

Scope & Purpose

It is the responsibility of all employees and contractors to understand and comply with this procedure.

All complaints need to be handled seriously.

It is the policy of Mastery Schools Australia that all complaints will be acknowledged immediately; or within five working days if the matter is complex. In more complex cases, parties will be kept informed about what is happening to their concern or complaint, and, if a more detailed response is needed, by what date it will be received. The issue should be dealt with as quickly as possible.

Framework

This Policy fits within the Mastery School Australia's 'Great Place to Work' Framework. The Framework operates with the following principles:

- Leaders value and promote Respect, Equity, and Diversity;
- Strategic and operational plans incorporate Respect, Equity, and Diversity strategies;
- Attracting and retaining a diverse workforce;
- Improving the capability of our workforce;
- Respect and courtesy in the workplace is practised;
- Promoting equity in our enrolment, teaching, recruitment, and employment practices; and
- Flexible working conditions are promoted and supported

Related Documents

Complaints Handling Policy

Procedure

Recording

Mastery Schools Australia keeps a complaint register on a secure server:

It is important that you record the details of the complaint accurately as:

- it may become the cause of legal action in the future;
- patterns in the record may indicate a need for action; and
- the Principal should be able to check the log and report on it regularly to the Mastery Schools Australia board.

The log should contain the following information:

- date when the issue was raised
- name of parent
- name of pupil
- brief statement of issue
- location of detailed file
- member of staff handling the issue
- brief statement of outcome.

These files are confidential and are only to be accessed by members of school staff in the presence of Senior Management. The files should contain simple but clear notes of all conversations with parents about any source of dissatisfaction. This applies to friendly chats and to telephone conversations, as misunderstandings easily arise. There should be a clear statement of what is concerning the complainant/s. The notes can be agreed with parents.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is an important issue for students, parents and staff. It is essential that any complaint is treated in a confidential manner and with respect.

Parents often seek an assurance of confidentiality before expressing their concerns. If, for example, they wish to discuss a particular member of staff, they may fear that their child will suffer in some way because they have complained.

It should be made clear to all concerned that it is Mastery Schools Australia policy that complaints made by parents should not rebound adversely on their children and similarly that complaints raised by students should not rebound on them or on other students.

The question of confidentiality should be discussed sensitively and on an individual basis with the parents and the school's policy should be carefully explained.

It may be possible to deal with a problem without naming individuals. However, even if no names are given, the source of the complaint may be clear. Depending on the nature of the complaint and on the circumstances, it may be impractical to investigate without identifying the member of staff or the child – it may also be in the interest of the child to do so.

Members of staff are rightly concerned that they should know about complaints that might be damaging to their reputation. Such complaints will be known only to themselves and to those who have to be consulted. Mastery Schools Australia will provide support for staff against whom a complaint is made, upon request; this will be provided by a colleague who is not otherwise involved.

If there is a situation involving the police, the Principal, will take responsibility for action and Mastery Schools Australia Governing Body Chairperson will be informed as soon as possible.

Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints may be where there is no indication of either name or address, or where the complainants say that they do not wish to be identified. They may come from members of the public, from parents or from students.

Complaints from the public about the behaviour of a group of students will be dealt with on a general basis, with reminders to all about the School's expectations.

Parents and students should be encouraged to give their names and should be given reassurance on the issue of confidentiality. If they persist in wishing to remain anonymous, it is at the Principal's discretion as to what action, if any, should be taken, depending on the nature of the complaint.

Anonymous complaints will be recorded.

Anonymous allegations about child abuse should be dealt with as outlined in Mastery Schools Australia Child Protection Policy.

Parents and students may be satisfied the situation has been resolved by any of the following:

- knowing that changes have been made, and that matters will be different in future
- knowing that the school is now alert to a possible problem
- feeling that their concern has been considered seriously
- an outcome which may be different from the one they sought, but which they perceive to be well considered
- a considered letter
- an apology.

In all cases where time has been needed to investigate a complaint, parents will receive a report in writing which covers:

- the issues raised
- how the issues were considered
- the people consulted
- the action that is to be taken
- an apology, if appropriate.

Lodging a Complaint

A formal complaint must be lodged in writing or via email and can be discussed by contacting the School or arranging an appointment with the Principal. Please include detailed information relating to the complaint so further investigation can be carried out. It's best to include, names, times, location, people involved, specific concerns and also how the complaint may be resolved.

Complaints can be sent to:

Principal, Mastery Schools Australia, 1 Bellvue Dr, Varsity Lakes Qld 4227.

Complaint Referral

The first point of contact for Complaint Handling will be the Principal and the complaint will be relayed to the appropriate staff i.e. Senior Teacher etc.

If the complaint relates to one of the above parties this should be discussed in the initial contact and the complaint should be addressed to the next relevant Senior Position.

Referral to the Chair of Mastery Schools Australia Board

In most cases, the procedure will be that the Principal refers the matter to the Chair of the Board and informs the parents that this stage has been reached. However, a situation may arise where the complaint seems to the parent to have been mishandled by a Senior Manager. In those circumstances, the parent should be able to write direct to the Chair of the Board at Chairperson, Mastery Schools Australia, 1 Bellvue Dr, Varsity Lakes Qld 4227 or chairperson@msa.qld.edu.au.

The Chair of the Board will discuss the matter fully with the Principal and be provided with relevant documentation. If a briefing is required from a member of staff, this will occur in the presence of the Principal.

The Chair will respond to the parents, notifying them that he/she is reviewing the matter, asking them if they wish to add anything further and providing a date by which they may expect a response.

The Chair may be able to offer a new approach to the matter, and this may satisfy the parents. The Chair's response will be clear and detailed, and will offer a meeting if the parents remain troubled.

Meeting with the Chair of the Board

If a meeting is requested, the Chair of the Board will offer to meet the parents at a time convenient to them. Those involved are:

- the Chair of the Board
- the Principal and, at the most, one other member of staff
- the complainants

Complainants are encouraged to bring with them a supportive friend who is not involved with the complaint. Legal representation is not appropriate at this stage. The Chair of the Board, after questioning and listening to the complainants and the Principal, may be able to find a solution. If this is not possible, and the parents wish to take the matter further, the Chair of the Board could consider seeking the advice of an independent arbitrator.

Referral to a Conciliation Committee

Mastery Schools Australia may establish a Conciliation Committee if resolution by the Principal and the Chair of the Board has failed. The Conciliation Committee is composed of a convener, independent of the School, and up to four other members, two of whom will be members of the Board (excluding the Chair). The Chair of the Board, in consultation with the Principal, decides when to refer a complaint to the Conciliation Committee, and invites the convener to call a meeting.

The Chair of the Board has no further involvement until the convener reports back at the end of the committee's deliberations. Meeting with the Conciliation Committee, those involved in the

meeting are:

- up to five Committee members, including the convener;
- the Principal, and possibly a key member of staff; and
- the complainants, who are invited to bring a supportive friend, as for the meeting with the Chair of the Board

A sufficient amount of time is committed to the meeting, in case it is needed. The complainants and the Principal are asked in advance whether there are any papers they would like to have considered at the meeting, bearing in mind the need for all to keep the proceedings confidential. The papers are copied and distributed before the meeting. The convener will emphasise that he or she is concerned to reach a positive conclusion and will invite first the complainants, then the Principal to speak. After this, the convener encourages questions and general discussion.

If a positive solution is reached, the convener will summarise the outcome and confirm the nature of the agreement before the meeting disperses. The agreement will be recorded, copied and circulated as soon as possible. At the end of the Committee's deliberations, the convener will make a full report to the Chair of the Board and inform the complainants that this is being done. The Chair of the Board would be expected to endorse the Committee's decision.

Breach of Procedure

Breaches of this procedure:

- are not acceptable by any employee;
- will be responded to promptly; and
- may result in disciplinary action being taken, up to and including termination of employment, with or without notice.

Communication

This procedure is made available to all staff on the company's Google drive.

Review

This procedure is reviewed periodically as detailed in the Procedure Review Schedule.