



# Complaints and Grievance Policy and Procedures

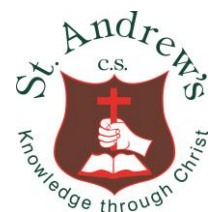
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This document has been contextualised by St. Andrew's Christian School.

# 1. Introduction

The Registered and Accredited Individual Non-Government Schools (NSW) Manual, Section B8.2 (Schools must provide for student welfare) requires that St. Andrew's Christian School (STACS) must have policies and procedures to provide for student welfare and ensure a safe and supportive environment.

A safe and supportive environment for students is one where the risk of harm is minimised and students feel secure.

Schools must have and implement a **policy and procedure for managing complaints** from students and/or parents (which includes carers or guardians) that includes:

- how to raise a concern
- how the school responds to concerns.

The school must make this document publicly available.

## 2. Principles

STACS is committed to handling complaints effectively and efficiently. STACS follow Biblical principles and adheres to procedural fairness.

### 2.1 Procedural Fairness

Everyone has a basic right to procedural fairness when dealing with authorities. Procedural fairness involves 2 key concepts:

- the '**hearing rule**'
- the '**right to an unbiased decision**'.

In schools, procedural fairness includes:

- giving students and parents or guardians a copy of the school's discipline policy and procedure
- providing details of a specific allegation, which may include an outline of allegations made in witness statements
- considering protecting the identity of witnesses
- providing an interpreter for parents or guardians who need one.

The **hearing rule** is the right of the person who has had allegations made against them to:

- know the specific allegations and any other information which will be taken into account when considering the matter
- know the process for considering the matter
- respond to the allegations
- know how to seek a review of the decision made in response to the allegations.

The **right to an unbiased decision** is the right to:

- an impartial investigation and decision-making process
- an unbiased decision-maker.

All communication by staff and the parent/carer should conform to communication protocols in the Code of Conduct characterised by courtesy and respect.

- **PeaceWise** principles are taught throughout the school. Firstly, we encourage one to take it to the person directly and deal with it in a Christ-like manner.
- Everyone should be treated with **respect**. Meetings to discuss complaints/concerns will be suspended if any person(s) behaves in an insulting or offensive manner.
- **Confidentiality** applies with respect to both information relating to the person making the complaint, and, if relevant to a person against whom a complaint is made. STACS is committed to maintaining the confidentiality of information throughout the complaints process. Personally identifiable information about a complainant will only be made available for the purpose of addressing the complaint and (unless the complainant consents) will be actively protected from disclosure. Please refer to our **Privacy Policy** (website).

We are exhorted in Ephesians 4:2-3 to 'be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace'. Christians are called upon to resolve disagreements amongst themselves and to 'live in harmony with one another' (Romans 12:14).

### 3. Scope

This policy describes the procedures followed by STACS in handling complaints made:

- Regarding services provided by the school, or
- Against staff members, which includes employees, contractors and volunteers.

The procedures in this policy are to help parents and/or students understand the correct method to raise a concern with the School.

The procedure will ensure parents and/or students that their concern is heard and resolved to the best of our ability by those involved, or those who have authority to become involved. As per the General Code of Conduct in our **Parent Handbook** ([website](#)), it is important to discuss matters of concern within the school and not publicly or on an online forum

This policy does **not** extend to:

- Personal grievances between parents, guardians or other members of the school community
- Complaints about **Child Protection** matters such as reportable conduct are dealt with under the School's **Handling Allegations of Reportable Conduct Policy** using this [link](#).
- **Whistleblower** complaints ([website](#))
- Grievances between staff members about work matters (see **Staff Grievance Policy**)

## 4. Defining Concerns, Complaints and Grievances

### 4.1 Concern

In some cases, there may be an issue or situation that has the potential to cause dissatisfaction that could lead to a grievance or complaint or is the result of a perception of a problem arising.

### 4.2 Complaint

A complaint can refer to any communication, either oral or written, expressing dissatisfaction with a situation, decision or action. By expressing their dissatisfaction through a complaint, individuals can seek resolution and strive for better and fairer treatment.

### 4.3 Grievance

In essence, a grievance is a type of complaint. Where it differs from a complaint is in the nature of the issue that has caused dissatisfaction. A grievance arises when there are perceived systemic issues that affect individuals or groups of people. It is usually most relevant in workplace issues.

**Most** concerns/complaints are best resolved at the local level. In schools, the teacher or Year Coordinator is often the best person to handle routine concerns about matters within their classroom and/or area of responsibility.

**Some** concerns/complaints will need the involvement of a member of the executive (Head of Primary or Secondary; Deputy Principal; Business Manager or Chaplain). As issues are clarified, a complaint may need to be handed to another suitable person.

**Few** concerns/complaints should require management at the Principal (or Board Chair) level. Some complaints received at the Principal (or Board Chair) level may also be suitable for internal review.

#### 4.4 Table – Who to see

Who	What for...Examples
Peers; SRC; Captains	Mildly annoying behaviour, accidental knocks, new ideas
Teacher/Year Coordinator	Student learning matters; class discipline; playground; friendship issues; homework; assessment tasks; issues outside school which may impact on learning
Head of Primary/Secondary	Student matters across classes; continuing in the playground; excursions; curriculum
Deputy Principal	Learning Support staff; continuation of issues raised with Heads; school wide matters (traffic, policies, procedures); grievances with parents
Principal	Continuation of unresolved issues; student protection concerns; concerns about staff; serious breaches of our Code of Conduct
Board Chairperson	Continuation of unresolved issues; complaint about the Principal

### 5. Student Complaints

- **Step 1: Think** about the grievance carefully; consider your part in the issue. The decision is yours and sometimes you may decide to do nothing.
- **Step 2: PeaceWise** - speak to the person and make a time to discuss the problem. Use the strategies learned in PeaceWise. At the end of this document are some PeaceWise tools.
- **Step 3:** If PeaceWise is not working for the student, they could **talk it over** with someone they trust, eg:
  - your friends
  - School Captains SRC representatives
  - your parents
  - your teacher or Year Coordinator
  - another teacher
  - chaplain
  - another adult
- If the matter cannot be resolved, the matter will be referred according to [table 4.4](#)
- The student may complete and submit an Incident Report (available at Student Reception) of the nature and details of the complaint.
- Our **Child-friendly Child Safe Commitment and Complaints Procedure** is available to students.
- Each complainant has the opportunity to present his/her case to the Deputy Principal. Students may be accompanied by a support person.
- The formal complaints process will commence within 10 working days of the lodgment of the complaint.

- Once a decision regarding the complaint is determined, the student will be informed of the outcome and the reasons for the outcome (accompanied by a support person if previously present).
- If the complaints procedure finds in favour of the student, the School will implement the decision and any corrective and preventative action required.
- If the complaints procedure does not find in favour of the student or the student is dissatisfied with the result of the complaints procedure, he/she will need to present their complaint in writing to the Principal (or regarding the Principal, the School Board) who is the final arbiter in all decisions.
- The School undertakes to finalise all complaints procedures within 20 working days
- In most circumstances, for the duration of an appeals process, the student is required to maintain enrolment and attendance at all classes as normal.

## 6. Parent Complaints

- Parent(s) should contact the appropriate person (see [table](#))
- If the matter cannot be resolved through mediation, it will be referred to the Deputy Principal.
- At this point, parent(s) must notify the school in writing of the nature and details of the complaint.
- Each complainant then has the opportunity to present their case to the Principal. Parent(s)/legal guardians may be accompanied by a support person.
- The formal complaints process will commence within 10 working days of the lodgement of the complaint with the Principal. If the complaint is a serious allegation against the Principal e.g. Reportable Conduct, rather than an opinion about his/her leadership, then the process is undertaken by the School Board with all relevant correspondence being given to the Board Chairman.
- Once the Principal or Board has come to a decision regarding the complaint, the parent(s)/legal guardian will be informed in writing of the outcome and the reasons for the outcome.

## 7. Raising a Concern or Complaint

### 7.1 Principles

The principles of respect and responsibility should be followed at all times, for example:

- Attempt to informally resolve the issue
- Treat all members of the school community with respect
- Staff acting in roles of responsibility are to be recognised as having authority
- Discussions must be polite and respectful. All actions in discussions must honour God
- People are defamed when their reputation is injured. Parents and guardians must ensure that their communication complies with the law.
- Staff will keep a written record of all interviews conducted.

### 7.2 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 as per the guidelines in the aforementioned [table](#).

Any complaint about the conduct of a staff member should be raised directly with the Deputy Principal in the first instance.

Should the matter not be resolved through informal processes, the complainant may raise the matter formally with the school. A formal complaint can be made in writing to the Complaints Manager (Principal) by

1. Sending an email to [complaints@standrewscs.nsw.edu.au](mailto:complaints@standrewscs.nsw.edu.au)
2. Writing a letter to the School addressed to "The Complaints Manager" – 84 Washpool Road, Clarenza NSW 2460
3. Telephoning the School on 6643 4770 and making an appointment with the Principal

If the complaint is regarding the Principal, contact the Board Chairman (Presbyterian Church NSW 02 9690 9301).

### 7.3 The School

The Principal/Delegate will generally acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint in writing as soon as practicable.

### 7.4 Information you can provide

To assist the School consider a concern raised or look into/investigate a complaint made, ideally complainants should be prepared to report the following:

**WHO** was involved:

- The person(s) making the complaint.
- The person(s) on whose behalf the complaint is made.
- The person(s) who are the subject of the complaint.
- Whether there were any witnesses and, if so, the names of any witnesses, if known.
- Any known contact details for all of the above.
- If a child or young person was involved, the child or young person's age and parent details.

**WHAT** they observed or heard (or as the case may be, was reported to them and when)

**WHEN** the incident, behaviour or conduct was observed/alleged to have occurred

**WHERE** the concerning incident, behaviour or conduct occurred/was said to have occurred

**WHY** they are concerned and the impact of the incident (i.e. injuries, others at risk of harm, pattern of behaviour or omission).

**WHAT NEXT** - if known, what the complainant would like to happen next and the outcome the complainant is seeking.

## 8. Procedure for handling Concerns or Complaints

### 8.1 Assessment

The Principal or delegate will assess the complaint and determine:

- Whether the complaint is one to be addressed under this policy, staff grievance or reportable conduct matter
- The priority of the complaint in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the matter raised; and
- If the school is required to report the matter to the Office of the Children's Guardian, Police, Department of Communities and Justice or other relevant authorities should the complaint relate to possible unlawful conduct or other reportable matters.

## 8.2 Management of Formal Complaints

**Step 1** - All formal complaints are logged in Engage>Pupil Daybook>Parent/Carer Communication and marked Confidential. They are then screened by our Complaints Manager or delegate, or in the case of complaints against the Principal by the Board Chairman.

**Step 2** – Advise complainant of the likely steps which will be undertaken and approximate timeframe to contact them.

**Step 3** – All valid complaints are acknowledged in writing, as soon as practicable, and allocated a status, priority and target resolution date. It is our policy, where possible, to resolve all disputes within 20 days.

**Step 4** – The Complaints Manager or delegate conducts an investigation into the issues raised, following principles of procedural fairness, and make a determination.

**Step 5** - Following the determination, if appropriate, the Complaints Manager or delegate formulates a resolution and provides a written response to the complainant. The matter will be closed if this response is accepted.

**Step 6** - If the initial response is not acceptable, the matter will be reviewed internally by the Principal or the Principal's delegate, who may seek additional information or submissions from the relevant parties. The Principal or their delegate seek to resolve all disputes within 20 days from the date that the review process is initiated. The matter will be closed if the response of the Principal, or their delegate, is accepted.

**Step 7** – Progress is added in Follow-up sections of the Engage entry by the Complaints Manager and, where appropriate, a corrective action request will be made to address any underlying processes which the complaints investigation revealed may require improvement.

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.

A complainant and the relevant parties that the complaint is about may choose to have an appropriate **support person** present at any meeting with representatives of the School about the complaint. However, 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.

## 8. Record Keeping

It is the responsibility of the person to whom the complaint is made to maintain records in relation to a complaint.



Within the School, Engage\* is the preferred method of recording (\*School Information System).

## 9. Supporting Policies

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the policies mentioned throughout in **red**, and the Parent or Staff Handbook.

Students about Students - Complaints from students about student behaviour, such as bullying, aggressive behaviour, social media are managed through the **Student Duty of Care** suite of policies.

## 10. Contact

If you have any queries about this procedure, you should contact the School for advice.

## The Peacemaking Pizza

**1. GOD: Put God first** in planning my response to conflict. (1 Corinthians 10:31) Seek to please God, get his guidance and see the conflict as an opportunity to grow.

**2. ME: Own my part** in a conflict. (Matthew 7:3-5) Examine my emotions, my roadblocks, my selfish desires. Pray, repenting of my poor choices and ask God's forgiveness.

**3. YOU: Talk it over** with the other person or people. (Galatians 6:1) Apologise for the part I have owned. Encourage them kindly to own their part.

**4. US: Make it right** between us. (Matthew 5:23-24) Negotiate any material issues. Give and receive forgiveness. This is reconciliation, which leads to a restored relationship.

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**escape**

shut down | blame game | deny

**make peace**

overlook | talk | get help

**attack**

put down | exclude | fight

## Staying on top of conflict

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## The PAUSE process



**P**repare – pray and get advice

**A**ffirm relationship – value the person and use kind words

**U**nderstand interests – find out and care about what the other wants

**S**earch for creative solutions – brainstorm ideas

**E**valuate options – choose a solution that suits both

**Philippians 2:3-4**

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## 5 A's of Apology



1. **A**dmit your part; without saying if, but or maybe

2. **A**pologise specifically for your poor choices

3. **A**ccept the consequences

4. **A**sk for forgiveness

5. **A**lter your behaviour & attitude

**Proverbs 28:13**

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## 4 Choices of Forgiving



1. **C**hoose to think good not bad thoughts about the other person

2. **C**hoose to not use the incident against them

3. **C**hoose to not talk about what they did to others

4. **C**hoose to be friendly with the person again

**Ephesians 4:32**

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