



## PARENT GRIEVANCE POLICY

### Rationale

This policy describes St Mark's practices for handling parent complaints, grievances and concerns. Throughout this document, the term 'parent' has been used to refer to both parents and carers, which includes individuals who have assumed responsibility for the role of primary caregiver for a child or young person, such as guardians, grandparents, or other family members.

Issues or concerns that you may have regarding your child's education are important to us. At times, issues or concerns need to be addressed, with a positive resolution the goal of those involved. This can be achieved by addressing at the earliest opportunity possible. This policy aims at dealing with issues or concerns in a way that respects the rights of all the participants in the grievance process in the most informal way and by the most appropriate person/ people.

St Mark's complaints handling management system is intended to:

- boost public confidence in the School's administrative process, and
- provide information that can be used by us to deliver quality improvements in our products, services, staff and complaint handling practices.

All personal matters such as concerns regarding student, parent or staff relationships should be discussed directly with the school through the class teacher or Principal, in a confidential manner. It is important to keep an open mind, make sure you have all the facts, and seek clarification in the first instance as an informal complaint, grievance matter.

Information on how to make a grievance/complaint is made available:

- on the School's website
- via contacting the office for details on how to submit a complaint.

### How to lodge a Grievance/ Complaint

#### Informal Grievance, Concern or Complaint

The vast majority of issues causing concern in schools can be handled quickly and in an informal manner. We therefore ask that, where appropriate, raise any complaint, grievance or concern directly with the relevant staff member (follow from Step 1 of the Guidelines: Implementation section below).

#### Formal Complaint

If the matter is unresolved after going through the informal stage, or a person wishes to make a formal complaint, this can be done by any of the following means:

Phone: 08 8391 0444

Email: [contact@stmarks.sa.edu.au](mailto:contact@stmarks.sa.edu.au) or email individual Teacher/ Principal

Post: 37 Hampden Road  
Mount Barker SA 5251

All formal complaints will be logged into our complaints management system and managed in accordance with the complaints handling procedures.

### **Guidelines: Implementation**

The following guidelines may assist you if you have an issue or concern and are to be read in conjunction with the Lutheran Education Australia document Valuing Safe Communities: Complaints Handling options.

1. The preferable first action is to make an appointment to talk to the relevant person, which in most instances is the class teacher. If via email, let that person know what subject\* you wish to discuss, as this will facilitate the process. This process makes the most productive use of the time available – as the person is free to give you their full attention. If you consider that the issue you have raised is still unresolved after exploration of as many options as possible at this meeting, it is important that you state this to the person at the conclusion of the meeting. (\*- identify key concerns by outlining facts rather than using emotion, e.g. “It seems to me....”).
2. If the issues are not resolved during the initial appointment and a second appointment does not also provide a resolution, make an appointment with the Principal. Once again, inform the Principal of the subject you wish to discuss, as this will facilitate the process.
3. Meet with the Principal or the delegated authority. Results of this meeting may include the following:
  - if required, lodgement as a formal complaint;
  - details on how the situation will be monitored;
  - further discussions with the people involved (eg. Principal and teacher); and
  - outside support for the child or family may be sought.

The matter may be resolved and closed at this stage if agreed by you and the Principal.

4. If you are still dissatisfied with the outcome of the meeting, phone or write to the Principal again to air your concerns. If the school does not receive further information, it is reasonable for the issue to be considered resolved.
5. If after steps 1-4 you are still dissatisfied, inform the Chairperson of School Council in writing who will try to resolve the situation further. The expectation of the Chairperson of School Council will be that the above steps have been followed.
6. If the grievance is with the Principal, parents need to follow 1, 4 and finally 5.
7. Information from steps 1-6 will be recorded in the Complaints Handling Management Program Register and will form part of the school’s continuous improvement strategy of reviewing de-identified data regularly.

### **Trust and Confidentiality**

Grievances/complaints are best dealt with when there is a high level of confidentiality and trust between the parties involved. Criticism of teachers and/or the school in the wider school community can adversely affect the resolution of the grievance and is something to be guarded against.

The child's welfare should be the paramount concern throughout the grievance procedure.

Confidentiality applies with respect to both information relating to the person making the complaint, and, if relevant to a person against whom a complaint is made. St Mark's is committed to maintaining the confidentiality of information throughout the complaints process.

Personally identifiable information about a complainant will only be made available for the purpose of addressing the complaint and (unless the complainant consents) will be actively protected from disclosure.

*Note: Neither the Minister for Education nor the Department for Education has any power to directly intervene in any complaints relating to the operations of a non-government school.*

## **Expectations**

While a complaint is being investigated, it is expected that all parties will behave in a manner consistent with the ethics and behaviours within St Mark's Community Code of Conduct.

## **Resolving a complaint**

When responding to complaints, staff are to act in accordance with our complaint handling procedures, as these provide guidance on the management of complaints. The matter should be dealt with by a person within the school with appropriate delegated authority and impartiality. St Mark's should also consider any relevant legislation and/or regulations when responding to complaints and feedback. Investigation details, including resolution/outcome will be recorded on the Complaints Handling Register.

## **Complaints about Child Safety Incidents or Concerns At or Involving the School or its Staff Members**

Complaints about or allegations of breaches of the Child Safe Codes of Conduct, placing a child or young person at risk or inappropriate behaviour are managed by St Mark's in a different way to other complaints.

This is because of the additional confidentiality and privacy requirements surrounding these kinds of matters.

We refer to these as child safety related complaints, further information is outlined in the Child Safe Program.

If a complaint is a child safety-related complaint, please ensure the complaint is addressed to: James Heyne, Principal and St Mark's Senior Child Safety Officer by phoning 8391 0444 or emailing [jheyne@stmarks.sa.gov.au](mailto:jheyne@stmarks.sa.gov.au) or if this person is the subject of your complaint, please notify the Chair of the School Council (contact details can be obtained from the Front Office).

## **Related documents**

Complaints Handling Procedures  
Complaint Response Letter  
Community Code of Conduct  
Code of Conduct  
Privacy Policy  
Supporting Positive Student Behaviour Policy

## **Legislative context**

*Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA)*  
*Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)*  
*Education and Children's Services Act 2019 (SA)*  
*Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (SA)*  
*State Government Funding Deed*

## Definitions

A **grievance** is generally considered to be a more formal complaint about any act, behaviour, omission, situation or decision that someone thinks is unfair or unjustified. Grievances can occur when a person complains that an action or decision has been taken (or not taken) at the school and may contravene a relevant Act, Regulation or Order, infringe upon the principles of merit and equity, or is otherwise unreasonable.

A **concern** is generally considered to be less formal than a grievance.

A **complaint** is an expression of dissatisfaction made to St Mark's, related to our services or operations, or the complaints handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.

## Review

This policy will be reviewed at least every 3 years.

Version	Date	Changes/ updates	Author/ Responsible Person
1.0	2019	-	School Council
2.0	28/11/2023	Multiple additions	School Council