

ALLEGRA SCHOOL COFFS HARBOUR COMPLAINTS & GRIEVANCES POLICY

COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES POLICY

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose and scope

Allegra School Coffs Harbour is committed to a timely resolution of concerns in a process that is easily accessible, transparent, and procedurally fair and equitable. This procedure applies to Allegra School Coffs Harbour in handling complaints and grievances made in respect of services provided by the School or against Staff members, which includes Board Members, employees, contractors and volunteers.

The School recognises that Staff members may have grievances about matters at work, including about work relationships and/or decisions made by other staff members which impact on their work. This policy does not extend to personal grievances between Parents, Guardians or other Members of the School Community. For grievances about unlawful discrimination, harassment or bullying, refer to the Anti Bullying and Harassment Policy.

1.2 Whistleblowing complaints

This procedure does not extend to complaints which are whistleblowing disclosures. For whistleblowing complaints, please refer to the 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, an Officer of Coffs Coast Community College Inc., or the School's Auditor.

1.3 Related policies

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

1.4 Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest

All parties involved in complaints handling are required to maintain appropriate confidentiality, including in relation to handling and storing records. Further to this, conflict of interest must be declared prior to the management of a complaint to ensure that each complaint is handled fairly and without bias.

2. Complaints

A complaint or grievance is an expression of dissatisfaction made to the School 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.

If a Parent/Carer or Student has a concern about the conduct of a Staff member, they should raise their concern with the School 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 the School's Child Protection Policy in accordance with **section 1.3**. Please refer to the school'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.

Complaints may be made by a Staff Member, Student, Parent/Carer or Community Member.

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

Allegra School Coffs Harbour views concerns, complaints, grievances, compliments and other feedback as constructive opportunities to improve the quality of service the School provides.

3. Raising a complaint

3.1 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 Head Teacher or Student Support Officer. All complaints are to be documented in Sentral. Any complaint about the conduct of a Staff member should be raised directly with the Principal in the first instance.

Should the matter not be resolved through informal processes within fourteen (14) days, the complainant may raise the matter formally with the School. A formal complaint can be made in writing to the Principal and/or delegate, via email principal@coffscollege.nsw.edu.au, in person using the Formal Complaint Form, or over the phone (02) 66 525 378.

Where a person wishes to make a formal complaint concerning the Principal the complaint should be made in writing, marked 'Confidential: for the attention of the Chair of the Board and or/delegate', and delivered via the Operations and Project Manager located in the Coffs Coast Community College Administration Office (adjacent to the School), or via post Level 1 City

Square (PO BOX 1030) 66-90 Harbour Drive Coffs Harbour NSW 2540. In this situation, the references in this policy relating to the role of the Principal and/or delegate should be read as references to the Chair of the Board and/or delegate.

A Formal Complaint Form is available to ensure that reporting requirements are met.

3.2 Acknowledgement

The Principal and/or delegate will acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint in writing as soon as practicable. All documentation relating to formal complaints will be kept for a period of 5 years.

4. Handling complaints

4.1 Assessing a complaint

The Principal and/or delegate generally will assess the complaint and determine:

- 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 1.3; and
- the priority of the complaint in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the matter raised; and
- whether the school may be required to report the matter to the Ombudsman, Police, Department of Communities and Justice or other relevant authorities should the complaint relate to possible unlawful conduct or other reportable matters.

4.2 Managing a formal complaint

The Principal and/or delegate generally will manage a formal complaint by:

- a) advising the complainant of the likely steps that will be undertaken by the School 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 the School considers necessary to assess the complaint;
- d) making a decision about how the complaint will be resolved (“resolution decision”) which may include consulting the Board; and
- e) advising the complainant in writing, and any other relevant parties as appropriate, of the resolution decision of the Principal and/or delegate and if appropriate, any proposed action to be taken.

The complaint resolution is to be documented by the Principal and/or delegate on the Formal Complaint Response Form and will be filed in the Student’s file; the resolution (if achieved) to be offered to the complainant in writing within fourteen (14) days from the date the complaint

is received. There may be circumstances where some of the steps outlined above are not appropriate and the School will determine, on a case by case basis the most appropriate method of handling the complaint.

5. Grievances

The grievance procedure is not a term of any contract, including the contract of employment. This grievance procedure may be varied from time to time.

5.1 How should a grievance be raised?

All grievances, if appropriate, should be in the first instance addressed directly with the person involved.

If a grievance cannot be resolved directly with the person involved:

- a) raise it with the Head Teacher; or,
- b) if it is not appropriate that it be raised with the Head Teacher, grievances should be raised with the Principal,
- c) Concerns about the grievance process should be directed to the Operations and Project Manager as detailed in 3.1

5.2 What will the School do if a grievance is raised?

The School will determine the most appropriate method of dealing with the grievance. This may include, but is not limited to:

- a) Requesting further information for you;
- b) Requesting information from other co-workers or third parties;
- c) Meeting with you or others involved in the grievance;
- d) Reviewing and responding to the grievance or arranging for an appropriate person to review and respond to the grievance; or
- e) Facilitating a meeting between you and the person(s) the grievance is about.

On receipt of a grievance, the School will generally take the following steps:

- a) Determine the best method of handling the grievance;
- b) Advise you of the likely steps that will be undertaken by the School in relation to the grievance;
- c) Advise the person(s) that the grievance is about, of the nature of the grievance and seek their response;
- d) Collect any additional information the School considers necessary to properly review the grievance; and
- e) Advise both you and the person(s) that the grievance is about of the School's response to the grievance and if appropriate, and the proposed action to be taken.

However, there may be circumstances in which some of the steps outlined above are not appropriate and the School will determine, in its absolute discretion, on a case by case basis the most appropriate method of handling the grievance.

6. Internal Review

In the case of an unresolved complaint, grievance, misgiving or concern the issue will be referred to the Chair of the Board and/or delegate who may:

- Make contact with the complainant and the person(s) involved and act as a mediator to resolve the issue.
- Request from all parties involved
 - Formal meetings
 - Telephone conversations
 - Written correspondence
- Reserve the right to involve other Staff, including executive personnel, or an external mediator if appropriate.

The complaint resolution is to be documented by the Chair of the Board and/or delegate on the Offer of Resolution Formal Complaint – Internal Review form within fourteen (14) days from the date the internal review request is received.

7. Resolution

At all stages of the process the complainant has the right to

- a) Accept the resolution
- b) Offer an alternative
- c) Progress to the next stage of the process without prejudice

8. External Review

In the event that the complainant is still not satisfied with the resolutions, processes and outcomes, the complainant has a right to an External Review. External Reviews can be requested from the Ombudsman or Association of Independent Schools, NSW (AIS NSW).

In the case of an External Review, Coffs Coast Community College Inc. agrees to:

- a) Provide fact sheets and brochures to the complainant so they can seek resolution through this method
- b) Participate in the External Review Process in good faith to achieve a resolution
- c) Provide any relevant information and documentation as required

9. Review

The Principal and /or delegate of Allegra School Coffs Harbour will undertake a review of the processes and procedures for continuous improvement, with policies and procedures adjusted accordingly.

10. Support

A complainant and the relevant parties that the complaint or grievance is about may elect to have an appropriate support person present at any meeting with representatives of the School about the complaint.

The School 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 School to be inappropriate; the reasons for denying the person's preferred support person will be documented, and an alternative support person, either of the complainant's own choice or an independent person, will be offered to the complainant.

11. Record Management

All informal and formal complaints, grievances, concerns or misgivings are to be documented in Sentral initially by the person receiving the complaint and then according to the Officers involved at the complaint level.

Review of Policy

Policy to be reviewed one year from date of effect or earlier if required.

Version History

Version	Approved By	Approval Date	Date of Effect	Sections Modified
Original	Board	21 Jan 2020	22 Jan 2020	Change of Name; minor edits; general review
V1	Board	Board Approval	24 March 2020	Update of procedures from AIS; inclusion of specific Child Protection, Staff misconduct or reportable conduct; separate original complaints and grievances policy into different policies; inclusion of flowchart

Attachment A: Complaints Flowchart

