

Complaints Resolution Policy

Revised February 2017



Rationale

Staff and parents of OLMC are partners in the education and wellbeing of OLMC students. Effective communications play a vital role in this partnership, as does a shared commitment to addressing issues of concern in ways that are constructive, open and respectful. Every member of our school community has a right to have their concern or complaint addressed, and we will work positively and resolutely to achieve a satisfactory outcome for the people involved.

Concerns or complaints raised by students about other students are generally handled by a student's Pastoral Leader, Year Level Coordinator, House Coordinator or the Head of Student Wellbeing. In addition, procedures for raising and resolving bullying concerns are outlined in the OLMC *Student Anti Bullying Policy*. If your daughter has not been able to resolve the issue through these mechanisms, then this policy applies. It outlines our principles and procedures for **receiving and resolving complaints from parents** on behalf of your daughter. The policy also applies when parents have a specific parent-school concern.

Procedures for receiving and responding to staff complaints are addressed separately in in specific workplace policies.

Principles

In receiving and responding to complaints, the following guiding principles will direct and shape the College's actions:

- We will work with you with respect, courtesy and openness and with a genuine desire to achieve a fair and reasonable outcome.
- The complaint will be resolved as quickly as possible.
- The person(s) facing the complaint will be provided with detailed information about the substance of the complaint and will have the opportunity to respond.
- Personal information disclosed will be treated as confidential.
- Our resolution process will be grounded in sound and fair procedures for information sharing, conciliation, investigation and decision making.
- If a satisfactory outcome cannot be achieved, the College will provide you with options for having the outcome reviewed or mediated via an external authority.
- The communal needs of the school community will in most instances exceed the needs of any individual.

Procedures

Expectations of People Making a Complaint

In making a complaint, the College requests and expects that you will:

- Raise the concern or complaint as soon as possible after the issue has arisen
- Communicate and respond in ways that are constructive, fair and respectful

- Provide complete and factual information about the concern or complaint
- Observe confidentiality and a respect for sensitive issues
- Act in good faith to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
- Have realistic and reasonable expectations about possible outcomes/remedies.

If your concern/complaint relates to your daughter's treatment by another student or students while at school, the College expects that you will refer your complaint directly to the College, via your daughter's Pastoral Leader or Year Level Coordinator. Under no circumstances should you approach another student whilst she is in the care of the College to confront the issue. Direct contact with parents to resolve the matter is also discouraged where your complaint or concern pertains to issues or incidents that have arisen at the school.

Key Referral People

You are encouraged to make contact with members of the College staff who are most closely connected with your daughter and/or with the specific complaint. In most instances this will be one or more of the following people:

- Your daughter's Pastoral Leader
- Your daughter's Subject Teacher(s)
- Your daughter's Year Level/House Coordinator
- The Deputy Principal
- The Head of Learning, the Head of Student Wellbeing or the Head of Faith and Mission
- The Principal
- The Business Manager
- The College Nurse
- The College Counsellor

If there is any uncertainty about the most appropriate person to address a concern or complaint, you are encouraged to contact the College on its direct line. Reception staff will refer you to the appropriate person.

Email Communications

Due to teachers' classroom and supervision duties, your first contact is best made by email, with an appointment request for either a phone conference or face-to-face meeting. You are asked to outline concerns or issues (e.g. academic performance, discipline, student/peer incidents) so that the staff member can constructively prepare for the meeting/phone conference. Teachers are expected to respond in a timely manner (within 24 hours), and to do so by phone or email.

An updated list of the names, roles/titles and email addresses of teaching staff is made available to parents at the beginning of each school year and is also accessible from the College Portal.

Confidential, Contentious and/or Sensitive Matters

Parents and staff are strongly discouraged from sending or discussing confidential, contentious and/or emotional information via email. These matters are best discussed face to face or over the phone. The College email systems are monitored and should not be considered private.

Informal and Formal Resolution Processes

If initial communication between the parties does not resolve the complaint (an 'informal' resolution process), then the complainant should:

- Contact the Principal or a senior member of staff to make an appointment for either a phone conference or a face-to-face meeting
- Outline the nature of the complaint, either verbally or in writing, and the steps taken to resolve it.

In moving to a more formal process, the principal or a senior member of staff will:

- Organise a meeting/phone conference
- Fully document the complaint, any actions taken to resolve it and outcomes of those actions
- Further and fully investigate the matter
- Ensure that no one is victimised as a result of a complaint being made
- If necessary, enable a complainant to be accompanied by another person of his/her choice as a support person
- Enable the person against whom the complaint has been made to respond, and to be accompanied to any meeting by another person of his/her choice as a support person
- Organise a process of mediation if a complaint cannot be satisfactorily resolved by the College.

Avenues of Appeal

If a complaint remains unresolved or if you are dissatisfied with the outcomes, the complainant has the right to seek other avenues of appeal through authorities such as the Catholic Education Melbourne or Mercy Education Limited.

Serious or Repeated Complaints

Where a complaint relates to an allegation of physical, emotional or sexual abuse, or when complaints are sufficiently serious or repeated, the Principal will take action to report the matter to the appropriate authorities, which may include the Catholic Education Melbourne and the Police, and ensure a comprehensive investigation.

RELATED POLICIES

OLMC College Communication with Separated Parents Policy
OLMC Respectful Relationships Anti Bullying Policy
OLMC Privacy Policy
Catholic Education Melbourne Policy 2.20, Complaints

Policy approved by College Leadership Team – February 2015

Policy revised – February 2017

Next Policy Review – February 2019

Person Responsible – The Principal