



Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure

Policy number	QLD0054	Version	1.0
Drafted by	MSA	Approved by board on	February 2025
Responsible person	Principal	Scheduled review date	February 2027

Table of Contents

1	Organisational Statement	1
2	Scope	2
3	Purpose	2
4	Related Documents	2
5	References	2
6	Definitions	2
7	Complaints within the Scope of this Policy	3
8	Complaints outside the Scope of this Policy	3
9	Complaints Handling Principles	4
10	Appeals	6
11	Responsibilities	6
12	All Parties Involved in a Dispute	7
13	Employees Receiving the Complaint	8
14	Implementation	8
15	Complaint Handling Procedure	9
16	Breach of Policy	11
17	Review	11
18	Communication	11

1 Organisational Statement

Mastery Schools Australia is committed to creating a culture that views concerns and complaints as an opportunity to improve the school. All concerns, complaints and issues will be managed ethically and responsibly, and a visible, accessible, and fair handling process will be applied.

2 Scope

This policy applies to employees, contractors, visitors, parents/guardians and volunteers in relation to the Queensland operations and it is the responsibility of all working for or at the school to understand and comply with this policy.

3 Purpose

3.1 The Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure provide clear guidelines to all regarding how to raise, manage, and resolve complaints in a fair, respectful, and timely manner.

3.2 To ensure such cooperation and support, this Policy outlines the school's expectations for transparent communication, respectful engagement, and adherence to procedural fairness throughout the complaints process.

4 Related Documents

- (a) Complaints Handling Register
- (b) Complaints Form
- (c) Privacy Policy
- (d) Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- (e) Visitors and Volunteers Policy
- (f) Child Protection Policy
- (g) Child Risk Management Strategy
- (h) Conflict of Interest Policy
- (i) Diversity and Inclusions Policy

5 References

- (a) Work Health and Safety Act 2011
- (b) Privacy Act 1988.

6 Definitions

Concern	A concern about a matter, perceived discrimination, a situation, a process, a person or people, a facility or support service provided by Mastery Schools Australia, which an apprentice, trainee, student and/or customer of Mastery Schools Australia brings to the attention of Mastery Schools Australia in an informal way
Complaint	An expression of dissatisfaction made to or about the school, related to the school's services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.
Complainant	The person lodging the concern, complaint, or appeal

Informal Complaint	A complaint about a matter that is likely to be simple, straight forward, easily manageable, or minor, where a simple or quick resolution is appropriate such as discussion of the matter with a relevant staff member.
Formal Complaint	A complaint about a matter that is serious, complex or may pose a threat to the health and safety of any person. Examples include serious allegations or breaches of policy, complaints against a senior staff member, including the principal or an informal complaint that could not be resolved informally. Assessment of the complaint is required by a relevant member of the senior leadership team.
Respondent	The person who is referred to in a complaint by a complainant as the person responsible for their concerns or who can best respond to their concern.

7 Complaints within the Scope of this Policy

7.1 Mastery Schools Australia encourages students, parents/guardians, and employees to lodge promptly any concerns regarding sexual harassment, child protection, discrimination, workplace bullying and privacy breaches as well as more general complaints that include areas such as:

- (a) the school, its employees or students having done something wrong.
- (b) the school, its employees or students having failed to do something they should have done.
- (c) the school, its employees or students having acted unfairly or impolitely.
- (d) issues of student or employee behaviour that are contrary to their relevant code of conduct.
- (e) issues related to learning programs, assessment, and reporting of student learning.
- (f) issues related to communication with students or parents/guardians or between employees.
- (g) issues related to school fees and payments; and
- (h) general administrative issues.

Student complaints may be brought by students or by parents/guardians on behalf of their children, as appropriate in the circumstances.

8 Complaints outside the Scope of this Policy

8.1 The following matters are outside the scope of this policy and should be managed as follows:

- (a) Child protection concerns or risks of harm to children should be dealt with in accordance with the law and the school's Child Protection Policy
- (b) Student bullying complaints should be dealt with under the Student Behaviour Management Policy.

- (c) Student discipline matters, including matters involving suspension or expulsion, should be dealt with under the Student Behaviour Management Policy.
- (d) Employee complaints related to their employment should be directed to their manager. This does not include disputes about work health and safety matters, which may be dealt with under the school's Complaints Handling Policy
- (e) Student or employee violence or criminal matters should be directed to the principal who will involve the Police as appropriate; and
- (f) Formal legal proceedings.

9 Complaints Handling Principles

Mastery Schools Australia is committed to managing complaints according to the following principles:

9.1 Access:

- (a) This Policy and procedure must be simple to understand.
- (b) This Policy and its associated procedure must be well publicised, and will be done through School newsletter, Student assembly, Staff meetings, and published on the school website.
- (c) All MSA members and community should understand how to receive and pass on complaints.
- (d) Complaints will be taken seriously, and receipt acknowledged immediately, or within five days if the matter is complex.
- (e) Complaints will be dealt with in a timely manner with consideration given to the complexity and seriousness of the issues raised.
- (f) All MSA members and community will be supported in trying to resolve complaints at the level of least formality and disruption as possible, to ensure efficiency of handling and timeliness, and to minimise disputation and escalation.
- (g) Anonymous complaints will be treated on their merit's.

9.2 Procedural fairness and Natural Justice:

- (a) All parties will be afforded natural justice and procedural fairness in complaints handling by MSA.
- (b) All parties can expect the complaint will be dealt with fairly and objectively, in a transparent matter and free from bias.
- (c) All parties will be afforded equal opportunity to participate in the process and will be provided with reasons for the decisions that are made upon conclusion.

9.3 Equity:

- (a) MSA values the Special Assistance School nature of our school, and therefore takes into consideration the reasons for enrolment and past experiences at previous schools in contextualising procedures.
- (b) All decisions and/or actions made in relation to complaints will consider age, disability, language, culture, religion, gender and sexuality, and other circumstances such as people in care, from overseas, or unable to live at home.
- (c) Where necessary or requested, complainants and respondents will be entitled to seek assistance from a support person, which may represent a family member, carer, friend or other support person. Reasons for accessing a support person may be (but are not limited to) supporting cultural security, language barriers, overcome disability or wellbeing concerns. Please refer to the Diversity and Inclusions policy for further details.
- (d) MSA will ensure complainants, respondents, and people associated with them will not be victimised as a result of lodging complaints in good faith and they will not suffer any other reprisals, regardless of the outcome.

9.4 Confidentiality and Recording:

- (a) The privacy and confidentiality of all parties will be maintained and respected, acknowledging that matters may be subject to production under legal orders or Freedom of Information requests.
- (b) MSA will keep records of complaints, and staff members involved in handling the complaint will also keep records, including of the reasons for decision making.
- (c) MSA will notify its' insurer if a complaint could be connected to an insured risk.

9.5 Resolution:

- (a) Where it falls within MSA responsibility, appropriate remedies will be offered.
- (b) Complaints and resolutions will be reported to the Board to improve MSA services, and where necessary, to mitigate the cause and implement preventative measures against future complaints.
- (c) A satisfactory resolution to all parties is pursued, and where this is not achieved, the right of escalation and the mechanisms for appeal will be outlined in the Complaints Handling Procedure (at the bottom of this policy).

9.6 Authority:

- (a) MSA will ensure that the individuals involved in handling complaints will have the necessary authority and support from management to action the process effectively.
- (b) As mediation may represent an optional pathway to resolution, where required, identified staff will have access to appropriate training and resources to fulfil the responsibilities of their role.

9.7 Conflicts of Interest:

- (a) Where a conflict of interest exists, individuals will not be permitted to act in the complaint, in either a handling, investigating or adjudicating manner. Please review the Conflict-of-Interest policy for further information.

10 Appeals

- 10.1 All staff, students, and associated persons of MSA have the right to appeal decisions made by management and staff of MSA with regards to a complaint.
- 10.2 The process for an appeal is an escalation and mirror of the Complaints process, both of which are outlined in the Complaints Handling Procedure (at the bottom of this policy).

11 Responsibilities

11.1 The school

The school has the following role and responsibilities:

- (a) develop, implement, promote, and act in accordance with the school's Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure.
- (b) appropriately communicate the school's Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure to students, parents, and employees.
- (c) ensure that the Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure are readily accessible by staff, students and parents.
- (d) Upon receipt of a complaint, manage the complaint in accordance with the Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure.
- (e) ensure that appropriate support is provided to all parties to a complaint.
- (f) take appropriate action to prevent victimisation or action in reprisal against the complainant, respondent or any person associated with them.
- (g) appropriately implement remedies.
- (h) appropriately train relevant employees.
- (i) keep records.

- (j) conduct a review/audit of the Complaints Register from time to time.
- (k) monitor and report to the governing body on complaints.
- (l) report to the school's insurer when that is relevant; and
- (m) refer to the school's governing body immediately any claim for legal redress.
- (n) report complaints and concerns to relevant authorities where warranted, and/or necessary.

11.2 Contractors, Visitors and Volunteers

All contractors, visitors and volunteers have the following role and responsibilities:

- (a) Ensure understanding of the Complaints Handling Policy.
- (b) Upon receipt of a complaint, refer the complainant to an MSA staff member, and report the complaint to the School Principal.
- (c) Raise complaints using the Complaints Handling Procedure (at the bottom of this policy)

12 All Parties Involved in a Dispute

12.1 The complainant and respondent both have the following role and responsibilities:

- (a) apply and comply with the school's Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure.
- (b) lodge the complaint as soon as possible after the issue arises.
- (c) provide complete and factual information in a timely manner.
- (d) not provide deliberately false or misleading information.
- (e) not make frivolous or vexatious complaints.
- (f) act in good faith, and in a calm and courteous manner.
- (g) act in a non-threatening manner.
- (h) acknowledge that a common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties.
- (i) recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced.
- (j) maintain and respect the privacy and confidentiality of all parties; and
- (k) not victimise or act in reprisal against any party to the dispute or any person associated with them.

13 Employees Receiving the Complaint

Any employee that receives a complaint will refer to and follow the Complaints Handling Procedure. In addition, the employee will keep details of the complaint confidential in accordance with the Complaints Handling Procedure.

14 Implementation

- 14.1 Mastery Schools Australia is committed to raising awareness of the process for resolving complaints at the school, including by the development and implementation of this policy and related procedures, and via the clear support and promotion of the policy and procedures.
- 14.2 This Policy, and its associated procedure will be communicated to students through:
- (a) An introduction to their rights and responsibilities in the enrolment pack, and in their pre-enrolment interviews.
 - (b) Consistent class reminders
 - (c) Via the School newsletter.
 - (d) Via the School website.
 - (e) During Student assembly.
- 14.3 This Policy and procedure will be communicated to staff through:
- (a) Staff member induction.
 - (b) Via Staff meetings.
 - (c) Via the School newsletter.
- 14.4 This Policy and procedure, will be communicated to all staff, parents/guardians, volunteers, and visitors through:
- (a) Being informed as to the location of the procedure on the website upon student enrolment, and at the start of every school year.
 - (b) Being informed as to the roles and responsibilities and being directed to either a physical copy or the website for the procedure upon engagement with the school, enquiry, or extend period of presence.
 - (c) During the onboarding and induction process.
- 14.5 Mastery Schools Australia is also committed to appropriately training relevant employees (especially senior staff) on how to resolve complaints in line with this policy and procedure. Mastery Schools Australia will keep appropriate records of complaints, will monitor complaints and the resolutions, and will report on a high-level basis to the school Board on complaint handling at the school. Mastery Schools Australia will act to encourage students, parents/guardians,

and employees to contribute to a healthy school culture where complaints are resolved with as little formality and disruption as possible.

- 14.6 Mastery Schools Australia will appoint an appropriate employee as an Equity Contact Officer to provide confidential and impartial information about the school's relevant policies and processes.

15 Complaint Handling Procedure

15.1 Lodging a Complaint

- (a) Complaints can be lodged with the most appropriate staff member at the local level, for example, the initial contact point for many complaints is the student's relevant classroom teacher.
- (b) Complaints about the principal must be lodged with the Board chairperson@msa.qld.edu.au
- (c) Complaints can be lodged through various methods, including:
 - (i) Phone
 - (ii) Email
 - (iii) In-person (by appointment)
- (d) If the complainant is unsure where to direct their complaint, they can contact their school's administration office for guidance.
- (e) If the complainant is uncomfortable directing the complaint to the most appropriate member at the local level, or wants to make a formal complaint, they can submit a complaint by:
 - (i) Completing the online complaint form (available on the school website)
 - (ii) report to member of the executive team member.
 - (iii) If the complainant wishes to remain anonymous, they must indicate this when submitting their complaint.
- (f) Where an anonymous complaint is lodged, the school will follow the complaints handling policy, when there is sufficient information to do so.

15.2 Acknowledgement, Assessment and Referral

The staff member receiving the complaint will:

- (a) acknowledge the complaint within two (2) business days, outlining the next steps and where possible the estimated timeframes.
- (b) assess the complaint, using the definitions of informal and formal complaints in this policy, and refer the complaint to the informal or formal complaints process.

15.3 Registration and Support

- (a) The recipient of the complaint will promptly enter it onto the complaints register, regardless of whether it proceeds through the informal or formal process.
- (b) The recipient of the complaint will offer support to the complainant as appropriate, which may include assistance with completing forms or understanding procedures.
- (c) If a student is a complainant, respondent or victim, or the child of a complainant, respondent or victim of a matter being managed through this policy, the school may offer the student support where appropriate e.g. discussing suitable adjustments with parents/caregivers.

15.4 Informal Complaints Handling Process

- (a) The informal process is designed to resolve issues promptly and collaboratively at the local level.
- (b) It may involve constructive discussion and negotiation between the complainant and the relevant staff member(s).
- (c) If the complaint cannot be resolved informally, it will be escalated to the formal process.

15.5 Formal Complaints Handling Process

- (a) The formal process begins with the assessment of the complaint by a designated staff member (e.g., a member of the senior leadership team or the board chair for complaints against the principal)
- (b) The staff member may gather additional information through investigation, interviews, or evidence review
- (c) The staff member will determine appropriate action, which may include:
 - (i) Mediation
 - (ii) Disciplinary measures
 - (iii) Implementation of policy changes
 - (iv) Referral to external agencies (e.g., police)
 - (v) Provision of written updates to the complainant throughout the process
 - (vi) Other actions the principal, executive or board chair determine as appropriate in the circumstances.

15.6 Complaint Closure

- (a) The complaint register will be updated with the date the complaint is closed and a brief summary of the outcome.



- (b) The complainant will receive written notification of the outcome and any actions taken where appropriate.

15.7 Appeals Process

- (a) Complainants may appeal the outcome of a complaint by writing to:
 - (i) the principal (for complaints not previously managed by the principal,)
 - (ii) the board chair (for complaints previously managed by the principal, or complaints about the principal).

16 Breach of Policy

16.1 Breaches of this Policy:

- (a) are not acceptable by any Employee, Contractor, Visitor, or Volunteers;
- (b) will be responded to promptly; and
- (c) may result in disciplinary action being taken.

17 Review

This policy is reviewed periodically as detailed in the Policy Review Schedule. Next review date is February 2025.

18 Communication

This policy is made available to all staff in the onboarding and induction period. It is also readily available on the company's SharePoint, and this is also provided to families during the enrolment period and on the school's website for the wider community.