



# Complaints Handling Procedures

## Purpose

This procedure sets out the processes used to manage and respond to complaints in line with the Complaints Handling Policy to:

- promote the health, safety and wellbeing of students
- ensure consistent and fair complaints management
- improve the outcomes of complaints with a focus on collaboration and resolution
- meet its legal and regulatory obligations

## Procedures



Call 03 9845 3211 or [enquiries@emmaus.edu.vic.au](mailto:enquiries@emmaus.edu.vic.au) and let us know if you need an interpreter. We will organise one for you.

Emmaus College is committed to receiving, managing, and responding to complaints in a manner that achieves the best possible outcome for our students and fosters good relationships with parents/guardians/carers and the College community.

## How to make a complaint with Emmaus College

A complaint is a formal expression of dissatisfaction with an action taken, decision made, service provided or handling of an issue by the College. The nature of complaints covered by this procedure is outlined in the College Complaints Handling Policy. The policy indicates also, which complaints are not covered by the policy and how these may be addressed.

Complaints can be raised by students, parents/guardians/carers or members of the College community. A complaint can be about an action taken, decision made, or services provided by the College, or the way in which the College has handled an issue. Also, It could be about the behaviour of College staff, volunteers, or contractors.

In the day to day running of a College, students, parents/guardians/carers also may have queries, concerns or areas for which clarification is sought. These matters do not constitute complaints, and the College encourages its employees to work collaboratively with students, parents/guardians/carers and members of the College community to resolve these matters informally with the wellbeing of the student at the centre of the matter. If resolution of the matter is not possible in this manner, then it may escalate to a complaint under the Complaint Handling Policy and this procedure.

## Who to contact

Where appropriate and in the first instance, any concerns or queries are to be raised with a student's subject teacher or other relevant member of the College staff, including their Pastoral teacher or House Leader.

If a concern is unable to be resolved informally, a complaint may then be raised with the Director of Students or Deputy Principal Students. Otherwise, it may be escalated to one of the other Deputy Principals or the College Principal.

Where a complaint is received, the College will ensure the staff member managing the complaint is someone other than the subject of the complaint.

Complaints can be submitted via either email, telephone or in-person meeting. Appropriate contact details are:

Emmaus College

[enquiries@emmaus.edu.vic.au](mailto:enquiries@emmaus.edu.vic.au)

03 9845 3211

In the case of a complaint involving the College Principal, the relevant regional general manager should be informed. Contact details are listed below, see Complaints Escalation.

Parents/guardians/carers must not approach any other student in the care of the College to discuss an issue or to chastise them. Direct contact with other parents to resolve the matter is discouraged if the complaint relates to issues or incidents that have arisen at the College.

## What information to provide and matters to consider

In making a complaint, the College requests and expects that the complainant will:

- raise the concern or complaint as soon as possible after the issue has arisen
- be clear about the topic or issue to be discussed
- provide all the facts relating to the issues raised
- check and observe the College Complaints Handling Policy and Procedures
- communicate and respond in ways that are constructive, fair and respectful
- provide complete and factual information about the complaint
- observe confidentiality and a respect for sensitive issues
- act in good faith to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
- think about what a fair outcome would be for everyone
- have realistic and reasonable expectations about possible outcomes/remedies.

## Role of Emmaus College

### Receipt of complaint

The College will record the details of all complaints, including the name and contact details of the persons making the complaint.

The College will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within two school days.

Where possible, the College will provide indicative timelines relevant to the nature of the complaint and advise the complainant how the complaint will be addressed.

The College will refer the complaint to the most appropriate person to manage the complaint. If the complainant has not raised the issue with the relevant teacher, the College Principal may ask them to first discuss their complaint with the teacher, when it is appropriate to do so, before it progresses through this complaint's procedure.

To have matters managed fairly, the College will ensure the staff member addressing the complaint, is someone other than the subject of the complaint.

Complainants should be aware that employees, volunteers and contractors will be informed of formal complaints that are made about them in order to enable them to respond to the concern raised.

### **Response to complaints**

The staff member, to whom the complaint is referred, will contact the complainant to let them know they have been allocated to their complaint and the next steps in the process.

The staff member may communicate with the complainant to discuss the issues they have raised and to gain some further information. They may speak also to other staff or students, who may be able to provide relevant information.

If a complainant has a known vulnerability that has been communicated to the College, College staff will seek to accommodate any cultural, financial, physical, mental or related vulnerabilities by putting relevant support in place.

The College will endeavour to complete any necessary information gathering and hold an initial meeting where appropriate within 10 working days of the complaint being raised. A meeting will be arranged to discuss the issues raised by the complainant and explore options for resolution.

If the matter remains unresolved following this meeting and further time is required to resolve the matter, the College will consult with the complainant and discuss any interim solutions to the concerns that can be put in place.

If the complainant and the College cannot achieve a mutually agreed outcome, the College Principal or someone appointed by them will write to the complainant providing a summary of the action taken by the College in response to their complaint and the College's position in response to the issues raised. This should occur within 20 working days from when the complaint was first received, however, depending on the complexity of the complaint, more time may be needed to gather enough information to fully understand the circumstances of the complaint. The College will provide updates throughout the process as appropriate.

If the scope of the complaint is beyond the capacity or jurisdiction of the College, the matter will be referred to the relevant regional general manager and the complainant will be informed of the referral and reasons for this decision. This may be required for complaints against the College Principal or where matters are unresolved by the College.

### **College recordkeeping and privacy statement**

The College will handle personal, sensitive and health information in accordance with the College's Privacy Policy, MACS requirements for recordkeeping, retention and disposal, and requirements under the Child Information Sharing Scheme and the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme.

Privacy laws may prohibit information being provided to the complainant about any specific action taken in relation to individuals about whom a complaint has been raised.

The College will ensure that it will create, maintain, and dispose of records relevant to child safety and wellbeing in accordance with the policies and procedures for recordkeeping in MACS schools.

## Outcomes of complaints

Potential outcomes of complaints can include:

- an apology – either verbal or written
- mediation – with an internal or external mediator
- an official warning
- disciplinary action
- a behavioural contract (in the case of a student)
- pastoral or spiritual care
- an understanding that the behaviour will not be repeated; and/or
- a change in policy or procedure

Complainants will be provided with the reasons for the outcome/decision.

## Complaint escalation

A complainant may escalate their complaint to the MACS Eastern Regional Office via the following details:

Eastern Regional Office  
39 Hewish Road  
CROYDON VIC 3136  
Ph: 03 9427 6400  
Email: [manager.ero@macs.vic.edu.au](mailto:manager.ero@macs.vic.edu.au)

Alternatively, a complainant may lodge a complaint online at [www.macs.vic.edu.au/Contact-Us/Complaints.aspx](http://www.macs.vic.edu.au/Contact-Us/Complaints.aspx).

## When the regional office will become involved

The regional office is responsible for responding to complaints when:

- a complainant is not satisfied that a matter has been addressed in accordance with the College's complaints handling policies and processes
- a complainant is not satisfied that an acceptable resolution has been reached
- the subject of the complaint relates to policy outside the responsibility or management of the College
- the College requests assistance to resolve a complaint
- the subject of the complaint is the College Principal.

Generally, the regional office will not become involved when:

- issues have not been raised with the College
- the College is continuing to address the issues in the complaint
- the College has responsibility over the issues raised (e.g. College uniform, Canteen duty, parking)
- issues raised can be resolved at the College level

## Role of the regional office

The regional office will:

- acknowledge receipt of a complaint within two working days
- contact the complainant to ensure they are aware of the complaint handling procedures, to confirm and clarify their issues and provide an indicative time for resolution
- raise the issue with the College, if the complainant has not done so, to assist with initiating discussions with the College, if appropriate

- work with the College and the complainant to achieve a mutually agreed resolution
- review the issues raised by the complainant and communicate the outcome of this review to the complainant, if a mutually agreed resolution cannot be achieved

In undertaking the above procedure, the regional office will:

- ensure that any student affected by the complaint remains engaged in education
- support families and College staff in the complaint process by providing appropriate or additional supports; and
- document the actions taken to achieve the outcome.

When a complaint is not resolved after the involvement of a regional general manager, it may be referred to the Executive Director for review by emailing [execdirector@macs.vic.edu.au](mailto:execdirector@macs.vic.edu.au). If the complaint is unable to be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, however the matter is finalised, the complainant has the right to seek alternative independent or other advice or contact other entities such as the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, or the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. Complaints related to the minimum standards for school registration can be referred to the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA).

## Students raising complaints and concerns

The College encourages students to raise any concerns they may have with a trusted adult staff member at the College. Complaints made by students will be taken seriously.

A trusted adult at the College may include the Pastoral Teacher, House Leader Deputy Principal Students, Director of Students or the College Principal. The staff member will explain to the student what steps they will take to try to resolve the issue and what the College can do to support the student.

Also, students can ask their parent/ guardian/ carer or another trusted adult outside the College to talk to the College about the issue. Other ways students can raise a concern or complaint with the College include:

- [Community Care @ Vermont South](#)
- [Community Care @ Burwood](#)
- [Communication Circles of Support](#)

The College will ensure students know/are informed of who to approach and relevant processes to raise complaints by information on Emmlink as part of their wellbeing curriculum, etc.

Students may be assisted/accompanied by a support person also when raising a complaint. The support person can be a family member, a friend or a professional with knowledge of the student. The support person can assist also with ensuring the cultural safety of students and families in the complaints process. Further information about support persons can be found below. Additional resources to support students to raise issues or concerns are available at:

- [Report Racism Hotline](#) (call 1800 722 476) – this hotline enables students to report concerns relating to racism or religious discrimination
- [Reach Out](#)
- [Headspace](#)

- [Kids Helpline](#) (call 1800 55 1800)
- [Victorian Aboriginal Education Association](#) (VAEAI)

## Support for complainants

### Support persons

Parents/guardians/carers discussing complaints with the College Principal may be accompanied by a support person. The support person can be a family member, a friend or a professional with knowledge of the student.

Any person acting in a professional capacity on behalf of the parents/guardians/carers must provide their occupational details and full name prior to the meeting being held. It is at the College Principal's discretion if an external professional is a participating member of any College meeting.

The support person may encourage and facilitate sharing of parent/guardian/carer knowledge, perception, and issues. The support person should support a positive working relationship between all parties. The support person does not speak on behalf of parents/guardians/carers when discussing complaints with the College Principal.

### Multicultural Services and Interpreters

MACS can provide for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Officers to support families/carers to raise complaints to the College if required.

The College can provide the relevant teachers/staff to resolve issues.

Translation and interpreting services can be provided to assist all complainants. Please contact the College for assistance to access to these services.

## Withdrawal of a complaint

A complaint can be withdrawn at any stage during the complaint handling process.

A complaint should be withdrawn in writing by the complainant and addressed to the College Principal or the relevant regional general manager.

## Definitions

### Complaint

A formal expression of dissatisfaction with an action taken, decision made, service provided or handling of an issue.

### Complainant

The person or persons, who have raised a complaint with the College.

## Related policies and documents

Bullying Prevention Policy

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Parent / Guardian / Carer Code of Conduct

Student Code of Conduct

Privacy Policy

Complaints Handling Policy

PROTECT – Identifying and Responding to Abuse – Reporting Obligations Policy

Reportable Conduct Policy

Community Safety Order Scheme Internal Review Process  
Suspension of Students Policy  
Expulsion of Students Policy  
Whistleblower Policy

Approval date	October 2023
Date of next review	June 2025
Publication details	CEVN, school website