



## Complaints and Grievances Handling Policy

### Rationale

Marian College is committed to positive relationships between staff, students and parents. We believe that all students and staff have a right to a safe and supportive learning environment where each individual is treated with dignity. This policy deals specifically with complaints raised by parents or guardians of students attending Marian College Ararat.

From time to time, students and parents may raise concerns about matters relating to their experience at school. For this policy, it is important to distinguish between the terms 'concern' and a formal '**complaint**' or '**grievance**'. Often early 'concerns' can be dealt with informally and in prompt manner with the person(s) concerned to clarify an issue and find a suitable solution to prevent further escalation.

However, formal procedures need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve an issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the issue remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further. This matter is then deemed to be a '**complaint or grievance**' for handling purposes. The College will register all formal complaints and grievances received. If the matter is of a more serious nature requiring action at Leadership level or higher, this formal process may be invoked immediately on receipt of a concern.

Complaints are an important way for our community to provide information and feedback and to reflect upon our work to ensure our processes and procedures are fair, consistent and safeguard the dignity of all parties.

Marian College complaints resolution procedures are implemented for complaints or grievances in relation to issues that fall within the College's area of responsibility. They are designed to ensure that throughout the school there is a transparent process for ensuring student and parent complaints and grievances are dealt with fairly, consistently and promptly.

***This policy does not include situations where there is a complaint of suspected sexual abuse or alleged criminal behaviour covered under the Marian College Child Protection Policies or criminal legislation. All matters of complaints of allegations of sexual abuse, or serious misconduct should be referred directly to the police.***

### General Principles

The College will:

- seeks to resolve concerns, grievances and complaints in a prompt, impartial and just manner.
- remain committed to open and transparent communication and processes to ensure natural justice is afforded to all parties.
- acknowledge that our goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
- handle the complaint process confidentially
- act in good faith in a calm and respectful manner
- determine the finding as quickly as possible
- provide all parties with details of the determination and reasons
- ensure that no person is victimized as a result of raising complaint
- make this policy available on the school's website



## **Complaints Procedure**

In the first instance, complainants are encouraged to resolve issues directly with the person/s involved or speak with the relevant Teacher Advisor. Parents are asked to keep any initial written correspondence or phone call brief in the first instance and allow suitable time for the staff member to gather data or further investigate the matter. However, if after an initial meeting or discussion the issue remains unresolved, or if the matter is of a more serious nature, parents can always ask to see the House Leader or Principal.

To do this, you will need to request an appointment through the school office. Please note that:

- the Principal may ask another senior staff member to speak on their behalf
- if a teacher is going to be present at the meeting it is more likely to occur outside of classroom hours
- If your complaint or grievance is related to issues of school policy, these should be raised more formally (in writing) with the Principal
- If the complainant after the meeting with the principal believes that the school has not listened to their concerns or followed processes then the complainant can take the issue to the school's governing authority – Kildare Ministries.
- If the matter is urgent and the teacher is not available please contact the College office to arrange another member of the Leadership Team or suitable staff member to contact you.
- Where the complaint is against the Principal or Business Manager of Marian College, the complainant should refer all concerns and correspondence directly to the governing authority - Kildare Ministries

## **Maintaining a Safe Environment**

At any stage in the complaint process, staff have the right to feel safe. Aggressive or abusive behaviour will not be tolerated. In such circumstances, the staff member will end the meeting and refer the matter to the Principal. If the complainant feels unsafe, they should end the meeting and refer the matter to the Principal. In the case of it being the Principal, then the complainant should contact the governing authority – Kildare Ministries.

## **Making, Receiving and Investigating Complaints**

At Marian College, all staff are expected to:

- encourage the complainant to speak to the person/s immediately involved or named in the first instance
- respond to concerns or complaints in a timely manner
- clarify the nature of the complaint and individuals involved
- listen carefully and deal calmly and respectfully with complaints
- inform the complainant of the process of investigation
- conduct a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary
- provide feedback to the complainant on any actions/outcomes/decisions taken
- accept that it is not possible to resolve all complaints
- document the complaint, actions taken and outcome
- identify when a complaint cannot be resolved
- refer more complex or unresolved complaints to the Principal or the school governing authority



### **Those making complaints are expected to:**

- be clear about the topic or issue you want to discuss
- focus on the things genuinely affecting your child
- always remain calm and respectful
- remember that they may not have all the facts relating to the circumstances of the topic or issue you wish to discuss
- think about what would be an acceptable outcome for the parents and their child that is consistent with school policy and procedures
- be aware that they have the right to seek advocacy or support when making a complaint.
- Follow the Complaint and Grievance policy if they wish to proceed with a complaint
- In most situations, students with a concern or complaint will be asked to complete an Incident Report in the Responsible Thinking Classroom detailing in their own words their concerns and others students involved to initiate further action.
- More serious matters not covered previously should be referred immediately to the Principal, School Child Protection Officer or Governing Authority

### **Record Keeping**

A record of complaint should include the following details:

- Date when the issue was first raised
- Name of parent(s)
- Name of students
- Detail statement of concern/complaint including:
  - Nature of complain
  - Identity of person (s) involved
  - Time of allegation
  - Description of the procedure applied and time from for reporting on actions
  - Statement of outcome
  - Staff member(s) handling the complaint

The record of complaint will be filed in school records management system.

### **Anonymous Reports**

The College may determine that an anonymous complaint cannot be investigated because:

- it is not possible to liaise appropriately with the complainant
- it call into question the ability of the College to ensure natural justice
- such a complaint may have been made maliciously.

In some rare cases it may not be possible to resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant. In such circumstances the Principal or Governing Authority will identify other avenues of appeal or redress for the complainant.

Please note that under the Kildare Ministries and Catholic Education guidelines and standards, some outcomes are not possible. Marian College is also bound by privacy laws that may prohibit disclosure of specific details about any internal actions taken.



I thank you for your understanding and cooperation in this matter.

Mrs. Carmel Barker  
Principal  
Marian College  
Ararat

Dated: 22 March 2017

