

# Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure

## Introduction

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### Purpose and Scope

This policy applies to handling complaints made in respect of services provided by the Cranbrook School or against the School's staff members, which includes employees, contractors and volunteers.

This policy does not extend to personal grievances between parents/carers or other members of the school community.

### Whistleblowing Complaints

This policy does not extend to complaints which are whistleblowing disclosures. The procedure for processing whistleblowing complaints is dealt with in the School's Whistleblower Policy.

In summary, a whistleblowing disclosure is a disclosure which:

- is made by a School Council member, staff member, a person who supplies goods or services to the School, an employer of a supplier or a relative of any of these people;
- involves alleged misconduct, an improper state of affairs or circumstances, or illegal activity; and
- is made to a School Council member, Head of School, Head of Senior School, Head of Junior School, Chief Operating Officer, Director of Corporate Services, the School's auditor or another person who the School has authorised to collect such disclosures.

### Related Policies

Complaints about reportable conduct will be addressed in accordance with the School's Child Protection Policy.

Complaints regarding the behaviour of, or a grievance between students will be addressed in accordance with the relevant student behaviour related policies, guidelines and codes of conduct.

Complaints regarding a grievance between staff members about work matters, including work relationships and decisions made by other staff members which impact on their work, will be addressed in accordance with the School's Internal Grievance Resolution Policy.

Complaints regarding unlawful discrimination, harassment or bullying between staff will be addressed in accordance with the School's Respectful Relationships Policy.

Complaints regarding teacher accreditation processes will be addressed in accordance with the School's Teacher Accreditation Procedures.

Complaints regarding Full Fee-Paying Overseas Students will be addressed in accordance with the School's Overseas Students: Complaints and Appeals Policy.

### Confidentiality

All parties involved in complaints handling are required to maintain appropriate confidentiality, including in relation to handling and storing records.

## Complaints

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A complaint or grievance is an expression of dissatisfaction made to the School about an educational and/or operational matter relating to services provided by the School or the behaviour or decisions of a staff member, contractor or volunteer, including misconduct.

Complaints may be made by a student, a parent/carer or any member of the school community.

If a parent/carer or student has a concern about the conduct of a staff member, they should raise their concern with the School using the mechanisms outlined below.

If a complaint that concerns the behaviour of a staff member may constitute reportable conduct, the matter will be addressed by the School's Child Protection Policy as noted above.

A complaint about a reportable conduct matter may be current or historical. Timeframes for investigation of complaints relating to reportable conduct are dependent on the individual matter and may be over an extended period of time, particularly in the case of a historical allegation. The School is bound by privacy or other confidentiality requirements when conducting investigations of reportable conduct allegations, which may limit the information that can be shared with the complainant regarding the outcome of an investigation.

Complainants are not required to assess whether their concern meets the threshold of reportable conduct before making a complaint. **Any** concern about a child's wellbeing or the conduct of an employee, volunteer, contractor or member of the school community may be reported using the mechanisms outlined below or in the Child Protection Policy.

The School will seek to resolve complaints informally where possible, but acknowledges that in some cases a person may wish to make a formal complaint.

## Raising a Complaint

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### The Complainant

Should the complainant not feel comfortable raising a complaint directly with the person involved, the matter is one where it may not be appropriate to do so, or the matter is not able to be resolved between the parties directly in the first instance, the complainant may raise the matter with the School.

A complaint can be made in writing via email to [complaints@cranbrook.nsw.edu.au](mailto:complaints@cranbrook.nsw.edu.au) or through the School's online reporting tool, which can be accessed via the link on the Feedback page of the School's website (<https://www.cranbrook.nsw.edu.au/community/feedback/>).

Where a person wishes to make a complaint concerning the Head of School, the complaint should be made in writing to the President of School Council. This can be done via email to [councilsecretary@cranbrook.nsw.edu.au](mailto:councilsecretary@cranbrook.nsw.edu.au) or through the School's online reporting tool detailed above. In this situation, the references in this policy relating to the role of the Head of School should be read as references to the President of Council.

### The School

The School will generally acknowledge receipt of a complaint raised with the School in writing as soon as practicable.

## Handling Complaints

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### Assessing a Complaint

The Head of School or a member of the Senior Executive, in consultation with the Head of School, as appropriate, generally will assess the complaint and determine:

- whether the complaint is one to be addressed under this policy or one of the other policies detailed above; and
- the priority of the complaint in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the matter raised; and
- whether the School may be required to report the matter to the Office of the Children’s Guardian, Police, Department of Communities and Justice or other relevant authorities should the complaint relate to possible unlawful conduct or other reportable matters;
- the appropriate staff member to manage the complaint (**Complaint Manager**).

## Managing a Complaint

The Complaint Manager generally will manage a complaint by:

- advising the complainant of the likely steps that will be undertaken by the School in relation to the complaint;
- determining whether the complaint will be investigated internally or externally and by whom;
- if appropriate, advising the relevant parties of the complaint at the relevant time and providing them with an opportunity to respond;
- collecting any additional information the School considers necessary to assess the complaint;
- making a decision about how the complaint will be resolved (“resolution decision”); and
- if appropriate, advising the complainant in writing, and any other relevant parties as appropriate, of the resolution decision and, if appropriate, any proposed action to be taken.

There may be circumstances where some of the steps outlined above are not appropriate and the School will determine, on a case-by-case basis the most appropriate method of handling the complaint.

A complainant and the relevant parties that the complaint is about may choose to have an appropriate support person present at any meeting with representatives of the School about the complaint. However, the School maintains the right to determine whether the person’s preferred support person is appropriate and may not approve the attendance of a support person where they are determined by the School to be inappropriate.

## Further Information

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For further information about Cranbrook School’s [Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure](#) please email [complaints@cranbrook.nsw.edu.au](mailto:complaints@cranbrook.nsw.edu.au).

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