



# Complaints Handling Policy

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## POLICY OUTLINE

Purpose:	The purpose of this policy is to ensure that student, parent and employee complaints and disputes are dealt with in a responsive, efficient, effective and fair way.	
Scope:	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.	
		<b>Supersedes:</b> Complaints Handling Policy V5 (Mar 2023)
Authorised by:	EFL Board	<b>Date of Authorisation:</b> 22/04/2024
References:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulations 2017</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Australian Education Regulations 2023</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Fair Work Act 2009</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)</a></li> <li>• Arethusa College Complaints Handling Program</li> <li>• Arethusa College Complaints Handling Guide</li> <li>• Arethusa College Work Health and Safety Policy</li> <li>• Arethusa College Sexual Harassment Policy</li> <li>• Arethusa College Disability Policy</li> <li>• Arethusa College Workplace Bullying Policy</li> <li>• Arethusa College Privacy Policy</li> </ul>	
Review Date:	Annually	<b>Next Review Date:</b> March 2025
Policy Owner:	Equipping for Life	

## POLICY STATEMENT

Arethusa College is committed to ensuring that student, parent, and employee complaints are dealt with in a responsive, efficient, and effective and fair way.

Arethusa College views complaints as part of an important feedback and accountability process.

Arethusa College acknowledges the right of students, parents, and employees to complain when dissatisfied with an action, inaction or decision of the school and the school encourages constructive criticism and complaints.

Arethusa College recognises that time spent on handling complaints can be an investment in better service to students, parents and employees.

### **Complaints that may be Resolved under this Policy**

Arethusa College encourages students, parents and employees to lodge promptly any concerns regarding sexual harassment, child protection, discrimination, workplace bullying and privacy breaches as well as more general complaints that include areas such as:

- The school, its employees or students having done something wrong.
- The school, its employees or students having failed to do something they should have done.
- The school, its employees or students having acted unfairly or impolitely.
- Issues of student or employee behaviour that are contrary to their relevant code of conduct.
- Issues related to learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning.
- Issues related to communication with students or parents or between employees.
- Issues related to school levies and payments.
- General administrative issues.

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

### **Issues Outside this Policy**

The following matters are outside the scope of this policy and should be managed as follows:

- Child protection concerns or risks of harm to children should be dealt with in accordance with the law and the school's Child Protection Policy and Procedures.
- Student bullying complaints should be dealt with under the Bullying Prevention and Intervention policy.
- Student discipline matters, including matters involving suspension or expulsion, should be dealt with under the Student Discipline Procedures and Student Behaviour Management Policy.
- Employee complaints related to their employment should be directed to their supervisor.
- Student or employee violence or criminal matters should be directed to the Executive Principal who will involve the Police as appropriate.
- Formal legal proceedings.

## COMPLAINTS HANDLING PRINCIPLES

Arethusa College is committed to managing complaints according to the following principles:

- Complaints will be resolved with as little formality and disruption as possible.
- Complaints will be taken seriously.
- Anonymous complaints will be treated on their merits.
- Complaints will be dealt with fairly and objectively and in a timely manner.
- Arethusa College will determine the appropriate person to deal with the complaint in the first instance. Complaints should be resolved with as little formality and disputation as possible.
- Mediation, negotiation and informal resolution are optional alternatives.
- Procedural fairness will be ensured wherever practicable, including the right of interested parties to the complaint to be heard.
- Confidentiality and privacy will be maintained as much as possible.
- All parties to the complaints will be appropriately supported.
- Arethusa College will give reasonable progress updates.
- Appropriate remedies will be offered and implemented.
- Provide a review pathway for parties to the complaint if warranted.
- 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.
- The school will keep records of complaints.
- The school's insurer will be informed if a complaint could be connected to an insured risk.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

### School

The school has the following role and responsibilities:

- Develop, implement, promote and act in accordance with the school's Complaints Handling Policy and procedures.
- Appropriately communicate the school's Complaints Handling Policy and procedures to students, parents and employees.
- Ensure that the Complaints Handling Policy is readily accessible by staff, students and parents.
- Upon receipt of a complaint, manage the complaint in accordance with the Complaints Handling Guide.
- Ensure that appropriate support is provided to all parties to a complaint.
- Take appropriate action to prevent victimisation or action in reprisal against the complainant, respondent or any person associated with them.
- Appropriately implement remedies.
- Appropriately train relevant employees.
- Keep records.
- Conduct a review/audit of the Complaints Register from time to time.
- Monitor and report to the governing body on complaints.
- Report to the school's insurer when that is relevant.

- Refer to the school's governing body immediately any claim for legal redress.

## **All Parties to a Dispute**

The complainant and respondent both have the following role and responsibilities:

- Apply and comply with the school's Complaints Handling Policy and procedures.
- Lodge the complaint as soon as possible after the issue arises.
- Expect that the complaint will be dealt with fairly and objectively; in a timely manner; with procedural fairness wherever practicable; that confidentiality and privacy will be maintained as much as possible.
- Provide complete and factual information in a timely manner.
- Not provide deliberately false or misleading information.
- Not make frivolous or vexatious complaints.
- Act in good faith, and in a calm and courteous manner.
- Act in a non-threatening manner.
- To be appropriately supported.
- Acknowledge that a common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties.
- Recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced.
- Maintain and respect the privacy and confidentiality of all parties.
- Not victimise or act in reprisal against any party to the dispute or any person associated with them.

## **Employees Receiving Complaints**

Employees receiving complaints have the following role and responsibilities:

- Act in accordance with the school's Complaints Handling Policy and procedures.
- Inform the party lodging the complaint of how complaints can be lodged, when they should be lodged and what information is required.
- Provide the complainant with information about any support or assistance available to assist them in lodging their complaint.
- Provide the complainant with a copy of the school's Complaints Handling Policy and procedures.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Keep appropriate records.
- To forward complaints to more senior employees, including the principal, as appropriate.
- Not victimise or act in reprisal against the complainant, respondent or any person associated with them.

## **Complaints Manager**

We have appointed a Complaints Manager who is responsible for:

- Ensuring that all staff are educated about our Complaints Handling Program.
- Investigating and, where necessary, escalating complaints when requested by the complainant.
- Liaising with complainants and Complaints Officers.
- Maintaining accurate records in the Complaints Register.
- Regularly reporting to the Board about complaints.
- Ensuring systemic complaints are identified and rectified.
- Enlisting the support of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to address matters of concern.

- Monitoring the effectiveness of, and continually improving, our Complaints Handling Program.

The Executive Principal is the designated Complaints Manager.

## **Complaints Officers**

We have appointed a number of key senior staff members to act as Complaints Officers. These individuals are authorised to investigate and manage Formal Complaints once they have been logged.

Complaints Officers are responsible for:

- investigating and, where necessary, escalating complaints to the Complaints Manager
- liaising with complainants
- maintaining accurate records in the Complaints Register.

Our Complaints Officers are the Campus and Regional Principals.

## **Complaints Made Involving the Senior Executive Leaders or a Member of the Board of Directors**

A complaint “involves” the Senior Executive Leaders being the Executive Principal and/or the Chief Executive Officer if:

- The Senior Executive Leader is the subject of the complaint.
- The Senior Executive Leader is otherwise involved in the chain of events surrounding an incident or event that is the subject of the complaint (for example, they are a witness to the incident or event)
- The Senior Executive Leader has an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest in receiving or managing the complaint (for example, they are related to the complainant or to the person who is the subject of the complaint).

If a complaint involves the Senior Executive Leader, the complaint must be directed to the Chair of the Board of Directors, who will deal with the matter in consultation with the Board of Directors.

Complaints relating to the Senior Executive Leaders should not be documented on the Complaints register.

If a complaint involves a Board of Directors member, the complaint must be directed to the Chair of the Board of Directors. If a complaint involves the Chair of the Board of Directors, the complaint must be directed to an appropriate delegate appointed by the Board as necessary.

## **Complaints Register**

Arethusa College uses CompliSpace software for governance, risk, compliance and policy management. Our Complaints Register is part of the CompliSpace program within their Assurance component. The Complaints Register can show the history to any licensed user of updates made in a given period of time.

Any information inputted or changes made cannot be deleted.

Once a complaint has been resolved, the complaint will be closed but can be reviewed at any time at a later stage.

Complaints Officers and the Complaints Manager are prohibited from making changes to the original complaint. The Complaints Officers have access to view, read, update and make notes on any complaint.

The Senior Executive Leaders are prohibited from making changes to the original complaint. The Senior Executive Leaders can view, read, update and makes notes on any complaint.

## HOW TO MAKE A 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:

- Through the Arethusa website - [www.arethusa.qld.edu.au/policies](http://www.arethusa.qld.edu.au/policies) ([Complaint Form](#))
- Sending an email to the Executive Principal: [executiveprincipal@arethusa.qld.edu.au](mailto:executiveprincipal@arethusa.qld.edu.au)
- Sending an email to Chair of the Board of Directors: [chair@arethusa.qld.edu.au](mailto:chair@arethusa.qld.edu.au)
- Writing a letter to the College addressed to the Executive Principal or Chair of the Board of Directors
- Telephoning the College and asking to speak to the Campus Principal or Executive Principal

All formal complaints will be logged into our online complaints management system and managed in accordance with the following procedure:

1. All formal complaints are logged through our online complaints management system where they are screened by one of our Complaints Officers, or in the case of complaints against the Senior Executive Leaders, by the Chair of the College Board of Directors.
2. All valid complaints 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.
3. The Complaints Officer shall conduct an investigation into the issues raised, following principles of procedural fairness, and make a determination.
4. Following the determination, if appropriate, the Complaints Officer shall formulate a resolution and provide a written response to the complainant. The matter will be closed if this response is accepted.
5. If the initial response is not acceptable the matter will be reviewed internally by the Executive Principal or their delegate, who may seek additional information or submissions from the relevant parties. The Executive Principal or their delegate seek 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 Executive Principal, or their delegate, is accepted.
6. All complaints (not including those referred to the Chair of the Board of Directors) 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. Complaints made to the Chair of the Board relating to Senior Executives or other Board members will be filed in a confidential folder with access restricted to Board members only.
7. If the matter remains unresolved, the complainant may pursue external resolution alternatives.

### Additional Information for Staff Complaints

- Staff complaints will be referred to the staff member's line manager.
- If the complaint relates to the staff member's line manager or a complaint cannot be reasonably resolved by their line manager, it will be referred to the next level manager.
- If the complaint is about the principal, it must be referred to the Executive Principal.
- If a complaint is about the Senior Executive Leaders, then it must be referred directly to the Chair of the Board of Directors.
- Staff files will only be accessible to the Board, Senior Executive Leaders, Principals and HR staff.



## IMPLEMENTATION

Arethusa College is committed to raising awareness of the process for resolving complaints at the school, including by the development and implementation of this policy and related procedures, and via the clear support and promotion of the policy and procedures.

Arethusa 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 procedures.

Arethusa College will keep appropriate records of complaints, will monitor complaints and their resolution, and will report on a high-level basis to the school Board on complaint handling at the school.

Arethusa College will act to encourage students, parents and employees to contribute to a healthy school culture where complaints are resolved with as little formality and disruption as possible.

Arethusa College will appoint the Senior Leadership Team to provide confidential and impartial information about the school's relevant policies and processes.