



# FRAMEWORK

# Complaints Management

May 2021

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# FRAMEWORK

## Complaints Management

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### 1. Vision

The vision for Catholic Education Sandhurst Limited (CES Ltd) is to provide, in partnership with our families, stimulating, enriching, liberating and nurturing learning environments in each of the Catholic school communities within the Diocese. At the heart of this vision is our commitment to the ongoing duty of care that we have for the safety, wellbeing, and inclusion of all children and young people.

We believe:

- that the values of the Gospel are central to who we are, what we do, and how we act
- in leadership encompassing vision, innovation and empowerment.

### 2. Introduction

Sandhurst Catholic schools offer a broad, comprehensive curriculum imbued with an authentic Catholic understanding of Christ and his teaching, as well as a lived appreciation of membership of the Catholic Church.

CES Ltd is committed to ensuring that Sandhurst Catholic schools are communities of faith, hope and love where communication takes place in an environment of transparency, respect, compassion, tolerance and inclusion in the interests of all students.

The CES Ltd Complaints Management Framework provides the key documents and elements of our approach to managing complaints that arise about the operation of Sandhurst Catholic Schools. All Sandhurst Catholic schools must ensure the Complaints Policies and Procedures implemented at school level are consistent with this CES Ltd Complaints Management Framework.

### 3. Definitions

<b>CES Ltd</b>	Catholic Education Sandhurst Limited
<b>CES Ltd Board</b>	Board of Directors of CES Ltd
<b>Complaint</b>	A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived issue at the school where a response or resolution is expected.
<b>Complainant</b>	The person making the complaint.
<b>ETR Act</b>	<i>Education and Training Reform Act 2006.</i>
<b>ETR Regulations</b>	The Education Training and Reform Regulations 2017.
<b>Executive Director</b>	The person holding the position of Executive Director of Catholic Education in CES Ltd.
<b>Guidelines</b>	Recommendations and guidance to support the implementation of this Board-approved Framework and related Policies, which may be developed and approved by the Principal of a Sandhurst Catholic school for operation in a particular School in accordance with this Framework.
<b>Policy</b>	A high-level principles-based directive from the CES Board that must be complied with by each Sandhurst Catholic school as detailed in this Framework.
<b>Procedure</b>	A step-by-step instruction for the implementation of a CES Ltd Framework and related Policies, which may be developed and approved by the Principal of a Sandhurst Catholic school for operation in a particular school in accordance with this Framework.
<b>Sandhurst Catholic School</b>	A school which operates with the consent of the Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst and is owned, operated and governed by CES Ltd, where formation and education are based on the principles of Catholic doctrine, and where the teachers are outstanding in true doctrine and uprightness of life.

### 4. Purpose

The purpose of this CES Ltd Board approved Complaints Management Manual is to:

- outline the framework and the guiding principles for managing complaints of Sandhurst Catholic schools
- ensure that Sandhurst Catholic schools and CES Ltd meet their obligations to respond to parent/guardian complaints in a fair, effective and efficient manner
- inform parents/guardians about how to lodge a complaint at their child's school
- outline the procedures to be adopted, including the escalation process in complaints management
- outline the procedures to be followed by CES Ltd when a matter has been referred to the office from a Sandhurst Catholic school.

## 5. Principles

Addressing complaints or concerns with dignity and respect can provide powerful opportunities to model the love of Christ in the reality of our contemporary world and provides a valuable opportunity for reflection and learning.

In receiving and responding to complaints, the following guiding principles will apply:

- Complainants can expect their concern or complaint to be responded to in a respectful and timely manner.
- Schools will be informed of formal complaints that are made about them.
- Complainants and the person(s) against whom the complaint is made have the right to be heard and to expect that the principle of procedural fairness will be observed.
- Confidentiality, protection of privacy, respect, access, dignity and impartiality will form the basis of the complaints resolution process.
- The complaints resolution process will seek to achieve the restoration of good and respectful relationships.

## 6. Scope

This Framework and incorporated Policies and Procedures apply to all Sandhurst Catholic schools. It does not apply to schools in the Diocese of Sandhurst that are governed and operated under Religious Institutes. However, members of the community may use this policy as a guide if they wish to make a complaint to CES Ltd about any school in the Diocese of Sandhurst.

This Framework applies to:

- complaints processes in Sandhurst Catholic Schools to be used by parents/guardians and students who wish to raise a concern

- complaints that are unable to be resolved at the school level and referred to CES Ltd Office by members of the school community or external authorities (the Complainant). Procedures for making a complaint are presented in this Framework.

The Policy and Procedures relate to concerns and complaints about (but are not limited to):

- general issues of student behaviour that are contrary to the school Student Behaviour Policy, including incidents of bullying or harassment
- learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
- communication with parents/guardians
- school enrolment, fees and payments
- general administrative issues
- any other school related matter, including conduct of staff other than allegations of child abuse.

This framework **does not** relate to critical incidents, matters included in the Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme, emergency management, staff grievances or criminal offences.

If the matter relates to allegations of child abuse, Sandhurst Catholic schools and CES Limited will follow their procedures for responding to allegations of child abuse under various reporting obligations as outlined in **Child Safety Framework – Responding and reporting child abuse**.

Any such actions will be in accordance with any legal and reporting obligations.

## 7. Policy Statement

Complaints received by the CES Office from the school community are responded to in a timely manner consistent with the expectations and obligations of the CES Ltd Board.

CES Ltd endeavours to address and respond to all complaints, however in most circumstances CES Ltd will refer complaints from the parents/guardians and students back to the school:

- if they have not been addressed at the school first
- if the school is still working to address the complaint
- if issues raised are the responsibility of the school, e.g., school uniform, tuck shop duty, school parking
- if the issues raised should be able to be resolved at the school level.

CES Ltd Office will respond to complaints from the parents/guardians and students when:

- a complainant is not satisfied that a matter has been addressed in accordance with the school's complaint-handling processes
- a complainant is not satisfied that an acceptable resolution has been reached

- a school requests assistance to resolve a complaint
- the complaint is an allegation of serious or criminal misconduct in accordance with CES Ltd's Policies and Procedures relating to our legal obligations to respond and report.

Procedural fairness will apply to the handling of complaints.

Confidentiality will be maintained as far as reasonable.

All complaints will be acknowledged within **2-5 business days** and complainants will receive an indication of when they can expect to be notified of an outcome for their complaint. It would be generally expected that investigations are completed **within four (4) weeks**.

Complainants must be kept informed if there is any change to the time frame for dealing with their complaint.

All complaints are recorded and securely stored with relevant levels of authorised access.

In some situations, CES Ltd may not be able to fully address complaints that are made anonymously or without sufficient detail being provided to enable an investigation or resolution of the matter. To ensure procedural fairness, respondents have a right to know the particulars of the allegations being made against them, and be given an opportunity to respond to them. Anonymous complaints are recorded in the same manner as other complaints.

Complainants will be notified of the outcome of formal complaints in writing.

Each Sandhurst Catholic school must establish procedures for responding to complaints appropriate to their local context, and the expectation is that most complaints are managed initially by the school. The CES Ltd Board requires the procedures developed by each school to reflect the information contained within this Complaints Management Framework to guide the development of these documents.

Sandhurst Catholic schools must publish their complaints Policy and Procedures on their websites.

### 7.1 Complaints not covered in this policy

This information is provided to assist members of the school community to identify the best avenue for raising their complaint. The following types of complaints are not covered by this policy:

- **Misconduct or serious misconduct other than allegations of child abuse**

All complaints of alleged misconduct or serious misconduct by a staff member should be reported to the Principal of the school. Complaints about teachers can also be reported to the *Victorian Institute of Teaching* (VIT- [www.vit.vic.edu.au](http://www.vit.vic.edu.au)), which is the regulator in relation to the registration and investigation of serious misconduct of all teachers in the state of Victoria. The VIT can be contacted by telephone 1300 888 067 or email [vit@vit.vic.edu.au](mailto:vit@vit.vic.edu.au).

In some cases, certain actions which involve a sexual offence, physical or emotional misconduct, such as unlawful assault or threats to the person, may

constitute a criminal offence. These types of offences should be reported to and investigated by Victoria Police. Initial consultation with the Principal of the school may help to determine the appropriate course of action in these circumstances.

- **Complaints against Principal of a school other than allegations of child abuse**

Complaints involving the Principal of a Sandhurst Catholic school should be made to the CES Ltd Office and directed to the relevant Principal Consultant.

- **Complaints against clergy or other religious persons other than allegations of child abuse**

If a complaint relates to the clergy or other religious person at a school, the complainant should contact and seek advice from the CES Ltd Professional Standards representative [CES Assistant to the Executive Director: Pastoral Wellbeing]

If the priest or religious person is a member of a religious order, the complainant should also contact the Provincial Head or Professional Standards representative of that congregation or religious order. CES Ltd will also notify the relevant school governing body of the Religious Institute to ensure that the complaint has been referred and investigated.

## 8. Framework

### 8.1 Legislative requirements

This Framework and incorporated Policies and Procedures reflect the mandatory requirements imposed on Sandhurst Catholic schools under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, the *Education Training and Reform Regulations 2017* and the *Guidelines to the Minimum Standards and Requirements for School Registration (the Guidelines)*.

Schools must have Policies and Procedures for managing complaints which ensure procedural fairness, are accessible to the school community and consistent with its enrolment agreement.

### 8.2 School-specific Procedures and Guidelines

Each Sandhurst Catholic School will develop Procedures and Guidelines in compliance with this Framework and related Policies.

Any Procedure or Guideline developed and approved by the Principal of a Sandhurst Catholic school must be consistent with this Framework and support the application of this Framework and related Policies in a particular Sandhurst Catholic school.

### 8.3 Application of Framework

All Principals of Sandhurst Catholic schools are to ensure application of this Framework



and related Policies, Procedures and Guidelines are compliant and within the parameters of this Framework.

## 9. Roles, delegations and authorities

### 9.1 Approval Authority

The CES Ltd Board:

- ensures complaints escalation and reporting mechanisms are aligned with risk appetite and obligations of the CES Ltd Board
- determines the role of the CES Ltd Board in the complaints process
- approves the Complaints Management Framework

### 9.2 Responsible Officers

The Executive Director

Principal Consultants

Principals of Sandhurst Catholic schools

### 9.3 Transparency and Fairness

An up-to-date version of all prescribed Policies and Procedures forming part of this Framework must be maintained on the website of each Sandhurst Catholic school at all times.

A Principal of a Sandhurst Catholic school must ensure transparent, fair and supportive processes in compliance with this Framework.

### 9.4 Record Keeping

All Records obtained under this Framework are to be kept in a secure manner as per legislative requirements.

A Principal of a Sandhurst Catholic school must ensure that the school complies with this Framework and related Policies in:

- methods for recording the outcome of complaints
- systems for recording complaints;
- data collection and analysis; and
- customising any Policies and Procedures forming part of this Framework in the manner prescribed in this Framework, including with the branding of the School logo.

## 10. Review

The CES Ltd Board will review this Framework every three years or more frequently if needed. In the first instance, the Board requires a review within 18 months.

The CES Ltd Board must communicate any changes made to this Framework to the Principals of Sandhurst Catholic Schools as soon as possible.

Description of Revision(s)	
<b>Responsibility:</b>	The Executive Director of CES Ltd
<b>Approval Authority:</b>	CES Ltd Board
<b>Approval date:</b>	May 2021
<b>Date of Next Review:</b>	September 2022

## 11. Related documents and resources

Appendix 1: CES Ltd Procedures for Responding to Complaints

Appendix 2: Complaints Management Policy - School Level

Appendix 3: Procedures for Making a Complaint – School Level

Appendix 4: Flowchart for Complaints – School Level