

Resolution of complaints procedure

Purpose

The purpose of the procedure is to enable appropriate staff within Toowoomba Catholic Schools (TCS) to respond effectively to complaints and ensure complaints are resolved in a fair and timely manner.

Please note

1. This procedure is not to be used to deal with situations where allegations of sexual abuse, harm or inappropriate behaviour towards students are made against employees. In these instances, the [Student Protection processes and guidelines](#) are to be applied.
2. This procedure is not to be used by employees to make a complaint. In these instances, one of the following procedures may be applied.
 - a. Employee grievance resolution procedure
 - b. Workplace bullying and harassment procedure
 - c. Anti-discrimination, equal employment and addressing sexual harassment procedure

To whom it applies

This procedure is to be followed by TCS students, school and general community members to register complaints that relate to any school-based or Toowoomba Catholic Schools Office decision or action.

Please note: School-based complaints should first be brought to the attention of the school principal or other appropriate staff member.

Procedure

1. General principles

- a. Confidentiality for parties to the complaint and impartiality underpin the resolution of complaints procedure.
- b. Parties to resolving a complaint will work together with respect, courtesy and openness.
- c. School-based complaints are most effectively resolved when raised at the school level. Complainants are encouraged to attempt to resolve the issue directly with the school in the first instance.
- d. Complainants have the right to be heard and to expect that ongoing relationships will continue respectfully.
- e. All complaints will be handled in a procedurally fair and timely manner. This includes staff members being informed of formal complaints made against them.
- f. Where a complaint is received anonymously, it shall be considered and acted upon. However, as no interaction is possible with the complainant, the ability of the school or TCS to act upon the complaint may be limited. Similarly, if a complainant asks to remain anonymous, it may affect TCS's ability to investigate and resolve the complaint.
- g. The availability of an independent review (where warranted) is an integral component of the complaint resolution procedure.

2. Complaints made to schools and colleges

- a. Where possible, complaints made to schools and colleges by parent/ legal guardians, carers, students or community members should be addressed and resolved at school level.
- b. School and college staff are to follow their school's/college's complaints management procedure for all such complaints.

- c. Where the complaint cannot reasonably be made or resolved at the school or college, for example where the complaint relates to the conduct of the principal, then the person making the complaint (the complainant) should refer their complaint to the Toowoomba Catholic Schools Office.

3. Complaints made to the Toowoomba Catholic Schools Office (TCSO)

a. Submitting a complaint

- i. [Toowoomba Catholic School website complaints form](#)
- ii. Phone TCSO: (07) 46371400

b. Receiving the complaint

- i. Complaints received by TCSO will be directed to the Executive Officer (for information only) who will forward the complaint to the relevant Senior Education Leader (SEL) of the school to which the complaint relates.
- ii. The SEL may immediately redirect the complainant to an appropriate school contact.
- iii. The SEL will determine the level of the complaint.
 - Low level complaints – those that can be managed easily and quickly by the provision of information, clarity or quick follow-up.
 - More serious complaints – to be managed under this procedure.
- iv. Where a complaint is received from a legal firm, Union or an external accountability agency such as the Non-State School Accreditation Board (NSSAB) or a Ministerial office it is to be provided to the Executive Officer for action.
- v. Complaints of criminal behaviour will be referred to the Police, and any allegation of abuse, harm or inappropriate behaviour will be reported as required under the TCS Student protection processes and guidelines. The TCS Professional Standards team will also be engaged.

c. Recording and allocating the complaint

- i. Details of all complaints received are to be recorded in the TCS Complaints register.
- ii. The SEL will manage the complaint (complaint manager), unless otherwise stipulated.
- iii. The complaint manager is to make contact with the complainant (if contact details have been provided) to
 - confirm details of the complaint
 - establish any further action that may be required
 - provide alternative options to the complainant, for example, lodging the complaint with an external body where applicable
 - provide information about support options to the complainant.

d. Managing the complaint

- i. The complaint manager will manage the complaint in accordance with the relevant TCS policies, procedures and guidelines. Where the complaint requires an investigation, such as a complaint about the conduct or performance of an employee, the Professional Standards team may be involved.
- ii. Records will be kept of any interview or written statement and added to the TCS Complaints register.
- iii. The complaint manager will gather and assess all relevant information to determine what additional steps need to be undertaken. The assessment procedure may result in a resolution at that point, or further investigation may be required.

e. The outcome

- i. Dependent on whether the complaint is substantiated, unsubstantiated, or unable to be substantiated the following outcomes will be determined by the complaint manager.
 - a verbal or written apology
 - mediation
 - systemic actions, for example the provision of resources, clarifying documentation or procedures
 - disciplinary action, including a Disciplinary Action Improvement Plan
 - a Performance Improvement Plan
- ii. The complaint manager is responsible for ensuring the outcome is communicated in writing to all parties in order that the complaint can be finalised.
- iii. All documentation related to the complaint and its resolution is to be either
 - uploaded to the TCS Complaints register by the complaint manager and a finalisation date entered OR
 - provided to the Executive Officer to upload to the TCS Complaints register and to enter a finalisation date.

Please note: Where a complaint is managed in accordance with the TCS Student protection processes and guidelines, the records will be stored securely by the Professional Standards team, and this will be noted in the TCS Complaints register.

- iv. Not all parties will be provided with detail as to the specific outcome, with due regard to the privacy of individuals involved.

f. Appeals

- i. Where the management of a complaint is finalised and one or more of the parties to the complaint are unsatisfied with the outcome, they should in the first instance raise their concern with the complaint manager.
- ii. Where this does not reach a satisfactory outcome, the complaint should be referred to the Executive Officer who, in consultation with the relevant Director, will determine the appropriate person or body to address the appeal. The Executive Director: Catholic Schools is the final decision maker.

4. Complaints in relation to non-compliance with the [TCS Student Protection processes and guidelines](#)

- a. Where a complaint is made in relation to an allegation of non-compliance with the Student Protection processes and guidelines, the complaint is to be referred to the Manager: Professional Standards.
- b. The Manager: Professional Standards will engage the TCS Student Protection Officer as the complaint manager and the complaint will be addressed in accordance with the Student Protection processes and guidelines.

Authority

This procedure is the responsibility of the Executive Director: Catholic Schools. Any changes to this procedure can only be made with approval from the Executive Director: Catholic Schools.

Version control and change history

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