

Helena College Child Friendly Complaints Policy

This policy is applicable to: Staff, Students & Parents

Managed by:	CompliSpace	Current as at July 2018
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Contact position:	Risk and Compliance Officer	
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Child Friendly Complaints Policy

Source of Obligation

The WA Registration Standards (Standard 11.1) require that the College has a child-friendly complaints handling policy and procedures.

WA Commissioner for Children and Young People Guide

The College has developed this policy with regard to the six elements of a child-friendly complaints system outlined in the WA Commissioner for Children and Young People Guide, *Are you Listening?* Guidelines for making complaints systems accessible and responsive to children and young people:

- Focus on children and young people
- Visibility
- Accessibility
- Responsiveness
- Confidentiality
- Accountability and continuous improvement.

Focus on Children and Young People

In our Complaints Handling Programme, we acknowledge that students are persons who may make a complaint using the College's Complaints Handling processes.

Visibility

The College uses strategies to publicise our complaints handling processes that include a range of methods which are effective in communicating with our students. These include:

- in person information sessions
- clearly positioned information on our public website
- display of posters (physical and digital)

We ensure that students are made aware of their right to make a complaint by means and in language which take into account their age, language background and other relevant factors. We do this through:

- age appropriate posters
- presentation at assemblies
- communication via newsletters or emails

The College involves strategies to publicise our complaints process and possible outcomes in publications which are developmentally suitable for and appealing to the students of the College, including by illustrations or other visual material such as posters, and by:

- inviting comments
- using minimal messaging
- using relevant technology for students at our College.



Accessibility

The College ensures our students know how to make a complaint, who they can make a complaint to and the methods in which they can make a complaint. We use the following approaches to ensure our complaints handling procedures are accessible:

- making information available on our public website
- ensuring information is available in different forms
- complaints can be made verbally and in writing
- facilitating making a complaint through the student SEQTA engage portal.

It is the College's policy that:

- students can choose how to make a complaint, including by speaking to someone face-to-face
- the College creates opportunities for students to give feedback and discuss their experiences
- the College enables an advocate to complain on behalf of a student and, when that occurs, makes sure the student can participate directly to the extent he or she wishes
- students are provided with an appropriately trained advocate, independent from the complaint investigation and management process, when they do not have one.

Responsiveness

The College acknowledges that it is important to ensure our complaints management system is responsive to our students and all staff are trained to identify, respond quickly and actively listen to, all complaints.

It is College policy that:

- a student's complaint is promptly acknowledged. Depending on the severity of a complaint, acknowledgement can be verbal (less serious) or in writing (more serious)
- timelines for investigating and responding to complaints are established and communicated
- staff handling students' complaints, and those reviewing the outcome of a complaint, have training in working with children
- understanding, helpfulness and responsiveness is demonstrated towards student complainants
- students' understanding of information provided about the complaints process is checked
- student complainants are given choices about how they wish to be kept informed about the progress of their complaint.

Generally, it is only more serious complaints that require formal acknowledgment, investigation and responses.

Often during the acknowledgement phase the complainant may be provided with a document that provides an overview of the school's complaints handling process in order to clearly establish expectations at an early stage of the process.



Confidentiality

It is the College policy that all complaints lodged through our Complaints Handling Programme will be treated as confidential.

When handling complaints from students:

- the student's consent in relation to the complaint is obtained
- any personally identifiable information concerning the complainant, or the person who is the subject of the complaint, is only to be used for the purpose of addressing the complaint
- students are made aware of the limits of confidentiality as the process progresses, and
- staff are trained in the school's complaints procedures, particularly as they apply to student complainants.

Child Wellbeing Complaints

In all circumstances where a complaint relates to the wellbeing of a child or young person, the College uses our Child Protection Programme to refer the complaint to the appropriate authorities.

The Guide defines child wellbeing to include the:

- care of a child;
- physical, emotional, psychological and educational development of a child;
- physical, emotional and psychological health of a child;
- safety of a child.

Our Response Team

We have appointed the Student Services Team who are responsible for:

- ensuring that all staff are educated about our Complaints Handling Programme
- investigating and, where necessary, escalating complaints when requested by the complainant
- maintaining accurate records in the Complaints Register
- regularly reporting to the Executive Team about complaints
- ensuring systemic complaints are identified and rectified
- monitoring the effectiveness of, and continually improving, our Complaints Handling Programme.

Pastoral Care Services

The College acknowledges that in some cases, students may not wish to engage with our complaints handling policies and procedures to make a complaint.

We encourage all students to contact our internal and external pastoral care services if they require assistance, guidance or support to make a complaint.

Students are aware of their ability to contact the WA Commissioner for Children and Young People if they wish to make a complaint outside the College's complaints handling policy and procedures.



Record Keeping

Records are kept of every complaint including records of the description of the complaint, supporting documents if any, immediate action taken, records relating to the investigation including any witness statements, and a record of the outcome of the complaint and investigation.

Accountability and Continuous Improvement

Our Complaints Handling Programme is regularly reviewed through CompliSpace Assurance to ensure that appropriate data is recorded and measured to monitor complaints by our students.