



Complaints Handling Policy

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Strathcona Baptist Girls Grammar School (Strathcona) welcomes feedback from all members of the School community and takes all complaints or concerns that may be raised seriously. This Complaints Handling Policy is designed to assist you to understand how to make a complaint.

In this Policy, we use the terms “staff” and “staff member” to include all teaching and non-teaching staff, school board members, volunteers, contractors and external providers.

What Is a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to Strathcona, related to our services or operations, or the complaints handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.

Complaints about child abuse, grooming or other harm, or other breaches of our Child Safety and Wellbeing Codes of Conduct, relating to conduct by:

- current or former staff members
- current or former students
- other people on School premises or at School events

are managed differently from other complaints.

Refer to the section at the end of this Policy – [Complaints About Child Safety Incidents or Concerns](#) for more information.

Strathcona’s Commitment to Complaints Handling

Strathcona is committed to handling complaints effectively and efficiently. To manage complaints effectively, we have established a Complaints Handling Program in line with:

- Principle 6 of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, using the Office of Child Safety’s “[Complaint Handling Guide: Upholding the Rights of Children and Young People](#)”
- the Australian/New Zealand complaints handling standard (AS/NZS 10002:2014 Guidelines for complaint management in organizations)
- the Australian Privacy Principles (APP).

There is no fee associated with making a complaint.

Our Complaints Handling Program includes the establishment of an online complaints management system which allows us to effectively capture, manage and report on complaints.

Regular analysis of complaints received and the implementation of rectification action, where deficiencies are identified, are key to the School’s commitment.

Complaints may be made anonymously or using a pseudonym. If you make an anonymous complaint, we will be unable to provide you with feedback on the progress and outcome of your complaint. It may also limit our ability to fully investigate the complaint if we are unable to contact you to obtain further details.

Informal Complaints Resolution

The vast majority of issues causing concern in schools can be handled quickly and in an informal manner. We therefore ask that, where appropriate, you first raise your concern directly with the relevant staff member.

If the response or resolution is not to your satisfaction, you may proceed to use our informal complaints resolution procedures. Informal procedures can take three distinct forms:

- an informal discussion between the Principal or appropriate School Leader and the complainant often leads to resolution (sometimes, the complainant may just want the Principal or appropriate School leader to talk to the School staff member on their behalf)
- the Principal or appropriate School leader talks to both the complainant and the respondent separately and then reaches a resolution
- the Principal or appropriate School leader can bring the complainant and respondent together for conciliation.

Note: If a complaint is resolved through the informal process, the complaint will not be added to the Complaints Register.

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 any of the following means:

- logging the complaint using our online [Complaint Notification Form](#)
- writing a letter to the School addressed to the Complaints Manager
- telephoning the School and asking to speak to the Complaints Manager.

At Strathcona, the Complaints Manager is the Business Manager unless delegated. The Complaints Manager or the Principal may appoint an Investigator to review the details of a complaint and submit a report. The Investigator may be an internal staff member of appropriate authority or a suitably qualified and experienced external provider.

All formal complaints will be logged into our Complaints Register and managed in accordance with the procedures detailed below.



Our Internal Complaints Handling Process

- Step 1:** All formal complaints are logged on our Complaints Register where they are screened by the Complaints Manager, or in the case of complaints against the Principal, Business Manager or a member of the School Board by the Chair of the School Board. A complaint about the Chair of the School Board is directed to the Complaints Manager.
- Step 2:** All valid complaints, except those made anonymously, will be acknowledged in writing, as soon as practicable, and allocated a status, priority and target resolution date. It is our policy, where possible, to resolve all disputes within 14 days.
- Step 3:** The Complaints Manager (or, if the complaint is about the Principal, the Business Manager, a member of the School Board or the Chair of the School Board, the person whom the Chair of the School Board or Principal asks to investigate the complaint) will conduct an investigation into the issues raised, following principles of procedural fairness, and make a determination.
- Step 4:** Following the determination, if appropriate, the Complaints Manager (or, if the complaint is about the Principal, the Business Manager, a member of the School Board or the Chair of the School Board, the person who has undertaken the investigation of the complaint) will formulate a resolution and, except where the complaint was anonymous, provide a written response to the complainant. The matter will be closed if this response is accepted.
- Step 5:** If the response is not accepted, the matter will be reviewed internally by the Principal or the Principal's delegate, who may seek additional information or submissions from the relevant parties. The Principal or their delegate seeks to resolve all disputes within 14 days from the date that the review process is initiated. The matter will be closed if the response of the Principal, or their delegate, is accepted. If the complaint was about the Principal, the Business Manager, a member of the School Board or the Chair of the School Board, the Deputy Principal will review the matter.
- Step 6:** All complaints received will be entered into our Complaints Register and, where appropriate, a corrective action request will be made to address any underlying processes which the complaints investigation revealed may require improvement.
- Step 7:** If the matter remains unresolved, and/or the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome or the way that the complaint has been managed, the complainant may pursue external resolution alternatives. External agencies to which complaints may be made include the [Victorian Regulations and Qualifications Authority](#) (VRQA) and the [Victorian Ombudsman](#). For general information on mediation, counselling, advocacy and support, refer to the [Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria](#).



Overseas Students

If an overseas student is not satisfied with the outcome of School's internal complaints handling process, they may lodge an external appeal through the Overseas Students Ombudsman (OSO) which investigates complaints about problems that overseas students or intending overseas students may have with private education and training in Australia. The services of the OSO are free. The contact details for the OSO are as follows:

- Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au.
- Call: 1300 362 072 within Australia. Outside Australia call +61 2 6276 0111.
- Enquiries: 9:00am to 5:00pm Monday to Friday, Australian Eastern Standard Time (Australian Eastern Daylight Time when daylight savings is in effect).
- Postal: Commonwealth Ombudsman, GPO Box 442 Canberra ACT 2601.
- Website: <https://www.ombudsman.gov.au/How-we-can-help/overseas-students>.

Strathcona agrees to be bound by the OSO's recommendations and will ensure that any recommendations made are implemented within 30 days of receipts of the report.

Confidentiality and Privacy

The School is committed to maintaining the confidentiality of information throughout the complaints process. This includes maintaining the privacy of information relating to the person making the complaint and any person named in the complaint.

Complaints About Child Safety Incidents or Concerns

Complaints about or allegations of:

- breaches of the Child Safety and Wellbeing Codes of Conduct
- child abuse, grooming or other harm of a current or former student by:
 - current or former staff members
 - current or former students
 - other people on School premises or at School events
- "reportable conduct" as defined in the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- other child safety and wellbeing-related staff misconduct

are managed by the School in a different manner from other complaints.

This is because of the additional confidentiality and privacy requirements surrounding these kinds of matters.

We refer to these as child safety and wellbeing-related complaints.

If your complaint is a child safety and wellbeing-related complaint, please make your complaint to: the Child Safety and Wellbeing Champion or Principal, or if this person is the subject of your complaint please notify the Deputy Principal.



Strathcona

GIRLS GRAMMAR

For information about how the School manages child safety and wellbeing-related complaints, as well as any child safety incidents or concerns, please refer to our [Procedures for Managing Child Safety Incidents or Concerns](#), available on our public [website](#).