

# HORIZONS COLLEGE – POLICY & PROCEDURE

## COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY



**Purpose:** The purpose of this policy is to ensure that any complaints involving students, parents/carers and employees are dealt with in a responsive, efficient, effective and fair way.

**Scope:** Students, parents/carers and employees, including full-time, part-time, permanent, fixed-term and casual employees, as well as contractors, volunteers and people undertaking work experience or vocational placements.

- References:**
- [Education \(Accreditation of Non-State Schools\) Regulations 2017](#)
  - [Australian Education Regulations 2013](#)
  - [Fair Work Act 2009](#)
  - [Work Health and Safety Act 2011 \(Qld\)](#)
  - [Privacy Act 1988 \(Cth\)](#)
  - [Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 \(Qld\)](#)
  - [Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 \(Cth\)](#)
  - [Sex Discrimination Act 1984 \(Cth\)](#)
  - [Age Discrimination Act 2004 \(Cth\)](#)
  - [Disability Discrimination Act 1992 \(Cth\)](#)
  - [Racial Discrimination Act 1975 \(Cth\)](#)
  - [Educational Services Award 2010](#)
  - Horizons College Complaints Handling Procedures
  - Horizons College Child Protection Policy
  - Horizons College Work Health and Safety Policy
  - Horizons College Anti-Discrimination Policy
  - Horizons College Sexual Harassment Policy
  - Horizons College Disability Policy
  - Horizons College Workplace Bullying Policy
  - Horizons College Privacy Policy

<b>Policy Name:</b>	Complaints Handling Policy		Version 202112_01
<b>Policy Type:</b>	Mandatory Policies, Frameworks and Strategies *		
<b>Supersedes:</b>	Complaints Handling Policy – Version 202105_01		
<b>Authorised by:</b>	Board Chair	<b>Date of Authorisation:</b>	December 2021
<b>Review Date:</b>	Annually	<b>Next Review Date:</b>	December 2022
<b>Policy Owner:</b>	School Governing Body		

Note: Policy types marked with asterisks as follows are:

\* published on school website

\*\* only mandatory for schools incorporated through the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth)

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### Policy Statement

Horizons College is committed to ensuring that student, parent/carer and employee complaints are dealt with in a responsive, efficient, and effective and fair way.

Horizons College views complaints as part of an important feedback and accountability process.

Horizons College acknowledges the right of students, parents/carers and employees to complain when dissatisfied with an action, inaction or decision of the school and the school encourages constructive criticism and feedback.

Horizons College recognises that time spent on handling complaints can be an investment in better service to students, parents/caregivers and employees.

### Complaints that may be Resolved under this Policy

Horizons College encourage students, parents/carers 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:

- the school, its employees or students having done something wrong
- the school, its employees or students having failed to do something that they should have done
- the school, its employees or students having acted unfairly or impolitely
- issues of student or employee behaviour that are contrary to school policies
- issues related to learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
- issues related to communication with students or parents/carers or between employees
- issues related to school resources levy
- general administrative issues.

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

### Issues Outside of this Policy

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

- 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.
- Student bullying complaints should be dealt with under the Student Bullying Policy.
- Student discipline matters, including matters involving suspension or expulsion, should be dealt with under the Positive Behaviour Support Policy.
- Student or employee violence or criminal matters should be directed to the Principal who will involve the Police as appropriate.
- Formal legal proceedings.

### Definitions

**Complainant:** any person who has a grievance. This may include any member of staff, employee, parent or student

**Grievance:** any concern or complaint about any act, behaviour, omission, situation or decision that someone thinks is unfair or unjustified

**Complaints Handling Policy:** the procedure and objectives set out in this document

**Dispute Resolution Procedure:** the procedure defined in this dispute resolution policy

**Respondent:** any person against whom a grievance is brought

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**College Board:** means governing body of the College

**College/School:** Horizons College of Enrichment and Learning

### Complaints Handling Principles

Horizons College is committed to managing disputes according to the following principles:

- complaints will be resolved with as little formality and disruption as possible
- complaints will be taken seriously
- anonymous complaints will be treated on their merits
- complaints will be dealt with fairly and objectively and in a timely manner
- mediation, negotiation and informal resolution are optional alternatives
- procedural fairness will be ensured wherever practicable, including the right of interested parties to the complaint be heard
- confidentiality and privacy will be maintained as much as possible
- all parties to the dispute will be appropriately supported
- Horizons College will give reasonable progress updates
- appropriate remedies will be offered and implemented
- provide a review pathway for parties to the complaint if warranted
- complainants, respondents and people associated with them will not be victimised as a result of lodging the complaints nor will they suffer any other reprisals
- the school will keep confidential records of complaints
- the school's insurer will be informed if a complaint could be connected to an insured risk.

### Complaints Handling Procedures

The *Complaints Handling Procedures* (the Procedures) support this Policy, and outline the roles, responsibilities and processes that will be used when actioning this Policy.

All complaints are to be responded to in a timely and transparent manner and managed in accordance with the complaints handling processes outlined in the Procedures. This includes ensuring:

- reporting as required by legislation;
- all information disclosed or recorded as part of a complaints handling process must be managed in accordance with privacy legislation and principles; and
- learnings from complaints processes form part of the College's quality improvement planning.

### Responsibilities

#### The College

Horizons College has the following role and responsibilities:

- develop, implement, promote and act in accordance with the school's Complaints Handling Policy and procedures
- appropriately communicate the school's Complaints Handling Policy and procedures to students, parents/carers and employees
- ensure that the Complaints Handling procedures are readily accessible by staff, students and parents/carers
- upon receipt of a complaint, manage the complaint in accordance with the Complaints Handling procedures
- ensure that appropriate support is provided to all parties to a complaint

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- take appropriate action to prevent the victimisation or action in reprisal against the complainant, respondent or any person associated with them
- appropriately implement remedies
- appropriately train relevant employees
- keep appropriate records
- conduct a review/audit of the Complaints Register from time to time
- monitor and report to the governing body on complaints
- report to the school's insurer when that is relevant
- refer to the school's governing body immediately on receipt of any claim for legal redress

### **All Parties to a Dispute**

The complainant and respondent have the following role and responsibilities:

- apply and comply with the school's Complaints Handling Policy and procedures
- lodge the complaint as soon as possible after the issue arises
- expect that the complaint will be dealt with fairly and objectively; in a timely manner; with procedural fairness wherever practicable; that confidentiality and privacy will be maintained as much as possible
- provide complete and factual information in a timely manner
- not provide deliberately false or misleading information
- not make frivolous or vexatious complaints
- act in good faith, and in a calm and courteous manner
- act in a non-threatening manner
- to be appropriately supported
- acknowledge that a common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
- recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced
- maintain and respect the privacy and confidentiality of all parties
- not victimise or act in reprisal against the complainant, respondent or any person associated with them.

### **Employees Receiving Complaints**

Employees receiving complaints have the following role and responsibilities:

- Act in accordance with the school's Complaints Handling Policy and procedures
- Inform the Principal as soon as a complaint is received
- Inform the party lodging the complaint of how complaints can be lodged, when they should be lodged and what information is required
- provide the complainant with information about any support or assistance available to assist them in lodging their complaint
- provide the complainant with a copy of the school's Complaints Handling Policy and procedures
- maintain confidentiality
- keep appropriate records
- to forward complaints to more senior employees, including the Principal, as appropriate
- not victimise or act in reprisal against the complainant, respondent or any person associated with them.

### **Implementation**

Horizons College will keep appropriate records of complaints, will monitor complaints and their resolution and will report on a high-level basis to the College Board on complaint handling at the school.

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Horizons College will act to encourage students, parents/carers and employees to contribute to a healthy school culture where complaints are resolved with as little formality and disruption as possible.

### **Awareness**

Horizons College 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.

The school will inform staff, students and parents/carers of its processes relating to complaints handling in communications to them and it will publish these processes on its website.

Staff, students and parents/carers will be made aware of the school's complaint handling processes at staff inductions, enrolment interviews and student assemblies. Students and parents/carers will also be made aware of these processes via the Student and Parent/Carer Handbook and school newsletters.

### **Accessibility of Processes**

The Complaints Handling Policy and procedures are accessible on the school website and will be available on request from the school administration.

School policies and procedures are available to staff on the school intranet.

### **Training**

Horizons College is also committed to appropriately training relevant employees (especially senior staff) on how to resolve complaints in line with this policy and the related procedures.

The school will train its staff on how to resolve complaints at staff inductions and at least annually at staff professional development days. Evidence of this training will include staff induction registers, attendance registers for professional development and training days and staff meetings, and the agendas and minutes of meetings.