



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 applies to complaints regarding HCLM services and staff misconduct. It does not cover personal grievances between parents, guardians, or other members of the school community.

All parties involved in the complaints process are required to maintain appropriate confidentiality, including the handling and storage of records.

The school's website provides public access to its Complaints Handling Policy and Procedures. This document, which addresses stakeholder complaints regarding staff misconduct and employee reportable allegations, is freely accessible without the need for a login or firewall.

A link to the school's Complaints Handling Policy and Procedures is also included in the Annual Report each year.

1. Types of complaints

- 1.1. A complaint or grievance is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction made to HCLM concerning an educational or operational matter relating to services provided by the school, or regarding the conduct or decisions of a staff member, contractor, or volunteer, including instances of misconduct.
- 1.2. This procedure does not cover whistleblowing disclosures, which are addressed under HCLM's **Whistleblower Policy**. In summary a whistleblowing disclosure is one that:
 - 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.
 - 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.
- 1.3. Other specific types of complaints are handled under separate policies:
 - a) Reportable conduct: Addressed in accordance with HCLM's **Child Protection Policy**.
 - b) Staff grievances: Complaints between staff members concerning work matters, including relationships and decisions impacting their work, are addressed in accordance with HCLM's **Staff Grievance Policy**.
 - c) Unlawful discrimination, harassment, or bullying (staff): Generally addressed under HCLM's **Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying Policy**.
 - d) Teacher accreditation processes: Addressed in accordance with the school's **Teacher Accreditation Procedures**.

2. Raising a complaint

If a parent/carer or student has a concern about a staff member's conduct, they should contact HCLM as outlined below. If the complaint might be reportable conduct, it will be handled according to HCLM's Child Protection Policy.

For information on reportable conduct, please refer to HCLM's Child Protection Policy.

Complainants do not need to determine if their concern meets the threshold of reportable conduct before making a complaint. Any concern about a child's wellbeing can be reported under this policy.

- 2.1. Complaints can be made by a student or parent/carer. HCLM aims to resolve complaints informally, but acknowledges that formal complaints may be necessary.

Informal Complaints

- 2.2. General complaints may be raised by a complainant directly with the person involved.
- 2.3. If the complainant is uncomfortable speaking directly with the person involved, or if it is inappropriate to do so, the matter can be raised with the Head of Primary, Head of Secondary, or Deputy Principal.
- 2.4. Any complaint about a staff member's conduct should initially be raised directly with the Principal.

Formal Complaints

- 2.5. If a matter is not resolved informally, the complainant may raise it formally with HCLM.
- 2.6. A formal complaint can be made in writing to the Principal via email (principal@heritage.edu.au). The Principal or Delegate will generally acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint in writing as soon as practicable.
- 2.7. 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). 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.

Assessing Complaints

- 2.8. The Principal/Delegate generally will assess the complaint and:
 - a) Determine if the complaint falls under this policy, the Staff Grievance Policy, or pertains to reportable conduct. For matters covered by other policies, refer to [section 1](#).
 - b) Prioritise the complaint based on its urgency and seriousness.
 - c) Determine if HCLM is obligated to report the issue to the Office of the Children's Guardian, Police, Department of Communities and Justice, or other relevant authorities, especially if the matter involves potential unlawful conduct or other reportable incidents.

Managing a formal complaint

- 2.9. The Principal/Delegate will generally manage a formal complaint by:
 - a) Informing the complainant of the likely steps HCLM will take.
 - b) If appropriate, advising relevant parties of the complaint and allowing them to respond. Please note that timeframes for investigating complaints related to reportable conduct can vary and may be extended, especially for historical allegations. Due to privacy and confidentiality requirements, the school may be

limited in the information it can share with the complainant regarding the investigation's outcome. Refer to the school's Child Protection Policy for details on reportable conduct.

- c) Collecting any additional information HCLM deems necessary for assessment.
- d) Making a decision on how the complaint will be resolved ("resolution decision").
- e) Notifying the complainant in writing, and other relevant parties as appropriate, of the resolution decision and any proposed actions.

2.10. HCLM reserves the right to determine the most appropriate method of handling a complaint on a case-by-case basis, as some of the outlined steps may not be suitable in all circumstances.

2.11. Complainants and relevant parties may have an appropriate support person present at meetings with HCLM representatives regarding the complaint. However, HCLM retains the right to determine the appropriateness of the chosen support person and may deny attendance if deemed unsuitable.

3. Related Documents

-  Child Protection Policy.pdf
-  Grievance Procedure.pdf
-  Staff Discrimination Harassment and Bullying Policy.pdf
-  Procedures for Teacher Accreditation at HCLM.pdf
-  Whistleblower Policy.pdf

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