
Assigned board committee	Child Safety and Risk Management
Approval date	October 2023
Risk rating	Extreme
Date of next review	June 2025
Publication details	CEVN, MACS office website

POLICY DATABASE INFORMATION	
Assigned framework	Complaints Handling and Complex Issues Framework
Related documents	See list above
Superseded documents	
New procedure	New