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SAINT MAROUN'S COLLEGE



St Maroun's College policies have a commitment to Maronite Catholic ethos and values and should be read in conjunction with other policies and procedures and with relevant legislation.

COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY **For All Stakeholders**

This policy and its procedures supersedes all previous policies and procedures relating to matters contained herein.

Mission

Inspired by the Maronite Sisters of the Holy Family, we provide high quality learning, nurturing students in their spiritual, academic, physical, and social potential, to serve the needs of the broader community.

Vision

We enable our community to grow in the likeness of Christ, striving for excellence as leaders and advocates, and positively transforming our world.

Friendship, Faith, Honesty

Ethos:

The College strives to instil in students the teachings of Jesus.

Emphasis is firstly given to providing a Maronite Catholic foundation through regular prayer, celebration of the Sacraments, commitment to the Word of God, and openness to grace.

Secondly, all are encouraged to see the best in themselves and in one another, as Paul writes, 'Whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things' (Phil 4:8). Emphasises is on treating all with dignity, service, forgiveness, justice, and love.

Thirdly, the College is a community which promotes a sense of family among the Sisters, Board Members, staff, students, parents, and friends

1. INTRODUCTION

St Maroun's College is committed to developing an educational and inclusive organisational culture based on mutual trust and respect.

We acknowledge that, sometimes, complaints about a decision, behaviour, communication, act or omission may arise. While most issues can be resolved through direct discussion with the parties, there may be instances in which this is not possible.

St Maroun's College's policies have a commitment to the Maronite Catholic ethos and values and should be read in conjunction with other policies and procedures with relevant legislation.

2. SCOPE

The Complaints Handling Policy (the Policy) and Procedures (Procedures) applies to the management of complaints made in respect of services provided by St Maroun's College or against staff members, which includes employees, contractors and volunteers.

3. POLICY EXCLUSIONS

This Policy and following procedures do not extend to personal grievances between parents, guardians or other members of the College community.

Parents, Guardians or student complaints on discrimination, harassment and bullying, including cyber bullying, are asked to refer to the College *Anti-Bullying Policy and Procedures*, *ICT (Information & Communication Technologies) Policy*, *Staff and Student Acceptable Usage Policies* and *BYOD Policy* for the most effective process to resolve the issue.

People who wish to make a complaint regarding whistleblowing disclosures is dealt with in St Maroun's College Policy *Whistleblowing Policy*.

In summary a whistleblowing disclosure is a disclosure which:

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

4. RELATED POLICIES

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

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 the school's *Staff Grievance Policy*.

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

5. UNDERSTANDINGS OF TERMS

This Complaints Handling Policy and associated Procedures adheres to the following understandings of the law.

Complainant:

The person raising a complaint or grievance. In this Policy and Procedures, the complainant refers to students, parents, guardians, staff and community members.

Respondent:

The person with whom the complaint has been made against.

Procedural Fairness:

“Procedural fairness is a basic right of all when dealing with authorities. Procedural fairness refers to what are sometimes described as the *‘hearing rule’* and the *‘right to an unbiased decision’* (NESA (NSW Education Standards Authority) 2020).

The *‘hearing rule’* includes the right of the person against whom an allegation has been made to:

- Know the allegations related to a specific matter and any other information which will be taken into account in considering the matter.
- Know the process by which the matter will be considered.
- Respond to the allegations.
- Know how to seek a review of the decision made in response to the allegation.

The *‘right to an unbiased decision’* includes the right to:

- Impartiality in an investigation and decision-making.
- An absence of bias by the decision-maker.” (NESA 2020)

6. COLLEGE PRINCIPLES

St Maroun’s College is committed to ensuring complaints are addressed appropriately and in a timely manner. Thus, when dealing with any complaint or grievance, the College adheres to the following principles.

(a) Commitment

The College will investigate all complaints in accordance with this Policy. This will be reflected in the:

- Adoption and distribution of this Complaints Handling Policy and Procedures.
- Appropriate induction and training of employees, contractors and volunteers in the implementation of this Policy.
- Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this Policy and its Procedures.

(b) Responsiveness

Complaints will be dealt with promptly. The Executive Principal or Executive Principal’s appointed delegate will respond in writing within 7 working days to the complainant. The process and the time needed to resolve an issue will vary depending on the nature and complexity of the complaint.

(c) Visibility

The existence of this *Complaint Handling Policy and Procedures*, its purpose and the method of accessing it will be promoted externally to the community via the College website. A Complaint Form (Appendix 2) is included in this document for stakeholders to use.

(d) Subsidiarity

The process of responding to a formal complaint will reflect the principle of subsidiarity. This means that we expect that complaints may be resolved wherever possible at the lowest level of management necessary for their proper resolution.

(e) Procedural Fairness

The principles of procedural fairness will be followed with all complaints or grievances. St Maroun's College procedural fairness includes:

- Providing the complainant (you) the opportunity to put your case forward.
- Offering the complainant assistance to ensure you are aware of the Complaint Handling Procedures included in this document.
- Informing the respondent of the substance of the complaint and providing an opportunity for the person to respond.
- Respondent is provided ample notice to attend meetings (minimum of 24 hours' notice in accordance with Catholic Employment Relations).
- Ensure all parties involved are provided the opportunity to have a support person attend a meeting with them.
- Providing the respondent with information about the complaint investigation process including outcomes.
- The complaint process including investigations are strictly confidential.
- Assessing the facts and circumstances of the situation objectively and determining the complaint fairly and equitably.
- Determining the complaint as expeditiously as possible and advising the determining outcome of the complaint to the respondent.
- Providing the complainant with details of the final determination and reasons for the decision.
- Informing the complainant and respondent of any avenue for review.

(f) Confidentiality and Privacy

Confidentiality is an obligation to the provider of information. Privacy is an obligation to the subject of the information.

In making a complaint, you can feel secure that your complaint will remain appropriately confidential in accordance with the Privacy Act 1988.

Confidentiality will be always respected within the constraints of the need to fully investigate the complaint. The obligation to maintain confidentiality extends to *all* parties involved and the handling and storage of all information and evidence associated with the complaint.

(g) Access and equity

The complaints handling process is accessible to all stakeholder on St Maroun's College website www.stmarouns.nsw.edu.au. Additional assistance is available if you are from a culturally and linguistically diverse background, have a disability, or are a young person.

(h) No victimisation

If you make a complaint in good faith, you will be rigorously protected from detrimental action including victimisation or unfair treatment.

Staff inappropriate behaviour regarding this, may lead to termination of employment.

(i) **Vexatious or malicious complaints**

There is an underlying assumption that complaints are made in good faith and with good will, with an intention for resolution, as opposed to retribution.

(j) **Anonymous complaints**

Anonymous complaints do not reflect the principles outlined above. If you make an anonymous verbal complaint to the College, you will be encouraged to identify yourself and put your complaint in writing in order for the procedures outlined in this Policy to be implemented fully. (Appendix 2 Complaint Forms).

7. COMPLAINTS (NSW Child Safe Standards 2, 3, 4, 6,7 and 10)

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

The College will seek to resolve complaints informally where possible but acknowledges that in some cases a person may wish to make a formal complaint.

This Policy and its Procedures encompasses complaints and grievances from all stakeholders in regard to the St Maroun's College this includes any:

Student
Parent/Carer
Staff member
Volunteer
Contractor
Community member

A complaint or concern about the misconduct or allegation about a staff member should be raised **directly** with the Executive Principal Principal@stmarouns.nsw.edu.au as soon as possible as it may constitute reportable conduct. If a complaint that concerns the behaviour of a staff member may constitute reportable conduct, the matter will be addressed in accordance with the school's Child Protection Policy in accordance with section 4. Please refer to the school's *Child Protection Policy* for information about reportable conduct.

The complainant or concerned person, is not required to consider whether the staff member's conduct is reportable before informing the Executive Principal. **Any concern about a student's safety, wellbeing or welfare is important** to the College and can be reported under this policy.

8. RAISING A COMPLAINT

8.1 The complainant

Informal complaints may be raised by a complainant directly with the person involved. However, if the complainant does not feel comfortable doing so or, the matter is one where it may not be appropriate to do so, a complaint can be made to the Executive Principal or their delegate the Head

of College. Any complaint about the conduct of a staff member should be raised directly with the Executive Principal in the first instance.

Should the matter not be resolved through informal processes, the complainant may raise the matter formally with the College. A formal complaint should be made in writing to the Executive Principal or Executive Principal's delegate via email to principal@stmarouns.nsw.edu.au.

Where a person wishes to make a formal complaint concerning the Executive Principal, the complaint should be made in writing to the Chair of the Board for St Maroun's College, via email chairperson@stmarouns.nsw.edu.au. In this situation, the position in this policy relating to the role of the Executive Principal should be read as a reference to the Chair of the Board.

8.2 The School

The Executive Principal or the Executive Principal's delegate will acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint in writing within 7 working days of receipt.

9. HANDLING COMPLAINTS

The following are the steps St Maroun's College assumes when handling a complaint from a stakeholder.

9.1 Assessing the Complaint

The **Executive Principal or Executive Principal's Delegate** will assess the complaint and determine:

1. Whether the complaint is one to be addressed under this Policy or is a staff grievance or reportable conduct matter which are dealt with by the relevant policies. See section 4; and
2. The priority of the complaint in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the matter raised.
3. Whether the College may be required to report the matter to the Office of Children's Guardian, Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ), Police, or other relevant authorities, should the complaint relate to possible unlawful conduct or other reportable matters.

9.2 Managing a Formal Complaint

The **Executive Principal or Executive Principal's delegate** will manage a formal complaint in accordance with the following steps.

1. Advising the complainant of the likely steps that will be undertaken by the College in relation to their complaint.


2. If appropriate, advising the respondent of the complaint at a pertinent time and providing them the opportunity to respond.
3. Collecting any additional information, the College considers necessary to assess the complaint.
4. Making a decision about how the complaint will be resolved.
5. Advising the complainant in writing, and any other relevant parties as appropriate, of the decision made by the **Executive Principal or Executive Principal's delegate** and if appropriate, any proposed action to be taken.

There may be circumstances where some of the steps outlined above are not appropriate. St Maroun's College will determine on a case-by-case basis, the most appropriate method of handling the complaint.

A complainant and the relevant parties may choose to have an appropriate support person present at any meeting where representatives of the College are present. However, St Maroun's College 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 the College to be inappropriate.

All documentation collected during the formal complaint process will be securely stored at the College by the Executive Principal or Executive Principal's delegate.

If you have any queries about this Policy and procedures, or the form, contact the Head of Business Services via email mary.flaskos@stmarouns.nsw.edu.au

Policy	Complaints Handling Policy
Last reviewed	March 2024
Next review	Term 1, 2025
Authorised	

Appendix 1

COMPLAINT FORM

CONFIDENTIAL

Full Name of Complainant:
Date of incident leading to complaint (if applicable):
Contact Details: Phone: Email:
Reason for Complaint:
Please provide as much details as possible:
Witnesses (if any):
Date of submission to the College:

COLLEGE USE ONLY

Person Handling Complaint:

Person Investigating:

Record:

Decision:

Follow up Action (if required):

Authorisation/Declaration:

Name:

Signature:

Date: