



## THE KOORALBYN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

# Complaints Policy and Procedure (Students, Parents/Carers & Staff)

### PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

The purpose of this Complaints Policy and Procedure (Complaints Procedure) is to outline the process for students, parents/carers and staff to raise a complaint, with the intention being for the complaint to be addressed between the parties courteously, respectfully, sensitively, efficiently, fairly, impartially and transparently, in accordance with the principles of natural justice and in accordance with legislative and regulatory frameworks and guidelines.

Scope: This policy applies to students, parents/carers and staff.

Responsibility: Principal

Point of Contact: Principal

### DEFINITIONS

**Complaint:** A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. A complaint may be made if a student, parent/carer or staff member thinks that the School has, for example done something wrong, failed to do something it should have done or acted unfairly or impolitely. A complaint may be made about the School as a whole, about a specific department in the School or about an individual member of staff.

**Complainant:** A person who raises a complaint.

**Respondent:** A person against whom a complaint is directed.

### POLICY

#### 1. Statement of Values

The Kooralbyn International School's approach to managing concerns and complaints is based on our endeavours to:

- provide a safe and supportive learning environment;

- build positive and mutually respectful relationships between students, parents and staff; and
- provide a safe School environment for students, staff, families and community members.

We recognise concerns and complaints as a valuable part of a continuous process of improvement.

We are committed to developing and implementing processes so that concerns and complaints may be managed efficiently and fairly with impartiality, confidentiality and transparency in a manner that is responsive to and respectful of the needs, rights and obligations of each person who is involved in the process.

This Complaints Procedure is based on the *Better Practice Guide to Complaint Handling* as developed by the Commonwealth Ombudsman, which is consistent with the Australian Standard AS/NZS 10002:2014 “*Guidelines for complaint management in organisations*”.

## 2. Scope of this procedure

This Complaints Procedure covers any type of complaint raised by a student, parent/carer, staff member, volunteer, contractor and visitor.

The School encourage students, parents/carers and staff to promptly raise any concerns regarding sexual harassment, child protection, discrimination, workplace bullying and privacy breaches as well as more general complaints and concerns.

The School has specific policies that address particular issues, such as child protection, anti-discrimination, anti-bullying and work health and safety for example. If a complaint relates to an issue covered by a specific policy or legislative requirement, the School may address the complaint under that policy.

Child protection concerns, mandatory reporting obligations and risks of harm to children should be addressed under the law, including under child protection legislation, and the School’s Child Protection Policy and Child Risk Management Strategy.

## 3. Making a complaint

The School welcomes suggestions and comments and takes seriously complaints and concerns that may be raised.

A complaint will be treated as an expression of genuine dissatisfaction that needs a response.

We endeavour to ensure that:

- Students, parents/carers, staff members and others wishing to make a complaint know how to do so;
- We respond to complaints within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient way;

- Students, parents/carers, staff members and others understand that we listen and take complaints seriously; and
- We take action where appropriate.

### How should I complain? Complaints by parents/carers

A complaint may arise from a misunderstanding and it may be possible to resolve the complaint quickly through respectful communications.

Where practical, a complaint should be raised through informal discussion in the first instance.

Open communication is essential to address and resolve complaints.

Members of staff will be happy to help. It may be best to start with the person most closely concerned with the issue – for example, to raise Boarding House matters with the Boarding Housemaster or Housemistress, sports concerns with the Head of Physical Education. They may be able to sort things out quickly, with the minimum of fuss.

If this initial communication has not effectively resolved the situation, or if it is not practical to engage in informal discussions, you may prefer to take the matter to a more senior member of staff and the complaint should be made, for example, to the HR Manager, the Business Manager or the Principal.

If the class teacher is the subject of the complaint, the complaint should be made to the HR Manager, the Business Manager or the Principal.

If the Principal is the subject of the complaint, the complaint should be made to the HR Manager or the Business Manager.

If the complaint is about the School Board or a member of the School Board, the complaint should be made to the HR Manager, the Business Manager or the Principal.

A complaint may be made by correspondence (email / letter), telephone or in person, although you may be asked to submit your complaint in writing.

When you contact the School, ask to speak to the appropriate person. If you are unsure you may ask to speak to the HR Manager or the Business Manager and they will either take your complaint or direct you to the appropriate person. Be as clear as possible about what is troubling you and remember that we acknowledge your right to raise your concerns.

It is the School's policy that complaints made by parents/carers should not rebound adversely on their children, and complaints made by a student should not rebound adversely on the student.

*"I don't want to complain as such, but there is something bothering me"*

The School is here for you and your child, and we want to hear your views and your ideas. Contact a member of staff, as described above.

“I am not sure whether to complain or not”

If as parents you have concerns, you are entitled to raise them. If in doubt, you should contact the School, as we are here to help.

“What if I am not satisfied with the outcome?”

We hope that you will feel satisfied with the outcome, or at least that your concerns have been fully and fairly considered.

If you are not satisfied, the School will offer to refer the matter to the Chairman of the School Board. Alternatively, you may wish to write directly to the Chairman. The Chairman will call for a full report from the School, and will examine matters thoroughly before responding. This may result in a satisfactory solution, but if it does not, the Chairman may invite you to a meeting. If your complaint was about the Chairman or the School Board, the School will appoint a suitably experienced person to undertake the review process in place of the Chairman.

The School recognises and acknowledges your entitlement to complain and we hope to work with you in the best interests of the children and young people in our care.

#### **How should I complain? Complaints by students**

We hope you enjoy your time as a student at the School. If you are unhappy, please let us know. You can raise your concerns with any staff member, including the Principal. Our staff will assist you to address your concern.

Depending on the subject matter of the complaint, it may be appropriate to involve your parents in the complaint management processes.

#### **How should I complain? Complaints by staff**

A complaint may arise from a misunderstanding and it may be possible to resolve the complaint quickly through respectful communications.

Where practical, a complaint should be raised through informal discussion in the first instance.

Open communication is essential to address and resolve complaints.

If this initial communication has not effectively resolved the situation, or if it is not practical to engage in informal discussions, you may prefer to take the matter to a more senior member of staff and the complaint should be made, for example, to the HR Manager, the Business Manager or the Principal.

If the Principal is the subject of the complaint, the complaint should be made to the HR Manager or the Business Manager.

If the complaint is about the School Board or a member of the School Board, the complaint should be made to the HR Manager, the Business Manager or the Principal.

A complaint may be made by correspondence (email / letter), telephone or in person, although you may be asked to submit your complaint in writing.

If you are unsure how to raise your complaint, speak to the HR Manager or the Business Manager and they will either take your complaint or direct you to the appropriate person.

#### “What if I am not satisfied with the outcome?”

We hope that you will feel satisfied with the outcome, or at least that your concerns have been fully and fairly considered.

If you are not satisfied, the School may offer to refer the matter to the Chairman of the School Board. Alternatively, you may wish to write directly to the Chairman. The Chairman will call for a full report from the School, and will examine matters thoroughly before responding. This may result in a satisfactory solution, but if it does not, the Chairman may invite you to a meeting. If your complaint was about the Chairman or the School Board, the School will appoint a suitably experienced person to undertake the review process in place of the Chairman.

#### “What will happen next?”

If you raise something face-to-face or by telephone, it may be possible to resolve the matter immediately and to your satisfaction. If further action is required, a written version of your concerns may be required.

If you have made a complaint or suggestion in writing, we will contact you within a reasonable period of time to respond to your concerns and explain how we propose to proceed.

We will endeavour to keep you informed of the progress of your complaint.

The nature of complaints differs widely and the timeline that we will aim to adopt must be responsive to the unique elements of the complaint. The timeline must also be flexible and the Complainant and Respondent must be flexible. At times, events may occur that are out of the School’s control and those events may extend the anticipated timeframes. For example, people may be uncontactable or key staff may be absent. We will use our best endeavours to address complaints efficiently in the circumstances.

The process that is adopted by the School in response to a complaint may vary depending on the situation. For example, a complaint may be addressed informally or, in some circumstances, the School may elect to adopt a more formal investigation. The School may decide to review the matter internally or may, at its discretion, appoint an independent party to investigate the matter.

#### “What happens about confidentiality?”

Your complaint or concern will be treated in a confidential manner although information about your complaint will have to be shared on a “need to know” basis and with those directly involved. The Chairman of the School Board may also need to be informed.

We cannot entirely rule out the need to make third parties outside the School aware of the complaint and possibly also the identity of those involved. This would be likely to happen where, for example, a child’s safety is at risk or it becomes necessary to refer

matters to the Police.

While information relating to specific complaints will be kept confidentially on file, we would point out that anonymous complaints might not be pursued.

#### 4. Expectations and requirements

The School expects and requires that all parties will, when raising, addressing, managing or responding to a concern or complaint:

- observes the principles of natural justice;
- acknowledge that their common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties;
- act in good faith and in a calm, reasoned and courteous manner;
- provide complete and factually accurate information in a timely manner;
- show respect and understanding of others' points of view and value differences, rather than being judgemental and expressing blame;
- recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced;
- not say, write or post on-line any derogatory statements about another person, the School or School personnel;
- avoid making frivolous or vexatious complaints or using false or misleading information; and
- not retaliate against another person in any way.

#### 5. Natural justice

When a complaint is raised about a person, the School has an obligation to afford natural justice / procedural fairness. For example, the School must:

- Fully inform the respondent of the allegations (which may include the name of the complainant together with details of the specific allegations that have been raised); and
- Provide the respondent with an opportunity and time to respond to the allegations.

Natural justice also requires that:

- The decision maker must not have a personal interest in the outcome; and
- The decision maker must only act on proper evidence.

#### 6. Zero tolerance of harassment, vilification and victimisation

The School will not tolerate harassment, vilification or victimisation of a complainant, a respondent or any person who is involved in the management of a complaint.

#### 7. Vexatious or malicious claims

The School will not tolerate malicious or vexatious complaints being made.

8. Precedence

If there is inconsistency between this procedure and the complaint management process set out in the School's other policy documentation, this procedure will take precedence to the extent of the inconsistency (although that does not apply to mandatory reporting obligations under the Child Protection Policy).

## PROCEDURE RELEASE DETAILS

***Date of Procedure***

May 2023

***Approved by Board***

31 May 2023

***Review Date***

Bi-annually or as required

***Last Review Date***

May 2023

## RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

Child Protection Policy  
Child Risk Management Strategy  
Anti-Harassment Policy  
Anti-bullying Policy  
Parent/Guardian Code of Conduct  
Staff Code of Conduct