TAS
THE ARMIDALE SCHOOL

Title:	Complaints Policy and Complaints Handling Guide
Intended Audience:	Parents, Students (including Boarders), Staff, Public
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The Armidale School's Complaints Handling Policy

We welcome feedback from all members of the school community and the School, and takes all complaints or concerns that may be raised seriously. This Complaints Handling Policy is designed to assist you to understand how to make a complaint. This policy is part of the student welfare framework and is a key aspect of providing a supportive school environment. This Policy also applies to our Boarding Program.

What is a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to the school, related to our services or operations, or the complaints handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected. Complaints and allegations of staff misconduct or reportable conduct are managed separately to other complaints. Refer to the section at the end of this policy - *Complaints and Allegations of Staff Misconduct or Reportable Conduct* for more information.

Our Commitment

We are committed to handling complaints effectively and efficiently.

To manage complaints effectively, we have established a Complaints Handling Program in line with both the international complaints handling standard (ISO 10002:2018 Quality management – Customer satisfaction – Guidelines for complaints handling in organizations), and the Australian/New Zealand complaints handling standard (AS/NZS 10002:2014 Guidelines for complaint management in organisations).

Our Complaints Handling Program includes the establishment of an online complaints management system which allows us to effectively capture, manage and report on complaints. Regular analysis of complaints received and the implementation of rectification action, where deficiencies are identified, are key to our commitment. Our internal complaints handling process are available at no cost.

Students can raise complaints through:

- A trusted staff member (such as a Teacher, Advisor, Head of House or Director of Pastoral Care)
- Direct contact with the Complaints Manager at complaints@as.edu.au or (02) 6776 5800
- A parent or guardian on their behalf

The school ensures age-appropriate support for students making complaints, including access to a support person if requested.

How Do I Make a Formal Complaint?

We ask that, where appropriate, you first raise the matter directly with the relevant staff member. If that is not appropriate or the issue was not addressed to your satisfaction, please contact our Complaints Manager on 6776 5800 or at complaints@as.edu.au

If you have been unable to resolve a matter informally, or simply wish to make a formal complaint you can do so by any of the following means:

1. Sending an email to complaints@as.edu.au
2. Writing a letter to us addressed to "The Complaints Manager', c/ The Armidale School, Locked Bag 3003 Armidale, NSW 2350
3. Telephoning us on (02) 6776 5800.

Complaints and Allegations of Staff Misconduct or Reportable Conduct

Complaints and allegations of Staff Misconduct and/or Reportable Conduct are managed by the School in a different manner from other complaints. This is because the School has legal obligations to report certain staff conduct to external authorities. Staff Misconduct is a broad term that could include breaches of professional boundaries, codes of conduct or standards of behaviour, whereas Reportable Conduct is a term defined in law and includes:

- any sexual offence or sexual misconduct, committed against, with or in the presence of a child (including child pornography offences, sexual touching or an offence involving child abuse material) including grooming behaviours
- any assault, ill-treatment or neglect of a child
- any behaviour that causes psychological harm to a child (whether or not, in any case, with the consent of the child).

If your complaint relates to alleged Staff Misconduct or Reportable Conduct please make your complaint to the Principal (principal@as.edu.au) or if this person is the subject of your complaint please notify the Chairman of the Board at chair@as.edu.au.

For more information about School's complaints handling procedures regarding allegations of staff misconduct or reportable conduct, please refer to our Procedures for Handling Allegations of Staff Misconduct and Reportable Conduct.

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Student Discipline Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy
- Child Safety Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Enrolment Policy

The Armidale School's Complaints Handling Guide

We welcome feedback from all members of the school community and we take all complaints or concerns that may be raised seriously. This Complaints Handling Guide is designed to assist you to understand our complaints handling process.

What is a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to the school, related to our services or operations, or the complaints handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected. Complaints and allegations of staff misconduct or reportable conduct are managed separately to other complaints. Refer to our Procedures for Handling Allegations of Staff Misconduct and Reportable Conduct document available on our public website.

Our Commitment

We are committed to handling complaints effectively and efficiently. To manage complaints effectively, we have established a Complaints Handling Program, in line with both the international complaints handling standard (ISO 10002:2018 Quality management – Customer satisfaction – Guidelines for complaints handling in organizations), and the Australian/New Zealand complaints handling standard (AS/NZS 10002:2014 Guidelines for complaint management in organizations).

Our program includes the establishment of an online complaints management system which allows us to effectively capture, manage and report on complaints. Regular analysis of complaints received and the implementation of rectification action, where deficiencies are identified, are key to our commitment. Our internal complaints handling process are available at no cost.

Informal Complaints Resolution

The vast majority of issues causing concern in schools can be handled quickly and in an informal manner. In most cases these issues can be resolved through informal discussions with appropriate staff members. Even if

an issue is able to be resolved informally, all staff are required to log issues through our complaints management system so we are able to identify any systemic issues arising, and take appropriate rectification action.

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If you have been unable to resolve a matter informally, or simply wish to make a formal complaint you can do so by any of the following means:

1. Sending an email to **complaints@as.edu.au**
2. Writing a letter to us addressed to "The Complaints Manager", c/ The Armidale School, Locked Bag 3003 Armidale, NSW 2350
3. Telephoning us on **(02) 6776 5800.**

All formal complaints will be logged into our online complaints management system and managed in accordance with the following procedure.

Our Internal Complaints Handling Process

- **Step 1** - All formal complaints are logged through our online complaints management system where they are screened by one of our Complaints Officers, or in the case of complaints against Principal by the Chair of the TAS Board,
- **Step 2** - All valid complaints will be acknowledged in writing as soon as practicable, and allocated a status, priority and target resolution date. It is our policy, where possible, to resolve all disputes within 14 days.
- **Step 3** – The Complaints Officer shall conduct an investigation into the issues raised, following principles of procedural fairness, and make a determination.
- **Step 4** - Following the determination, if appropriate, the Complaints Officer shall formulate a resolution and provide a written response to the complainant. The matter will be closed if this response is accepted.
- **Step 5** - If the initial response is not acceptable to the complainant, the matter will be reviewed internally by the Principal or their delegate, who may seek additional information or submissions from the relevant parties. The Principal or their delegate seek to resolve all disputes within 14 days from the date that the review process is initiated. The matter will be closed if the response of the Principal or their delegate, is accepted.
- **Step 6** - All complaints received will be entered into our Complaints Register and, where appropriate, a corrective action request will be made to address any underlying processes which the complaints investigation revealed may require improvement.
- **Step 7** - If the matter remains unresolved, the complainant may pursue external resolution alternatives.

Overseas Students

If an overseas student isn't satisfied with the outcome of our internal complaints handling process, they may lodge an external appeal through the Commonwealth Ombudsman which investigates complaints about problems that overseas students or intending overseas students may have with private education and training in Australia. The services of the Ombudsman are free.

The contact details for Commonwealth Ombudsman are as follows:

- The online complaint form
- by phone on 1300 362 072
  (note this is not a toll-free number and calls from mobile phones may attract additional charges)
- in writing at GPO Box 442, Canberra, ACT 2601.

- We agree to be bound to the Ombudsman's recommendations, and will ensure that any recommendations made are implemented within 30 days of receipts of the report.

Confidentiality

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. We are 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.