

COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE

SMYL Community College welcomes feedback from all members of the College community and takes all complaints or concerns that may be raised seriously. This Complaints Handling Procedure is designed to assist you to understand how to make a complaint.

We acknowledge that students and parents/guardians may sometimes have a complaint about a decision, behaviour, act, or omission that they feel is unacceptable. Whilst most issues can be resolved through direct discussion, there may be instances in which this is not possible.

For the purposes of this Procedure, we use the terms “staff” and “staff member” to include all teaching and non-teaching staff, Board members, volunteers, contractors and external providers.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to SMYL Community College, 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 Safe Codes of Conduct, relating to conduct by:

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

are managed differently to other complaints.

Refer to the section at the end of this policy –Child Safety Incidents Complaints or Allegations – for more information.

Our Commitment

SMYL Community College 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 “Complaints Handling Guide: Upholding the Rights of Children and Young People”.
- the international complaints handling standard (ISO 10002:2018 Quality management – Customer satisfaction – Guidelines for complaints handling in organizations), and
- the Australian/New Zealand complaints handling standard (AS/NZS 10002:2014 Guidelines for complaint management in organizations).

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 to identify causes and systemic failures so as to inform continuous improvement are key to the College's commitment.

When handling complaints, SMYL Community College ensures that reporting, record keeping, privacy and employment law obligations are met. Our College's complaints handling process conforms to the rules of procedural fairness and confidentiality – information is only shared with those who need to know.

Culturally Safe Complaints Management

SMYL Community College values diversity and does not tolerate any discriminatory practices. To achieve this, we support the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families. Our College's complaint handling system is one which is culturally safe and overcomes cultural barriers and taboos to disclosure – our complaints handling process is managed by people who are aware of and sensitive to potential complainant's culture and cultural attitudes.

Informal 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 staff member most closely concerned with the issue. They may be able to resolve the issue quickly. You can contact the staff member in person, by telephone or by email. Please ask if you require some assistance in expressing your concern.

Even if the issue is resolved informally, staff are required to log concerns in the My SMYL Complaints Register so we are able to identify any systemic issues arising and take appropriate remedial action.

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:

1. Provide your feedback/details of the complaint via the 'Contact us' function on our College website.
2. Sending an email to: college@smylcollege.wa.edu.au
3. Writing a letter to the College addressed to "The Complaints Manager".
4. Telephoning the College and asking to speak to the student's Teacher, Campus Coordinator or Principal.
5. If the complaint is about a sensitive matter regarding the Principal, the complaint can be made in writing, addressed to "The Board Chair."

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

Our Internal Complaints Handling Process

Step 1 – All formal complaints are logged through our online complaints management system where they are allocated to the appropriate claim respondent officer. In most instances this will be the person to whom the respondent reports, i.e. Campus Coordinator, Deputy Principal, Principal, or in the case of complaints against the Principal by the Board Chair.

Step 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.

Step 3 – The complaint resolution officer will investigate the issues raised, following principles of procedural fairness, and make a determination.

Step 4 – Following the determination, if appropriate, the complaint resolution officer will formulate a resolution and provide a written response to the complainant. The matter will be closed if this response is accepted.

Step 5 – Internal reviews: If the initial response is not acceptable 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 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 Principal, or their delegate, is accepted.

Step 6 - All complaints received will be entered into our MySMYL 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, the complainant may pursue external resolution alternatives.

The Role of the Director General

The Director General of the Department of Education is responsible for ensuring that the College observes the School Registration Standards, including the standard about its complaints handling system. Any student, parent or community member is entitled to contact the Director General with concerns about how the College has dealt with a complaint. Information is available on the Department of Education website (<https://www.education.wa.edu.au/non-government-school-concerns>).

While the Director General may consider whether the College has breached the School Registration Standards, she does not have power to intervene in a complaint or override the College's decision.

Child-Friendly Complaints

The principles that apply to complaints also are applied to complaints and concerns raised by students. The College is committed to improving the visibility, accessibility and responsiveness of the complaints process for our students. Students are encouraged to report complaints by talking to a staff member in the college that they feel comfortable with.

Students can make a complaint in writing (letter, email, complaint form or school website), face to face or by telephone on 9550 9400.

Child Safety Complaints or Allegations

Complaints about, or allegations of, child abuse, grooming or other harm, whether involving former or current staff or students, another person on College grounds or during school related activities are managed by the College in a different manner from other complaints.

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

If your complaint is a child safety-related complaint, please make your complaint to the Principal on 9550 9400.

If the complaint is about a sensitive matter regarding the Principal, the complaint can be made in writing, addressed to "The Board Chair, SMYL Community College, 46 Mews Road Fremantle, WA 6160".