

Complaints and Grievances Policy

1. Purpose

To provide a set of principles and procedures for the resolution of grievances at Eastside Lutheran College. This policy is to be used in conjunction with the [Complaints and Grievances Procedure](#).

2. Scope

This policy applies primarily to staff, students, parents/carers, and members of Eastside Lutheran College community. However, provision is also made for the lodging of complaints and grievances by persons external to the College. This policy may be used for grievances or complaints raised by groups, or raised by individuals, in relation to:

- bullying
- discrimination
- harassment
- unfair treatment
- victimisation

Circumstances do exist in which this policy does not apply, including:

- in relation to issues which are outside of the responsibility or scope of Eastside Lutheran College in its role as an employer
- where an existing review, appeal or complaint procedure is already in process.

3. Objectives

The objective of this policy is to support a harmonious, fair and just working and learning environment by ensuring that staff, students, parents/carers and Eastside Lutheran College community have access to processes that allow for grievances, disputes, problems and complaints to be resolved.

Eastside Lutheran College believes that all staff have an obligation and responsibility to proactively promote a workplace free of bullying and intimidation, irrespective of the parties involved. All complaints and grievances will be dealt with in a supportive environment without victimisation or intimidation by anyone connected with the grievance, either during or subsequent to the resolution procedure.

The emphasis of this policy and its accompanying procedures is on resolving problems as promptly and harmoniously as possible by directing complaints and grievances to the most appropriate resolution mechanism.

4. Definitions

Allegation	A statement of fact contained within a complaint. Such statements remain allegations until proven by supporting evidence.
Bullying	<p>Bullying is repeated and unreasonable behaviour directed towards an individual that creates a risk to health and safety, where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'Repeated behaviour' refers to the persistent nature of the behaviour and can involve a range of behaviours over time; and - 'Unreasonable behaviour' means behaviour that a reasonable person, having regard to the circumstances, would see as unreasonable, including behaviour that is victimising, humiliating, intimidating, or threatening.
Complaint / Grievance	An expression of dissatisfaction with a situation, service, facilities, policy, procedure or behaviour, for which a response or resolution may be explicitly or implicitly expected.
Discrimination	<p>When someone is treated unfairly because they belong to a particular group of people or have a particular characteristic.</p> <p>For example: treating someone unfairly or differently because of their sex, pregnancy, race (including colour, ethnicity and descent), disability, sexual preference, religion, transgender, carer's responsibilities, marital status, social origin, political belief, employee association activity, irrelevant criminal record or age.</p>
	Indirect discrimination occurs when there is a requirement or rule that is the same for everyone but in effect disadvantages people from a particular group more than people from other groups - unless the requirement is reasonable in the circumstances.
Harassment	Unwelcome behaviour that makes a person feel belittled, intimidated, offended or apprehensive, and that a reasonable person, taking into account all the circumstances, would expect to cause offence, intimidation or apprehension.
Eastside Lutheran College community	For the purpose of this policy, Eastside Lutheran College community refers to alumni, associations (including, but not limited to, Eastside Lutheran College Alumni Association and the Parents' Association, governing bodies (such as Eastside Lutheran College), volunteers, contractors and sub- contractors of the College. Parents, carers and families are also covered by this designation.

Victimisation	<p>Punishing, or threatening to punish someone. It is against the law to punish, or threaten to punish someone because they have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - asserted their rights under equal opportunity law - made a complaint - helped someone else make a complaint - refused to do something because it would be discrimination, sexual harassment or victimisation <p>Examples of victimisation can include (but are not limited to) bullying and intimidation by co-workers, being denied a promotion, or demoted to a position with lower responsibility, dismissal from work, or being refused further work. The legal definition of victimisation is when someone "subjects or threatens to subject the other person, or an associate of that other person, to any detriment" (Anti-Discrimination Act 1998; Section 18(2)).</p>
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5. Policy statement

The primary objective of this policy is to achieve the resolution of complaints and grievances. Eastside Lutheran College has a duty of care to students, staff and to Eastside Lutheran College community to resolve grievances quickly, and with a minimum of distress. As such, grievances should be handled according to the following principles:

- All complaints and grievances should be acknowledged. Formal complaints and grievances will be acknowledged in writing through the [Complaints and Grievances Form](#) submission process; informal grievances or complaints may be acknowledged verbally
- The resolution of complaints and grievances should be as prompt as possible, unless it is not practical, lawful or ethical to do so
- It is expected that all parties should engage with the resolution processes in good faith, with a desire to work co-operatively to problem-solve
- It is expected that all parties will treat one another with respect. Individuals must not harass or victimise other parties involved in the matter
- Confidentiality and privacy will be strictly observed by all parties at all stages of the [Complaints and Grievances Procedure](#)
- Complainants and respondents will be informed of the outcomes of these processes wherever appropriate

Principles of fairness and natural justice

Eastside Lutheran College recognises the legal and ethical rights of staff, students, and Eastside Lutheran College community members to:

- raise any complaint or concern related to bullying, discrimination, harassment, unfair treatment or victimisation
- have that concern, problem, complaint or grievance dealt with confidentially, fairly, and within a reasonable time frame
- have a support person present during the complaints and grievance process
- access mediation at any point during the complaints and grievance process, upon request
- access legal advice at any time

Effective date: January 2020	Authorised by: J Johnson-Glading
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Informal resolution

Eastside Lutheran College believes that the best possible resolution of a complaint, grievance or conflict is through an informal process in which the complainant and the respondent come together to resolve the issue. Informal grievance processes may be handled at the discretion of the parties involved, and record keeping is not mandated at this initial step. Where the complaint is with respect to a child's schooling, staff are required to keep a record of the complaint and resolution in keeping with Eastside Lutheran College's Records Management Policy from the onset of the complaint or grievance.

Formal resolution

Where it is not possible for a complaint or grievance to be resolved informally, a formal process may be engaged. This process commences upon the lodgement of a [Complaints and Grievance Form](#) and will be conducted according to the [Complaints and Grievances Procedure](#). Where it has not already commenced, lodging this form will trigger the commencement of the formal record keeping process. Subsequent investigations will require that all relevant documentation is kept, and that thorough records of the grievance resolution process are maintained.

Record Management

During the informal resolution phase, record keeping occurs at the discretion of the staff member managing the complaint. Where a complaint or grievance is between two staff members, records should be kept at step 2 (see the [Complaints and Grievances Procedure](#)).

Upon the commencement of the formal resolution process, the following records must be kept:

- The Complaints and Grievance form
- Notes of meetings
- Interview notes
- Witness statements
- Phone call records
- Written documentation (including, but not limited to letters and email)

A record of the outcome of the complaint or grievance investigation must also be kept. All records kept by the School should be dated, signed and retained according to the Records Management Policy.

Grievances lodged through the [Complaints and Grievance Form](#) will be assigned to the appropriate member of staff for investigation through an automated online process. The name or job title of the staff member tasked with investigating a grievance will be clearly stated to the complainant during this process and prior to the submission of the form, to allow for an alternate selection should a conflict of interest may be perceived.

Records generated by the [Complaints and Grievance Form](#) will be retained within the supporting system (CompliSpace) and used to identify trends that may emerge. These records will be managed according to the College's [Privacy Policy](#).

Upon receipt of a Complaint or Grievance notification, the designated staff member is expected to take action as soon as is practicable, observing the following rules of natural justice:

- Inform all parties of the receipt of the complaint or grievance
- Inform all parties of the procedures to be followed, and provide copies of the policies, procedures and guidelines considered relevant
- Explain to the complainant that the requirements of procedural fairness may mean that their identity may be disclosed to the respondent
- Inform the respondent of any allegation made against them and allow time for a response
- Provide the respondent with an opportunity to formally respond to the allegation, and provide any explanation for the alleged conduct
- Conduct a factual investigation of the allegation(s) made, interviewing all parties and considering all relevant information
- Act fairly, impartially, and without bias, by considering all relevant information and mitigating factors

Conflict of interest

Where it may be demonstrated that there is a conflict of interest, or where a potential conflict of interest may be perceived with respect to the person responsible for mediation, or any other of the complaint resolution processes detailed within this policy and its associated procedures, complainants and respondents have the right to request alternate personnel, or to move to the next step in the [Complaints and Grievances Procedure](#).

The Complaints and Grievances Form

The [Complaints and Grievances Form](#) serves as a single point of entry for all complaints and grievances that have progressed to the formal stage. Despite being a single form, this process handles complaints from staff, students and Eastside Lutheran College community members separately, and will distribute the complaint to the relevant staff member automatically depending on the details entered by the complainant. Where a complaint is received via other mechanisms (e.g. email), and once informal resolution options have been exhausted, staff may either direct the complainant toward the online form, or complete the form themselves on the basis of the communication that they have received.

Complaints against the Principal may also be processed through this form, however, these reports are sent directly to the Chairman of the Board and are managed separately from staff, student, and Eastside Lutheran College community complaints and grievances.

6. Supporting/related documents

Anti-Bullying Policy - Staff

Practice and Behaviour Guidelines

Anti-Bullying Policy - Students

Privacy Policy

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Anti-Discrimination Policy

Records Management Policy

Complaints and Grievances Procedure

Eastern Lutheran College Code of Conduct

Authorised by:	Board Chair 	Date of Authorisation Jan 2020
Reviewed Date:	Annually	Reviewed Jan 2021
Policy Owner:	College Governing Body	

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Authorised by: J Johnson-Glading