

Complaint Handling

Status	Approved
Effective	April 2024
Review	April 2026
Owner	Business Manager
Approver	The Sycamore School Governing Body

1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that student, parent, guardian /carer and employee complaints are dealt with in a responsive, efficient, effective and fair way.

2 Scope

- Parents, guardians and carers
- Students
- Staff which includes:
 - *Employees (full-time, part-time, permanent, fixed term and casual)Employee of a labour hire company*
 - *Contractors/subcontractors and their employees*
 - *Directors*
 - *Apprentices/Trainees*
 - *Student teachers*
 - *Volunteers*
 - *Anyone undertaking work experience or vocational placement at the school*

3 Definitions/Acronyms

Complaint – an implied or express statement of dissatisfaction where a response is sought, reasonable to expect or legally required. It includes dissatisfaction with the School’s service, actions or decisions, inaction or delay, or policy and processes.

Complainant – a person, organisation or representative that makes a Complaint.

Feedback – is a compliment, criticism, comment or suggestion where a response is not sought, or not reasonable to expect.

4 Policy

The Sycamore School acknowledges the right of students, parents, guardians and carers and employees to complain when dissatisfied with an action, inaction or decision by the school. The School takes any Complaints seriously and will take all reasonable steps to address any Complaints in a responsive, efficient, and effective and fair way.

The Sycamore School encourages students, parents, guardians, carers and staff to contribute to a healthy school culture where Complaints are resolved with as little formality and disruption as possible.

The Sycamore School has a zero-tolerance policy in relation to any harm, abuse or threats directed towards its staff by any person. Any conduct of this kind may result in a refusal to have further dealings with any person who engages in such behaviour. Any conduct of a criminal nature will be reported to police.

4.1 The Sycamore School Commitment

The Sycamore School is committed to managing Complaints using the following principles.

- We will respond to Complaints in a timely manner.
- We will address each Complaint with integrity and in an objective and impartial manner.
- We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that people making Complaints are not adversely affected because a Complaint is made by them or on their behalf.
- We will keep confidential all records of Complaints, unless legally required to disclose information.
- We will act proactively and decisively to manage any Complainant conduct that negatively and unreasonably affects us and will support our staff to do the same.
- We will use Complaints as part of our improvement processes.

4.2 Individual Rights

Complainants have the right:

- To make a Complaint and to express their opinions in ways that are reasonable, lawful, and appropriate, regardless of cultural background, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender expression, disability or other cultural or personal characteristics.
- To a fair and impartial assessment and, where appropriate, investigation of their Complaint based on the merits of the case.
- To a fair hearing.
- To a timely response.
- To be informed in at least general terms about the actions taken and outcome of their Complaint.

- To have decisions that affect them explained to them.
- To at least 1 review of the decision of the Complaint.
- To be treated with courtesy and respect.
- To communicate valid concerns and views without fear of reprisal or other unreasonable response.

Staff have the right:

- To determine whether, and if so how, a Complaint will be dealt with.
- To expect honesty, cooperation, and reasonable assistance from Complainants.
- To be treated with courtesy and respect.
- To have a safe and healthy working environment.
- To modify, curtail or decline service (if appropriate) in response to unacceptable behaviour by any person.

4.3 The Sycamore School Responsibilities

The Sycamore School is responsible for:

- Maintaining an appropriate and effective Complaint handling system in place for receiving, assessing, handling, recording, and reviewing Complaints.
- Appropriately communicating the school's Complaints Handling Policy and procedures to students, parents and employees. Making decisions about how all Complaints will be dealt with.
- Ensuring that all Complaints are dealt with professionally, fairly, and impartially.
- Ensuring that staff treat all parties to a Complaint with courtesy and respect.
- Finalising Complaints on the basis of outcomes that the School, or its responsible staff, consider to be satisfactory in the circumstances.
- Adequately considering any confidentiality, secrecy or privacy obligations or responsibilities that may arise in the handling of Complaints and the conduct of investigations.
- Conduct a review/audit of the Complaints Register from time to time

If The Sycamore School fails to comply with these responsibilities, Complainants may complain to The Sycamore School Governing Body.

4.4 What Complaints Can Relate To

- **Complaints regarding services** – including accessibility, quality or treatment by staff.
- **Complaints regarding actions of decisions** – including incorrect or unfair decision, reasons not properly explained or lack of response to reasonable request and applications.
- **Complaints regarding inaction or delay** – if there is an unreasonable delay in the provision of services or inaction/delays are not explained.
- **Complaints regarding policy and processes** – a reasonable disagreement with a policy or process or they are not properly explained.

4.5 What Is Not a Complaint?

- **An initial request for a service or action.** However, subsequent requests may be an implicit Complaint about service, inaction or delay.
- **Statements about an overall opinion** are generally not Complaints, unless a response or resolution is expected, or should be reasonably provided.
- **Request for information or explanations.** However, repeated requests for explanations may be implied Complaints about the quality of services, decisions or reasons previously provided.
- **Requests for updates are not generally Complaints.** However, some requests for updates may be implied Complaints about delay or inaction.

4.6 Unreasonable Complainant Conduct

The Sycamore School is committed to being accessible and responsive to all Complainants who approach our school regardless of ethnic identity, national origin, religion, linguistic background, sex, gender expression, sexual orientation, physical ability or other cultural or personal factors.

At the same time, the success of our School depends on:

- Our ability to do our work in the most effective and efficient ways possible.
- The health, safety and security of our staff.
- Our ability to allocate Complaint Management resources fairly based on the materiality of the Complaints we may receive.

In making Complaints, Complainants also have obligations to the School and staff, including those under the *Work Health & Safety Act 2011 (Qld)*, not to engage in unreasonable behaviour. This includes not making frivolous or vexatious complaints; not providing deliberately false or misleading information; not victimising or act in reprisal against any party to the dispute or any person associated with them.

Where Complainants repeatedly send letters, emails, or online forms that raise issues which are unlikely to be material, contain inappropriate or abusive content, or relate to an issue that has already been comprehensively considered or reviewed (at least once) by our School, we may restrict the issues the Complainant can raise with us.

If a Complainant's contact with our School places an unreasonable demand on our time or resources, or affects the health, safety, and security of our staff because it involves behaviour that is persistently rude, threatening, abusive or aggressive, we may limit when or how the Complainant can interact with us.

In rare cases, and as a last resort when all other strategies have been considered, The Sycamore Governing Body may decide that it is necessary for our school to completely restrict a Complainant's contact or access to our services.

5 Related Legislation

Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulations 2017 (Qld)

Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)

Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld)

6 Related Documents

[Effective Complaint handling guidelines, Ombudsman NSW, 3rd Edition, February 2017](#)

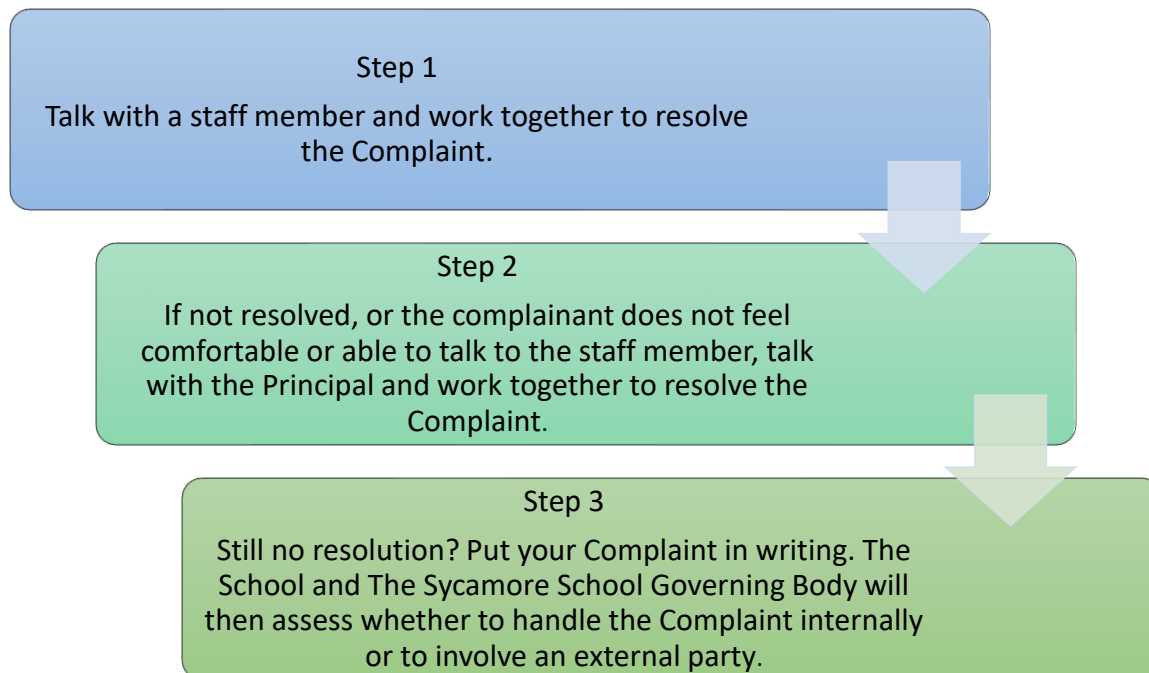
[Better Practice Complaint Handling Guide 2023, Commonwealth Ombudsman](#)

[Managing unreasonable conduct by a Complainant, A joint project of the Australasian Parliamentary Ombudsman, Ombudsman NSW, 2021](#)

Code of Conduct

Whistleblower Policy

7 Procedures



7.1 How a Student, Parent, Guardian or Carer can make a Complaint

- In the first instance, the student, parent, guardian or carer talks with a teacher or other school staff member, and they work together to resolve the Complaint.

For example - If a Complaint is with the child's teacher or relates to an issue concerning the child's experience at School, make an appointment with that teacher as soon as possible through the School's administration. Discuss the Complaint with the teacher and give the teacher an opportunity to suggest a solution. The teacher will make a record of the Complaint and report the meeting and any outcomes to the Deputy Principal. Together, parents/guardians/carers and teachers should be able to resolve the problem at this level.

- If the matter cannot be resolved, or the person does not feel comfortable discussing the matter with the teacher or staff member involved, the student, parent, guardian or carer talks with the Principal and they work together to resolve the Complaint.

For example – If the Complaint remains unresolved, make an appointment to see the Principal to discuss the issue further. Alternatively, a parent/guardian/carer and the teacher may agree to ask the Principal or their delegate to act as a go-between in an informal conflict resolution in an attempt to resolve the problem.

If the Complaint relates to a more general school matter, the Complaint should be raised directly with the Principal or their delegate. The Principal may refer the Complaint to a delegate such as the Deputy Principal or Business Manager.

- If you feel there is still no resolution you may be asked to put your Complaint in writing. Your Complaint should include:
 - Your contact details.
 - Nature of the matter including details of the Complaint (what is the problem, who is involved, when it happened, where it happened, any contextual information, names of witnesses or confidants).
- Resolution that is sought (for example an apology or an assurance that certain behaviour will not be repeated).

Complaints can be submitted in writing to:

The Principal
The Sycamore School
PO Box 5699
Alexandra Hills QLD 4151
principal@sycamore.qld.edu.au

7.2 Request for Review

If you are still not happy with the outcome, you have a right of appeal within 30 calendar days of receiving a final response to your complaint, to The Sycamore School Governing Body. A further right of appeal may be made to the Non-State Schools' Accreditation Board at nssab.qld.edu.au should all other courses of review not be successful.

7.3 Enrolment Termination Appeal Process

Suspension or termination of students is a serious consequence of a school's behaviour management process. Should a parent/guardian/carer (or the signatory of the enrolment form) feel aggrieved by a course of action taken by the School, they may appeal the decision by writing to The Sycamore School Governing Body. The appeal should set out the reasons for appealing the school Principal's decision to terminate enrolment. It should contain the student's name, school, year level, parent/guardian/carer name/s, contact phone number and email address.

7.4 Complaints about the Principal

Complaints about the Principal must be submitted in writing to:

The Board Chair
The Sycamore School
PO Box 5699
Alexandra Hills QLD 4151
jschmidt@thesycamoreschool.qld.edu.au

7.5 Response Timeframes

The time required to resolve a Complaint depends on its complexity, nature, and staff availability. Receipt of a Complaint will be acknowledged as soon as possible. Additional time may be required if a Complaint is submitted toward the end of a school term or outside of school terms.

8 Document History

Version	Description of modification	Modified by	Date
1.5	Review and updates	Vanessa Lyle	17/04/2024
1.4	Policy re-write Replaces Dispute Handling Policy and Parents and Volunteers Grievance Policy	Sandra Stuckey	19/11/2021
1.3	Dispute Handling Policy	Sonya Marshall	07/09/2020
1.2	Minor wording changes	Ronwyn Collier	16/08/2018
1.1	New policy	Nigal De Maria	13/07/2017