

Xavier College

Complaints Handling Policy



1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Complaints Handling Policy (the 'Policy') is to explain Xavier College's (the 'College') approach to managing complaints from its stakeholders including students, parents, suppliers and the community. In establishing its complaints handling system, the College is hoping to; resolve complaints quickly, directly and fairly, identify and address recurring or systemic problems and create opportunities for improvement and to enhance levels of community confidence and satisfaction.

The College has used ISO 10002:2018 Quality Management - Customer Satisfaction - Guidelines for Complaints Handling in Organisations (10002:2018) to develop this Policy.

2. CONTEXT

The College seeks to deal with its stakeholders in a fair, honest and professional manner and believes that a transparent and accessible complaints handling system is important for meeting this requirement. The College is open to receiving feedback, including expressions of dissatisfaction, about matters including the education services it provides to students and to report those comments in accordance with this Policy.

3. SCOPE

This Policy applies to the school environment, which includes, any campus of the College, online and virtual environments and other locations provided by the College or through a third-party provider for a child or student. The Policy also applies to the school boarding environment.

This Policy applies to all College employees (partners in mission), Jesuits, directors, students, parents and guardians, third party service providers, volunteers and contractors involved in the school environment.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

4.1 Complaint Definition

A **complaint** is any expression of dissatisfaction made to the College by a student, parent and/or a member of the community, and where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected by the complainant. This could relate to, but is not limited to, issues regarding child safety and wellbeing, the practice of teaching, the College's operations, unprofessional conduct at the College or any matter deemed to be significant.

The College accepts that complaints may either be *formal* or *informal*. An informal complaint is understood by the College and this Policy as a 'concern.' It is generally less serious in nature and may arise from a stakeholder (e.g. a parent) having a contrary view to the College and/or a College decision. The complainant will

generally not require a formal investigation into the complaint. Any other complaint should be deemed as a formal complaint.

Staff complaints and grievances are not covered by this Policy.

4.2 Guiding Principles

The College applies the following guiding principles in dealing with complaints:

- **Accessibility:** The College will keep the complaints procedures simple and accessible - this means that it will receive complaints verbally and in writing.
- **Accountability:** Reports about complaints are prepared, reviewed by the College's Principal, and provided to the College's Risk & Compliance Committee.
- **Confidentiality:** All information relating to a complaint shall be treated as confidential.
- **Continual improvement:** The College uses the information about complaints as an opportunity to improve its processes and systems.
- **Community Minded:** The College focuses on the stakeholder, is open to feedback and shows commitment to resolving complaints in a timely and fair manner.
- **Free of charge:** Complainants will not be charged for the provision of materials relating to, or access of, complaints information.
- **Objectivity:** Each complaint is addressed in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner by a person who is not the subject of the complaint. Each party has a right for their voice to be heard. Reasons for the decision are provided to the complainant. Principles of natural justice should apply to resolving complaints.
- **Responsiveness:** The College acknowledges receipt of a complaint as soon as practicable. The College includes clear response times in the procedures and makes the complainant aware of these response times and will keep them informed of progress.
- **Visibility:** The College takes reasonable steps to ensure that parents and community members know about the complaints procedure and how to lodge a complaint.

4.3 Roles and Responsibilities

4.3.1 Board

The College Board is responsible for reviewing and approving this Policy.

4.3.2 Risk & Compliance Committee

The College Risk & Compliance Committee is responsible for reviewing this Policy and recommending it to the Board for approval.

The Risk & Compliance Committee will receive a quarterly report on complaints for noting and discussion.

4.3.3 College Principal

The College Principal is responsible for:

- Overseeing the review of this Policy
- Allocating sufficient resources to the operation of the complaints handling framework within the College; and
- Overseeing the effective operation of the complaints' framework at the College.

4.3.4 Complaints Officer

A person will be delegated, by the Principal, to act as a Complaints Officer. This person is usually the Head of Standards, Safety & Risk, however, may vary depending on the nature or the location of the complaint.

The Complaints Officer is responsible for acknowledging, investigating, responding to and closing complaints.

The Complaints Officer will prepare a written complaints report on a quarterly basis for the College's Risk & Compliance Committee.

The Complaints Officer will also present an annual complaints report that identifies key trends and patterns identified in complaints.

4.3.5 Staff

All directors, officers and employees, including contractors, are responsible for escalation of any complaint to the Head of Standards, Safety & Risk that is referred to them by a parent or community member in accordance with the requirements of this Policy.

4.4 Complaints Handling Procedure

Details of the College's complaints handling procedures will be made available on the College's website.

Processes for responding to a complaint will largely depend on whether the complaint is deemed a formal or informal complaint. This section provides guidance on dealing with formal and informal complaints.

4.4.1 Receiving a Complaint

Complaints may be received by any College employee or nominated representative and may be provided *verbally* or in *writing*.

The primary channel for parents to make a complaint to the College is through the complaints handling form that is located within the Parent Portal.

Additionally, complaints can also be lodged through:

- Mail: Xavier College Complaints Officer, 135 Barkers Road, KEW, VICTORIA 3101
- Email: feedback@xavier.vic.gov.au
- Telephone: Call 03 9854 5411 and request to speak to the Head of Standards, Safety & Risk.

In receiving a verbal complaint, the complaint recipient is expected to remain courteous and listen carefully to the information being provided (without comment or admission). The collection of sufficient detail by the complaint recipient will assist in the effective handling of the complaint. The complaint recipient might make a written record setting out the details of the complaint (including time, date and method received, complainant details and an objective description of the complaint).

Complainants should be directed to the Complaints Handling Form to independently lodge their complaint, whether informal (concern) or formal. Alternatively, details of verbal and written complaints, including related correspondence, can be provided by the complaint recipient to the nominated Complaints Officer at riskcompliance@xavier.vic.edu.au and copied to the Director of Campus and/or the relevant Executive member, as soon as practicable or within 24 hours of receipt. The Complaints Officer will record the details of the complaint in the Complaints Register and monitor it to completion.

Any further communication with the parent or community member regarding the matters raised in a complaint must be done in consultation with the Complaints Officer, keeping the relevant Director of Campus and/or the relevant Executive Leadership Team member informed.

Where necessary, the Complaints Officer will assist a parent or community member who has difficulty in formulating or lodging their complaint.

4.4.2 Dealing with Informal Complaints (Concerns)

An informal complaint is understood by this Policy and the College as a 'concern.' It can be raised directly with the relevant staff member or their superior. This form of complaint can be resolved through:

- An informal discussion between the College representative who received the complaint and/or the Complaints Officer and/or the relevant staff member and the complainant; or
- The Complaints Officer bringing the complainant and respondent together for conciliation.

If a person believes that their complaint was not addressed appropriately, they can elect to make a formal complaint in writing to the College as per section 4.4.1 of this Policy.

Informal complaints are still to be escalated by the recipient of the complaint to the Head of Standards, Safety & Risk as the matter may reveal systemic and recurring issues.

4.4.3 Formal Complaints

4.4.3.1 Handling Formal Complaints

The following steps must be taken in relation to **formal complaints**:

- All formal complaints must be acknowledged within **five (5) working days** following receipt by the Complaints Officer by sending an acknowledgement letter to the complainant unless the complaint is resolved to the complainant's complete satisfaction by the end of the fifth business day after the complaint was received and the complainant has not requested a response in writing.
- A response must be provided to the complainant within **30 days from receipt of the complaint by the Complaints Officer**.
- A response must be prepared after the Complaints Officer has obtained and reviewed all relevant material relating to the complaint in a fair and consistent manner.
- The response will be reviewed by the Principal or relevant Executive member prior to dispatch.

In some cases, the handling and investigation of a complaint may reveal a matter that must be reported to an external body including but not limited to the Commission for Children and Young People and Victoria Police. Any such matter should be referred to the College Principal in the first instance.

4.4.3.2 Investigating Formal Complaints

The College will investigate a formal complaint to establish the facts of the matter and determine the most appropriate solution. This will help the College identify where it can improve processes and systems. The College performs investigations openly and transparently and under the direction of the Complaints Officer.

The following principles apply when investigating a complaint:

- The Complaints Officer will work with the relevant Director of Campus and/or Executive Leadership Team member or the Principal (as appropriate) to resolve the formal complaint
- The Complaints Officer will handle all communications with the parent or community member in conjunction with the College Principal
- The Complaints Officer will agree the most appropriate solution to the formal complaint; and
- The remedy for a formal complaint depends on the issues surrounding the complaint, its seriousness, the length of time that there has been a problem and whether the issue is a one-off or systemic matter.

4.4.3.3 Resolving Formal Complaints

The response to a formal complaint should contain the reasons for reaching a decision and adequately address the issues that were raised in the initial complaint. The response must either:

- Acknowledge error, and only where appropriate, offer redress
- Not acknowledge any error, and only where appropriate, offer redress; or
- Politely reject the complaint giving the College's reasons in writing for doing so.

Where a solution is suggested it will generally be one or a combination of:

- Disciplinary action / performance coaching involving a staff member
- Financial compensation
- Assistance to the complainant
- Provision of additional information to the complainant; or
- Indication of the College's intention to change procedures to address the cause of the complaint.

Any offer of compensation or financial assistance must be approved by the College Principal within their delegation of authority.

4.5 Closing Complaints

Only the Complaints Officer is authorised to close a complaint recorded on the Complaints Register. In general, a complaint may only be closed if the complaint has been resolved to the complainant's satisfaction, the Principal's satisfaction or the complaint has been referred to the College's Risk & Compliance Committee for resolution and the College's Risk & Compliance Committee has made a final decision.

If there is any doubt about whether a complaint may be closed, the Complaints Officer will consult with the Principal and the Chair of the Risk & Compliance Committee.

If, after all internal escalation points have been engaged, a complainant believes that their complaint has not been resolved to their satisfaction, the matter can be escalated to the Province Office for further review and assistance.

The appropriate individual to direct such matters to is:

Director of Culture, Risk & Standards - Australian Province of the Society of Jesus
Phone: 03 9810 7300
Email: sdavies@sjasl.org.au

4.6 Child Safety Related Complaints and Concerns

The College takes all child safety and wellbeing concerns and complaints seriously.

This applies to all complaints and concerns relating to child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, school staff, school boarding premises staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors, or other persons while connected to the College or the College Bord House.

Any child safety and wellbeing complaint will be treated in accordance with the procedures set out for Formal Complaints in section 4.4.3 of this Policy. Complaints will be handled promptly and thoroughly, and the child or student will be kept up to date on a regular basis.

Where a child has raised a complaint or concern, they will be provided with special assistance to make their complaint. After a complaint is made, the child will also receive ongoing care and support which will be determined in consultation with the child or student's parents and professional advisers.

After assessing the complaint, the College may decide that the matter(s) need to be reported to various authorities including Victoria Police and/or the CCYP.

Under no circumstances will the College:

- Prohibit or discourage staff, boarding premises staff or volunteers from reporting a complaint or concern relating to child abuse to a person external to the College
- State or imply that it is the victim's responsibility to inform the Police or other authorities of an allegation relating to child abuse
- Require staff, boarding premises staff or volunteers to make a judgment about the truth of a complaint or concern relating to child abuse; and
- Prohibit staff, boarding premises staff or volunteers from making records in relation to a complaint or concern relating to child abuse.

4.7 Recording Complaints

All complaints are required to be referred to the Complaints Officer and recorded in the Complaints Register maintained by the Complaints Officer. The Complaints Register tracks the status of all complaints and is used for identifying and recording potential systemic issues or recurring complaints.

The Complaints Officer is responsible for the maintenance of the Complaints Register. Records of complaints must be kept for seven (7) years.

4.8 Compliance Breaches

The Complaints Officer must also consider whether any circumstances arising from a complaint constitute a compliance breach or likely compliance breach as defined in the Incident and Breaches Policy. Where this is the case, the matter will be escalated in accordance with the Incident and Breaches Policy as soon as practicable.

4.9 Monitoring

The Complaints Officer conducts a review of the complaints handling procedure at least annually to identify any areas for improvement, identify any regulatory changes that need to be implemented and ensure that the complaints handling procedure is operating effectively.

4.10 Complaints Reporting

The Complaints Officer must provide a quarterly report to the Risk & Compliance Committee regarding the nature of complaints received, actions taken and decisions made in respect of those complaints.

On an annual basis, a report identifying any systemic issues will be provided to the Risk & Compliance Committee.

4.11 Privacy & Confidentiality

The College respects the privacy and confidentiality of all parties to a complaint. Unless required otherwise by law, information arising in the course of a complaint will be circulated only between the parties and other persons involved on a need-to-know basis. The College maintains controls and appropriate measures to protect privacy and confidentiality.

For further information please refer to the College's Privacy Policy.

5. RELATED LEGISLATION, POLICES, PROCEDURES AND DOCUMENTS

5.1 Related Standard

- 10002:2018 Quality Management - Customer Satisfaction - Guidelines for Complaints Handling in Organisations.

5.2 Related Policies, Procedures and Documents

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Risk Policy
- Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy
- Reportable Conduct Policy
- Mandatory Reporting Policy; and
- Incidents Policy.

6. BREACHES OF THIS POLICY

If you believe that the College has breached its obligations, please contact the Principal in writing or telephone. The College will investigate your notification and will inform you of the outcome as soon as is practicable after a decision has been made.

The College Principal can be contacted on:

- Telephone: (03) 9854 5411
- In Writing: The Principal, Xavier College, 135 Barkers Road KEW, VIC 3101
- Email: principal@xavier.vic.edu.au

Alternatively, the Director of Culture, Risk & Standards at the Australian Province at the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) can be contacted on:

- Telephone: (03) 9810 7300
- In Writing: Director of Culture, Risk & Standards, PO Box 6071, HAWTHORN, VIC 3122
- Email: professionalstandards@sjasl.org.au

Certain incidents might be covered by the College's Whistleblower Policy which can be found [here](#).

The Principal is responsible for ensuring that all breaches of this Policy and underlying policies, guidelines and procedures are escalated to the Child Safety & Risk Committee as soon as possible.

A breach of this Policy may lead to disciplinary action including possible termination of employment or appointment and/or referral to the appropriate authorities.

7. FURTHER INFORMATION

If you would like further information about the way the College manages complaints, please contact the office of the Principal at principal@xavier.vic.edu.au.

POLICY RATIFICATION AND REVIEW:

Xavier College policies are ratified by the Xavier College Board and are generally reviewed on a three - year basis or earlier if required.

Please note: This Policy may be varied by the College from time-to-time at its discretion and the College may, at its discretion, depart from this Policy in circumstances where it deems it appropriate to do so.