



COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT POLICY

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Policy author	Abigail Sawyer (Head of School)
Approved by	Linuwel Steiner School Board of Directors
Consultation	Linuwel Steiner School College of Teachers Association of Independent Schools NSW (AISNSW)

Linuwel Steiner School values its positive and productive relationships with parents/guardians and the wider community.

Linuwel Steiner School welcomes feedback of any type and is grateful to those who seek to address concerns through open, honest and respectful communication.

School staff commit to respond to complaints with open heart, acting to address matters of concern in ways that are timely, confidential, restorative and procedurally fair.

Policy purpose

The purpose of Linuwel's Complaints Management Policy is to:

- foster healthy relationships between Linuwel Steiner School, students, parents/guardians and the wider community.
- recognise and protect the right to raise matters of concern or complaints.
- recognise the rights of a person who is the subject of a complaint (the respondent).

- outline procedures for the timely management of complaints, including prompt communication of a response, in a way that is procedurally fair.
- provide, so far as is reasonably practicable, a complaint handling process that is impartial, inclusive and confidential.
- provide clear information on the complaints handling process including the right of review.

Policy scope

The policy applies to the management of complaints from students, parents/guardians and members of the wider community.

Complaints

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

A concern may be raised about any policy or procedure, decision, behaviour, act or omission considered to be unsatisfactory, unfair or unreasonable.

Complaints may be verbal or written. Written complaints include those sent by letter or email.

Anonymous complaints do not allow for full implementation of the Complaints Management

Complaints about potential reportable conduct

If a complaint that concerns the behaviour of a staff member may constitute reportable conduct, the matter will be addressed in line with the School's Child Protection Policy.

A complaint about a reportable conduct matter may be current or historical. Timeframes for investigation of complaints relating to reportable conduct are dependent on the individual matter and may be over an extended period of time, particularly in the case of an historical allegation.

The School is bound by privacy or other confidentiality requirements when conducting investigations of reportable conduct allegations, which may limit the information that can be shared with the complainant regarding the outcome of an

investigation. 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 or the conduct of an employee, volunteer, contractor or member of the School community may be reported under this policy.

Policy principles

Confidentiality

All parties involved in the management of a complaint are required to maintain appropriate confidentiality, including in relation to the handling and storage of records.

The School commits to maintaining confidentiality within the constraints of the need to fully investigate the matters relating to the complaint.

The obligation to maintain confidentiality extends to both the complainant and the respondent. It is expected that parties involved discuss the matter only with the contact person at the School and the support person.

Related policies

The scope of this policy is limited to complaints from parents and the community. Alternative policies are in place to enable management of whistleblowing complaints, staff grievances.

In summary, a whistleblowing disclosure is a disclosure which:

- is made by a Member of the Board, 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.
- is made to a senior staff member, officer of the School, the School's auditor or a person who the School has authorised to collect such disclosures.

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

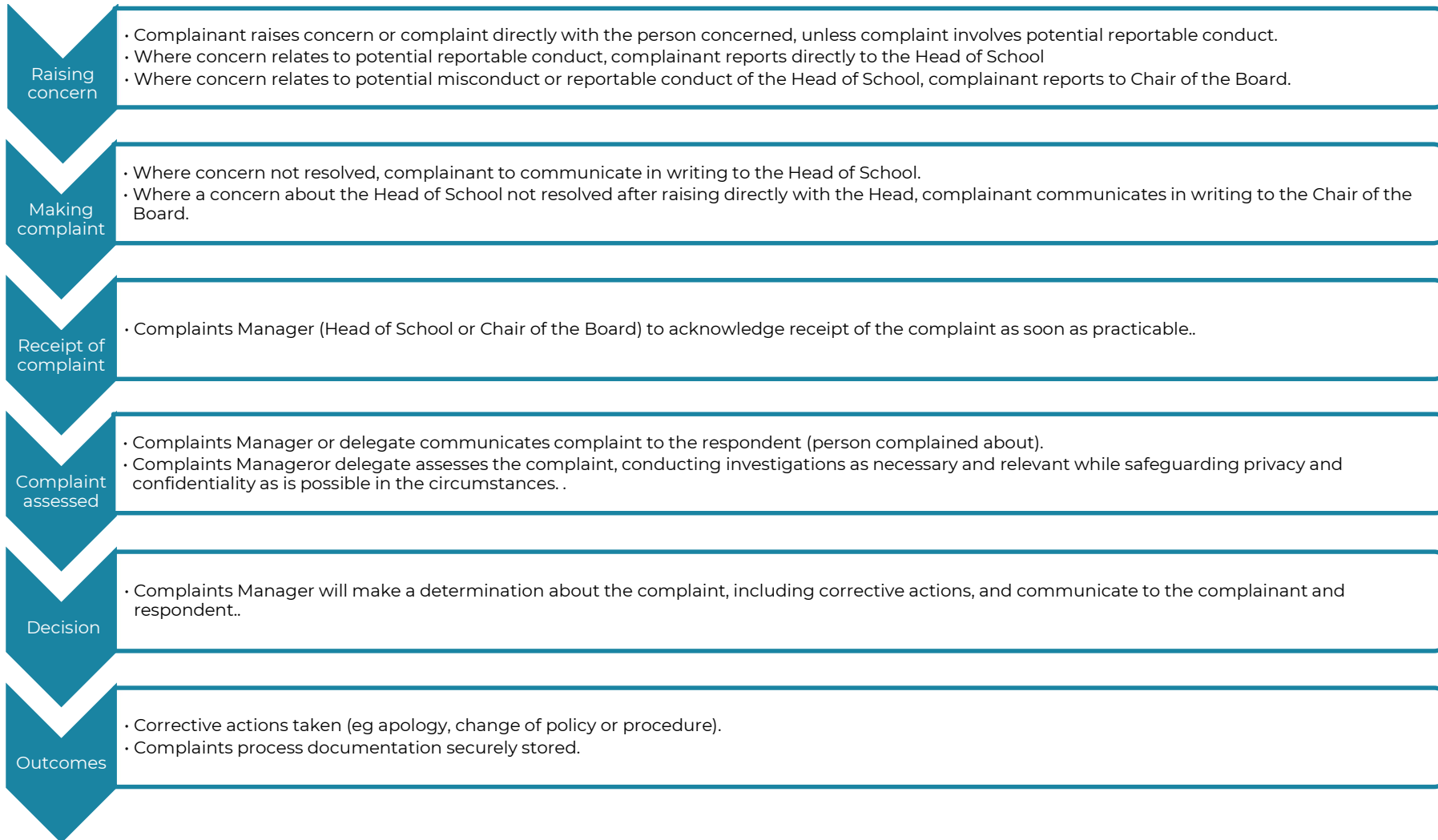
Complaints regarding a grievance between staff members about work matters, including work relationships and decisions made by other staff members which impact on their work, are addressed in accordance with the School's Staff Grievances Guidelines.

Complaints regarding unlawful discrimination, harassment or bullying between staff are generally managed in line with the School's Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Statement.

Policy review

Linuwel Steiner Complaints Management Policy and Procedures will be periodically reviewed and updated to ensure relevance and efficacy.

COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES: Summary



COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES

1. Raising a complaint

1.1 The complainant's responsibilities

In line with Linuwel Steiner School's commitment to restorative practices, complainants are encouraged to raise concerns directly with the person involved in the first instance, unless the complaint relates to potential reportable conduct.

At Linuwel, this means:

- If you are a parent/guardian raising a concern about a student other than your own child, you should raise it with the Class Teacher, Guardian or Mentor.
- If you are a parent/guardian or community member raising a concern about a member of staff, the issue should first be discussed with the staff member concerned and/or the Head of School.
- All allegations of staff misconduct or 'reportable conduct' must be reported directly to the Head of School.
- If you are a student raising a concern about another student, you should raise the concern with your Class Teacher/Guardian/Mentor, a Realm Coordinator or the Head of School.
- If you are a student raising a concern about a member of staff, you should raise it first with the relevant staff member and/or the Realm Coordinator or the Head of School.
- If you are a student raising a concern about a member of staff, allegations of staff misconduct or 'reportable conduct', this must be reported directly to the Head of School.
- If you are a member of the School community raising a concern relating to the School's grounds, buildings and buses, you should raise it first with the School's Facilities Manager facilities@linuwel.nsw.edu.au.
- If you are a student, staff member or community member with concerns about the Head of School (other than misconduct or reportable conduct), you should first raise your concerns with the Head of School, either in person or by emailing HOS@linuwel.nsw.edu.au

Where a complainant does not feel comfortable raising a concern directly with the person concerned, or the matter is one where it may not be appropriate to do so, a complaint can be made to the Head of School.

Any complaint about the potential misconduct of a staff member should be raised directly with the Head of School in the first instance.

Where, after raising directly with the person concerned, a complaint remains unresolved, a complaint should put the complaint in writing and send to the Head of School HOS@linuwel.nsw.edu.au

If your concerns relate to the Head of School, and have not been addressed to your satisfaction after raising directly with the Head, a formal complaint may then be made in writing and send to the Chair of the Board board@linuwel.nsw.edu.au

If your concerns involve allegations of misconduct or 'reportable conduct' on the part of the Head of School, you should not raise directly with the Head of School, but immediately communicate your concerns in writing directly to the Chair of the Board board@linuwel.nsw.edu.au

1.2 Raising complaints directly

When speaking directly with the person about whom your concern relates:

- Describe the incident, action or behaviour of concern clearly
- Communicate respectfully, allowing the respondent an opportunity to share their perspective
- State the outcome you are seeking.

In all cases where parents/guardians are raising concerns, they must abide by the Parent Code of Conduct.

Parents/guardians with concerns are to refrain from gossip, aggression or any form of negative communication that may cause reputational damage or distress to the respondent or the School.

2. Receiving a complaint

2.1 Upon receiving a written complaint, the Complaints Manager (Head of School or Chair of the Board) is to acknowledge receipt of the complaint as soon as practicable (usually within 3 school days).

2.2 The Complaints Manager (Head of School or Chair of the Board) is to contact the complainant and record details of the concern, ask what action the

complainant would like taken in response to the complaint and outline complaints management procedures.

2.3 Where the Complaints Manager or complainant requests a meeting, the complainant and respondent may choose to bring a support person.

2.4 The School retains the right to choose whether a complainant's preferred support person is appropriate in the circumstances and may not approve the attendance of a support person where the Complaints Manager deems the support person to be inappropriate (eg due to a conflict of interest).

2.5 Any support person who attends a meeting in respect to a complaint must maintain confidentiality about all matters discussed at the meeting and about the complaint with the complainant or respondent in private.

2.6 The role of the support person is to provide emotional support. They are generally not involved in the conversation but may be invited or permitted to speak at the discretion of the Complaints Manager.

3. Assessing a complaint

3.1 The Complaints Manager may delegate the assessment, investigation or further management of a complaint as they deem appropriate in the circumstances, for example, to a Realm Coordinator or Manager.

3.2 When assessing and responding to a complaint, the Complaints Manager or delegate is to maintain impartiality and guard against bias.

3.2 In order to assess a complaint, the Complaints Manager or delegate will:

- Communicate information about the complaint to the respondent (person complained about)
- Invite the respondent to be heard, usually by convening a meeting to which the respondent may bring a support person.
- Document any meetings held with the respondent in respect to the complaint.
- If appropriate, speak to others (eg witnesses, others impacted by a situation) to gather information. This is done with due regard to privacy and confidentiality to manage potential reputational damage and associated risks (eg wellbeing).
- Consider all available information and make a determination, which involves communicating with the complainant their findings in relation to the initial subject of the complaint.

- Where a complaint is upheld, collaborate with the complainant and respondent to identify potential corrective actions.
- Communicate the determination and any corrective actions to both the complainant and respondent.

4. Responses to complaints: Actions and outcomes

4.1 Responses to complaints vary depending on whether or not the complaint has been substantiated, the seriousness of the matter, the wishes of the complainant and the nature of the relationship of the persons involved.

4.2 A complaint is said to be upheld if the person investigating it believes that, on the balance of probabilities given evidence provided, that matters raised did occur.

4.3 If a complaint is upheld, potential actions or outcomes may include:

- an explanation and agreement between the complainant and respondent
- a verbal and/or written apology
- mediation
- targeted professional development or training
- dissemination of information where relevant
- referral to counselling
- directions about further interaction between the complainant and respondent
- a review of a School policy, guideline or procedure
- where a staff member is involved, disciplinary action or termination of employment
- where a student is the subject of the complaint, actions as per the School Discipline Policy.

4.4 If a complaint is not upheld or not substantiated (that is, the evidence is insufficient on the balance of probabilities), but some issue is identified as needing further management, possible actions or outcomes may include:

- monitoring of behaviour of students.
- counselling for the parties involved.

- mediation
- targeted professional development or training
- a review of a School policy, guideline or procedure.

4.5 If a complaint is found to be vexatious, possible actions or outcomes may include:

- counselling for one or more of the parties involved
- a verbal or written apology from the complainant
- in the case of a staff member, disciplinary action.

5. Right of review

5.1 Complainants or respondents involved in the management of a complaint who have concerns regarding the management of that complaint, or who believe the School's response to be incorrect or unfair, may seek a review of the decision.

5.2 Requests for a review of decisions in respect to complaints should be directed to the Chair of the Board at board@linuwel.nsw.edu.au

5.3 The Chair of the Board will consider the determination that has been made and determine whether or not a review is necessary and/or appropriate in the circumstances.

6. Record keeping and process reviews

6.1 The Head of School is to maintain a secure complaints register with restricted access.

6.2 Records of complaints, interviews and other documentation relating to a complaint investigated at the School will be kept at the School in a restricted access file.

6.3 Records related to complaints must be kept permanently.

6.3 The Head of School is to undertake regular reviews of complaints received to ensure that complaints have been responded to in line with policy and procedures.

6.4 The Head of School will provide the School's Board of Directors with regular reports on complaints received (without sharing identifying information), underlying trends and issues, corrective actions taken and potential risks to the school.