



Complaints Handling Policy

1. Purpose

SIS is committed to providing a caring, supportive, and safe environment where complaints are taken seriously. This policy is designed to assist those within the SIS communities to understand their options for raising a complaint.

Where a complaint relates to Child Safety a complainant may also have specific reporting obligations, as outlined in the Child Protection – Reporting Obligations Policy, available here. Where a complainant has specific reporting obligations a complaint to SIS will not be sufficient to meet these requirements.

2. Scope

This policy outlines the process for raising complaints to SIS and applies to all persons, including students.

This Policy is made available to all staff, volunteers, families and students via our public website.

If you require assistance in the reading or understanding this policy please contact the SIS Executive Secretary on secretary@sis.org.au. The Executive Secretary will work with any individual to ensure they are able to understand this policy, for example, by having it translated.

Complainants may also wish to review the Complaint Handling Process of any of the SIS Member Schools, available on their websites.

3. Complaint Resolution Principles

When engaging in the complaint resolution process all parties are expected to:

- Ensure the safety of children and young people, both physically and emotionally/psychological, is at the forefront of the Complaint Resolution Procedure.
- Respect the requirement to adhere to the Complaint Resolution Procedure.
- Be considerate of each other's views and roles in the Complaint Resolution Procedure.
- Be focused on resolution.
- Respect the Privacy & Confidentiality of those involved, as appropriate; and
- Act cooperatively and in good faith.

4. Complaint Resolution Procedure

4.1. Reporting

A complaint may be made in person, via telephone or in writing.

Given the nature of the association all complaints should be addressed to the SIS President.

Where the complaint relates to the SIS President it should be addressed to the SIS Vice-President.

Contact details for the SIS President & Vice- President are available here.

Where appropriate the complaint may also be forwarded to a specific Member School for resolution Referral to a Member School will be determined by the SIS Committee on a case-by-case basis and informed by the nature of the complaint.

4.2. Complaint Information

Where possible, a complaint should include the following information:

- Name and contact details of the complainant.
- Dates and times of any specific incidents relevant to the complaint.
- Names of any persons relevant to the complaint.
- The outcome being sought.

The more information provided the easier it is for the SIS committee to investigate.

4.3. Acknowledgement

Complaints are taken seriously and responded to promptly and thoroughly.

Complainants will receive written acknowledgment of their complaint within 4 business days which will:

- Confirm receipt of the complaint.
- Confirm the nature of the complaint and the details provided.
- Confirm the person handling the complaint and their contact details.
- Confirm any initial steps being undertaken to resolve the complaint;
- Provide a copy of this policy; and
- Where relevant, request further details to assist in the Investigation process.

4.4. Investigation & Resolution

SIS is committed to ensuring procedural fairness when determining an appropriate resolution to a complaint and will, where possible:

- Provide any person likely to be affected by a resolution an opportunity to present his or her position.
- Ensure that the decision-maker remains unbiased.
- Determine a resolution based upon any logically probative evidence provided.

The process of investigation will be determined on a case-by-case basis to ensure that SIS are able to provide a considered and fully informed resolution, where possible.

Where the subject of the complaint is of a Child Safe nature SIS will act appropriately to ensure that there is no ongoing risk to Child Safety during the course of the investigation by excluding the relevant person or persons from SIS Events until such time as the matter has been resolved.

Resolutions will vary from case to case depending on the nature and circumstances of each complaint. Resolutions could include, but are not limited to:

- Acknowledgement of the complaint circumstances
- Reassurance to the complainant
- A verbal or written apology
- Exclusion at SIS Events
- Monitored attendance at SIS Events
- Mediation
- Referral to the Member School for resolution

- Reporting to a relevant body as per the Southern Independent School Child Protection – Reporting Obligations policy available here.

A communication confirming the resolution of the complaint will be sent to the complainant. Details of the investigation and/or resolution will be subject to privacy and employment law obligations.

5. Child Safety Complaints

All Child Safety Complaints will be actioned in accordance with SIS Child Safety Policies (Child Safety and Wellbeing, Child Safe Code of Conduct and Child Protection – Reporting Obligations Policy).

6. Student Complaints

Students may wish to make a complaint using the procedure outlined in this policy, or via their Member School.

Students may raise their concerns to the SIS President themselves or via a trusted person such as a parent, carer, Member School staff or others.

Where a student complaint is made to a Member School regarding an SIS Event, or conduct at an SIS Event they are required to advise the SIS committee as soon as practicable after receiving the complaint. The SIS committee will work with the Member School to align their investigation and response procedures.

Where the complaint relates to a Child Safety concern specific reporting obligations may be required as outlined in the Southern Independent Schools Child Protection – Reporting Obligations Policy available here.

7. Support During the Complaint Resolution Process

SIS invites all persons involved in the Complaint Resolution Process to seek a support person such as a parent or friend.

Where additional support is required SIS will work with relevant Member School's to determine what resources are available based on the circumstances of the complaint. Outside support services may also be offered where required.

8. Record Keeping

All records of complaints, investigations, resolutions and referrals are maintained by the SIS secretary.

Records are maintained in accordance with the Public Records Office Victoria Standards and only disposed of in accordance with the law.

9. Consultation

SIS consults with all Member Schools in the development of Policies and Procedures and welcomes feedback from students, parents or carers, or the wider SIS community.

10. Review

This policy is to be reviewed, approved, and endorsed every two years, as a minimum, by the SIS Committee.

Last Review: July 2023.

Next Review: July 2025.