Complaints policy & procedural information - Community

Relevant Legislation / Related information	• Registered and Accredited Individual Non-government Schools (NSW) Manual - September 2023 – B8.2 • Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) • Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) • Work health and safety Act 2011 (Cth & NSW) • Child safe standards (NSW)
Related documents (Including but not limited to)	• Code of conduct - Staff • Child protection policies • Investigations policy and procedure • Privacy policy • Work health and safety policy • Bullying and Harassment policy and procedure • Complaints policy and procedure – Workplace • Student complaint information • Child safe policy • Unreasonable complainant conduct policy and procedure
Authorisation **Implementation**	Principal
Date of Approval	18 December 2024
Review Cycle	Biennial
Feedback	Feedback on this policy can be emailed to the Principal
Accessible	Board ☐ Staff ☒ Website ☒ Parent ☒

Purpose

This document outlines The Anglican School Googong's (TASG) (the School) policy regarding the response and resolution of complaints for community members.

Any concern about a child's wellbeing may be reported under this policy. According to the type of complaint it may be read in conjunction with TASG's child protection policies. The Reportable conduct policy states complainants are not required to assess whether their concern meets the threshold of reportable conduct before making a complaint.

Scope

This is a policy and procedure making provision for community members to raise concerns and receive appropriate management.

This policy does not extend to personal grievances between parents, guardians or other members of the school community. Nor does it extend to workplace complaints or whistleblowing disclosures. See – *Complaints policy and procedure - Workplace, Whistleblower policy.*

Persons deemed to be acting inappropriately may be managed under the *Unreasonable complainant conduct policy and procedure*.

Definitions

Complainant – a person bringing a concern to the attention of TASG

Formal complaint – a complaint actioned directly which has failed to be resolved, or a complaint made in writing. All allegations of personnel misconduct and all issues involving the safety of children / young persons are formal complaints

Informal complaint – a complaint actioned directly with the persons involved via discussion

Natural justice requires the right to be heard, the right to be treated without bias, and a decision being based on relevant evidence

Community members – Students, volunteers, contractors, parents, guardians, wider community members

Policy

The Anglican School Googong (TASG) (the School) aims to provide appropriate processes for community members to raise concerns and to have these concerns addressed. These processes uphold principles of:

- Children's and worker safety, health and wellbeing are key priorities. In line with regulatory requirements, we notify the relevant regulatory authorities of any complaints alleging the occurrence of a serious incident or contravention of law
- Resolution of all complaints including those involving children is child-focused and based on the principles of natural justice
- Our community members are integral to TASG. We welcome their input into all aspects of our school's operation, including any complaints they may have
- We welcome complaints as an opportunity to enhance the quality of our practices

- We reflect on each complaint received, identifying any issues or areas of improvement
- treat all complaints in a sensitive, equitable, timely and confidential manner
- promote awareness of how, when, where and to whom complaints can be made, making documents accessible to community members

The complainant has a right to:

- be heard
- have their complaint treated seriously
- be informed of the processes of complaints handling; and
- be informed of the outcome of the process.

TASG will make all reasonable efforts to protect parties involved, including witnesses, from adverse consequences as a result of making a complaint or participating in the complaints management process.

TASG will ensure a communication strategy is in place to ensure personnel and community members are aware of complaint avenues and the underpinning management principles as defined by the policy.

There are circumstances where TASG may not be able to accept or proceed with a complaint.

Responsibilities

TASG Board

- policy owner and approval biennially

Principal

- ensure this policy and procedure is reviewed with consultation
- implements the policy and procedure
- ensure consultation with Anglican Diocesan Services (ADS) as required
- treating all complaints seriously and ensuring there is evidence to document the resolution including investigation

Line managers

- implements the policy and procedure
- treat all complaints seriously and taking immediate action to document/gather evidence, investigate and resolve the matter
- ensure consultation with the relevant Head of School or Principal to ensure appropriate management
- maintain confidentiality and act without bias
- identifying topics, gaps and areas where policy, procedure and instruction are required

All workers

- have a responsibility to receive and report complaints
- treating all complaints seriously
- maintain confidentiality and act without bias

Community members

- treat everyone with respect and courtesy
- maintain confidentiality
- cooperate fully with any investigation
- be honest and not provide misleading information

Procedural information

Raising a concern - When to report

Our school is committed to providing quality service for all students, families and others.

If you have had a negative experience, problem or concern, we appreciate your complaint so we can continue to improve and meet the needs of those we serve.

You are **not required** to establish the facts or investigate, rather TASG will respond in line with legislation, regulation, policy and procedure.

Anonymous complaints

TASG respects the wishes of complainants to remain anonymous and will accept anonymous complaints where possible. However, the School's ability to investigate and/or satisfactorily resolve an anonymous complaint may be limited depending on the level of information provided.

Reporting

Allegations of personnel misconduct and all issues involving the safety of children / young persons must be reported to the Principal.

TASG's complaints process is:

- Initially community members are encouraged to raise issues or concerns with the relevant member of staff.
- Should the complaint remain unresolved then the complaint should be brought to the attention of the respective Head of Faculty or Head of School
- Should a complaint arise about the Principal, and it cannot be resolved by talking to the Principal, the complaint should be brought to the attention of the Board Chair via the Business Manager using the feedback form located on the School's website

Complaints can be raised via the feedback form located on the School's website **or** contact the relevant staff member, Faculty Head, Head of School or Principal.

Support

It is acknowledged that raising a complaint may be difficult for some people. The following supports may be selected where appropriate:

- reviewing publicly available school policy and procedure for information
- seeking advice while maintaining confidentiality – *see below*
- bring a support person to a meeting/s. The support person is:
    - to provide support to the complainant by provision of wise counsel

- not an advocate for the complainant
- not to become actively involved in the discussions.

To avoid escalating the issue a support person should not be an industrial advocate or lawyer.

Confidentiality

For effective management, the complainant and respondents must not discuss their complaint with other community members. Advice may be sought from TASG Heads of School.

Personnel managing a formal complaint may disclose details of a complaint in order to effectively manage and investigate the complaint.

Should legal obligations apply (such as criminal matters) confidentiality will be broken and the appropriate parties informed of this action.

Responsiveness

It is expected that all complaints will be acknowledged in seven days, pending the significance of the matter, and resolved in a timely manner. The process and time frames for resolution will vary depending on the nature, complexity and timing of the issue.

Vexatious or frivolous complaints

Regardless of any preconceptions about a complaint, TASG will treated each complaint seriously. However, TASG may not be able to accept or proceed with a complaint on certain grounds e.g. lack of evidence, vexatious or frivolous.

All participants in a complaint process are expected to be honest and not provide misleading information.

Vexatious complaints include, but are not limited to, complaints made in bad faith or lacking merit with the intention of causing harm or detriment to a person(s) or TASG. Frivolous complaints are generally trivial in nature or disproportionate to the significance of the matter.

Responding to the findings of a vexatious complaint - the response will be:

- reasonable in all circumstances
- proportionate to the problem identified
- in keeping with TASG's policies, such as the *Bullying and harassment policy*.

Appeals

TASG does not offer unlimited opportunities for appeal if a complainant is unhappy with the resolution of a complaint. Any appeal against the resolution of a complaint should be made in writing to the Principal within 10 days term time. An appeal is only likely to be considered if there is evidence that there was a procedural problem with the investigation.

The Principal, at their discretion, will consider the application for an appeal and will either direct that the complaint be re-examined or direct that the matter be closed.

Withdrawing a complaint

A complainant may choose to withdraw their complaint at any time by notifying the complaint / line manager in writing. In some instances, no further action will be taken, however, TASG retains the discretion to act on, or continue its investigation of, a complaint.

Communication strategy

The most current approved version of the *Complaints policy and procedure - Community* will be made available via the TASG website.

This policy is supported by the document *Student complaint information* which makes provision for students to pursue their concerns via this policy and procedure.

All community members can provide feedback and make a complaint within the Feedback form available within TASG's website.