



# Complaints Handling Policy and Procedures

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# Complaints Handling Policy and Procedures

## Policy Statement

This policy applies to Heritage College Lake Macquarie (HCLM) in handling complaints made in respect of services provided by the school or against staff members, which includes employees, contractors, and volunteers.

This policy does not extend to personal grievances between parents, guardians, or other members of the school community.

All parties involved in complaints handling are required to maintain appropriate confidentiality, including in relation to handling and storing records.

## 1. Types of complaints

A complaint or grievance is an expression of dissatisfaction made to HCLM about an educational and/or operational matter relating to services provided by the school or the behaviour or decisions of a staff member, contractor, or volunteer, including misconduct.

### Whistleblowing Complaints

This procedure does not extend to complaints which are whistleblowing disclosures. The procedure for processing whistleblowing complaints is dealt with in HCLM's Whistleblowing Policy.

In summary a whistleblowing disclosure is a disclosure which:

- a) is made by a board member, staff member, a person who supplies goods or services to HCLM, including a volunteer, an employer of a supplier or a relative of any of these people;
- b) involves alleged misconduct, an improper state of affairs or circumstances, or illegal activity; and
- c) is made to a senior staff member, or officer of HCLM, the school's auditor or a person who HCLM has authorised to collect such disclosures.

### Reportable Conduct

Complaints about reportable conduct will be addressed in accordance with **HCLM's Child Protection Policy**.

### Staff Grievances

Staff Complaints regarding a grievance between staff members about work matters, including work relationships and decision made by other staff members which impact on their work, will be addressed in accordance with HCLM's **Staff Grievance Policy**.

### Unlawful Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying

Complaints regarding unlawful discrimination, harassment, or bullying between staff are generally addressed in accordance with HCLM's **Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying Policy**.

## 2. Raising a complaint

If a parent/carer or student has a concern about the conduct of a staff member, they should raise their concern with HCLM in accordance with [section 3](#). If a complaint that concerns the behaviour

of a staff member may constitute reportable conduct, the matter will be addressed in accordance with HCLM's Child Protection Policy in accordance with [section 3](#).

***Please refer to HCLM's Child Protection Policy for information about reportable conduct.***

***Complainants are not required to assess whether their concern meets the threshold of reportable conduct before making a complaint. Any concern about a child's wellbeing may be reported under this policy.***

- 2.1. Complaints may be made by a student or parent/carer. HCLM will seek to resolve complaints informally where possible but acknowledges that in some cases a person may wish to make a formal complaint.
- 2.2. Informal complaints should be raised by a complainant directly with the person involved.
- 2.3. If the complainant feels uncomfortable raising the matter directly with the person involved, the matter can be raised with the Head of Primary, Head of Secondary or Deputy Principal.
- 2.4. Should the matter not be resolved through informal processes, the complainant may raise the matter formally with HCLM. A formal complaint can be made in writing to the Principal via email ([principal@heritage.edu.au](mailto:principal@heritage.edu.au)).
- 2.5. Where a person wishes to make a formal complaint concerning the Principal, the complaint should be made in writing to the Chair of the Board via email ([chair@heritage.edu.au](mailto:chair@heritage.edu.au)). In this situation, the references in this policy relating to the role of the Principal should be read as references to the Chair of the Board.
- 2.6. The Principal or Delegate will generally acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint in writing as soon as practicable

### 3. Handling complaints based on principles of procedural fairness

#### Assessing Complaints




- 3.1. The Principal/Delegate generally will assess the complaint and determine:
  - a) Whether the complaint is one to be addressed under this policy, qualifies as a staff grievance, or pertains to reportable conduct. For matters addressed by other relevant policies, refer to [section 1](#).
  - b) The priority of the complaint in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the matter raised; and
  - c) whether HCLM may be required to report the matter to the Office of the Children's Guardian, Police, Department of Communities and Justice or other relevant authorities should the complaint relate to possible unlawful conduct or other reportable matters.

#### Managing a formal complaint

- 3.2. The Principal/Delegate generally will manage a formal complaint by:
  - a) advising the complainant of the likely steps that will be undertaken by HCLM in relation to the complaint;
  - b) if appropriate, advising the relevant parties of the complaint at the relevant time and providing them with an opportunity to respond;
  - c) collecting any additional information HCLM considers necessary to assess the complaint;

- d) making a decision about how the complaint will be resolved (“resolution decision”); and
  - e) advising the complainant in writing, and any other relevant parties as appropriate, of the resolution decision of the Principal/Delegate and if appropriate, any proposed action to be taken.
- 3.3.** There may be circumstances where some of the steps outlined above are not appropriate and HCLM will determine, on a case-by-case basis, the most appropriate method of handling the complaint.
- 3.4.** A complainant and the relevant parties that the complaint is about may choose to have an appropriate support person present at any meeting with representatives of HCLM about the complaint. However, HCLM maintains the right to determine whether the person’s preferred support person is appropriate and may not approve the attendance of a support person where they are determined by HCLM to be inappropriate.

## 4. Related Documents

-  Child Protection Policy.pdf
-  Grievance Procedure.pdf
-  Staff Discrimination Harassment and Bullying Policy.pdf

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