

## Procedures for Making a Complaint

### School Context

Doxa School Bendigo is a Child Safe community committed to providing an environment that is true to the values of our schoolwide expectations: being **Safe, Kind** and **Curious**. We promote care for all individuals in the school community and this is reflected in our support of students to learn to understand and regulate their own behaviour.

All of Doxa School's policy and procedural documentation is underpinned by our **5 key Pillars of the Doxa School Model: Student-Centred Approach, Trauma Sensitive Practice, Social and Emotional Literacy, Choice Theory and our Catholic Identity** and complies with the requirements of Catholic Education Sandhurst Ltd. This Policy can be found on our school website [www.doxabendigo.catholic.edu.au](http://www.doxabendigo.catholic.edu.au) and applies to all community members of Doxa School Bendigo.

### Procedures

Doxa School aims to maintain a fair, equitable and efficient complaint handling process so that complaints about events or decisions can mostly be addressed through Doxa School.

The following procedure has been written with the intent of supporting people to safely make a complaint, and to ensure that procedural fairness applies to all involved at all times. Please seek support from someone you trust regarding these procedures if further clarification is required.

### Addressing An Identified Issue

#### a) Self-Managing an Issue

If it is safe and you are confident to do so, advise the person involved that you are unhappy about something/s that has occurred. This can happen in person, in writing, or on the phone. When doing this, it is best to:

- let them know how you feel and what your experiences have been
- be clear about what are unhappy about
- tell them what the behaviour is that you consider offensive, hurtful or not acceptable (if relevant)
- let them know if it relates to a decision they have made
- explain why you think what has happened is not appropriate

b) Seek Support and/or Advice Regarding the Issue

If you feel you require support or advocacy in order to decide how you want to proceed, speak with a trusted adult who you think will be able to help.

c) Speak to a Staff Member to Assist in Resolving the Issue

If you believe that the issue can be dealt with effectively with the support of a staff member you trust, then discuss the issue with them and ask them to help you resolve it with the other person.

d) Make a Formal Complaint About What Has Happened

If the issue that has occurred is serious, and/or you feel as though it needs to be formally managed by Doxa School, please find a staff member you trust and let them know you want to make a complaint about what has happened to you. All staff at Doxa School have knowledge and information about the complaint process and will be able to support you with the process of making a complaint. Nothing will be done in relation to the complaint without you agreeing.

## Steps of the Formal Complaint Process

1. The person wishing to make a complaint should advise the Principal of their intention to do so. This can happen in person, over the phone (03 5442 8140), or using the Principal's e-mail address – [principal@doxabendigo.catholic.edu.au](mailto:principal@doxabendigo.catholic.edu.au)

If the issue relates to the Principal, seek support from the Deputy Principal or Wellbeing Leader to make a complaint, or directly contact Catholic Education Sandhurst Ltd (CES Ltd) to do so. This can be done via [complaints@ceosand.catholic.edu.au](mailto:complaints@ceosand.catholic.edu.au) or telephoning 03 5443 2377

2. The Principal (or CES Ltd representative) will acknowledge that they are aware of the complaint within 2-5 business days and ensure that the complaint is dealt with quickly and in line with privacy and legal requirements.

They will make a time to gather all the details of the complaint as soon as possible. This often takes the form of a meeting where they will be given details of how the complaint will be worked through (including a copy of the Complaints Policy and the Procedures outlined in this document), and where they can go for assistance if they are not happy with the way Doxa School is dealing with the complaint. Confirmation of the expected timeframe for dealing with the complaint will be advised at this time. If this changes throughout the process, the person making the complaint will be advised. The person making the complaint will also be reminded of the importance of confidentiality to ensure procedural fairness for all parties.

Suitable support people can attend these meetings (as necessary) to ensure that the person is able to communicate what they wish to. For students, it would be expected that a parent/carer/guardian would be part of this process.

3. The Principal (or CES Ltd representative) will then talk to the person that the complaint relates to and anyone else who has relevant information. Any meetings will be done separately and the importance of confidentiality will be discussed as part of these. The Principal will also provide a copy of the Complaints Policy and these Procedures, and confirm the expected timeframe for dealing with the complaint. If this changes throughout the process, the person will be advised.

Suitable support people can attend these meetings (as necessary) to ensure the person is able to communicate what they would like to say. In the case of students, a parent/carer/guardian would be expected to be present.

4. The Principal (or CES Ltd representative) will again meet with the person who has made the complaint to explain the outcome and the reasons the Principal has determined it this way. Where appropriate, the Principal will also advise the person the complaint relates to.
5. Depending on the outcome determined by the Principal, a suitable plan to resolve the complaint (where possible) will be developed. A range of options may be discussed at this time depending on the nature of the issue, the agreement/non-agreement of the facts, any relevant extenuating circumstances, any common ground, etc. This may involve the two parties meeting to achieve a resolution through discussion.

For more serious issues, or where strategies have not been successful in resolving the complaint, it may be necessary to involve an outside agency, or undertake a formally managed process run by Doxa School and determined/approved by the Principal.

6. If the issue/s remain unresolved, referral will be made to Catholic Education Sandhurst Ltd (CES Ltd) for resolution. This can be done via [complaints@ceosand.catholic.edu.au](mailto:complaints@ceosand.catholic.edu.au) or 03 5443 2377

## **Complaint Outcomes**

Doxa School values relationships as a central part of our school values and we work to make the connections across our school as positive as they can be. Given this, and where possible, our priority through this complaints process would be to support the restoration of relationships. However, Doxa School also recognises that this is not always immediately viable or possible in the long-term and a range of other outcomes from a complaint are possible. These can include: apologies, education, specialist support, suspension or expulsion for students, counselling, warnings, disciplinary action or dismissal of staff members. (See Complaints Management Policy, Positive Behaviours Support Policy and Staff Code of Conduct for further information).

Sometimes the complaint that is made is either proven not to have happened, or is unsubstantiated (meaning it can't be proven to have occurred). In these instances, Doxa School continues to provide support for both parties, aiming to build/repair the relationship. Additional support for this may include referral to specialist services, monitoring of behaviour or relevant education/training.

## Appeals

Any member of the Doxa School community who feels as though a complaint they have made has not been dealt with suitably has the right to appeal the outcome.

Where the Principal was not involved in the complaint process (and the complaint is not about them) they are likely the best person to assess the appeal. If it is not appropriate for the Principal to do this, a representative from Catholic Education Sandhurst Ltd would undertake this process.

- For Students

Where a student or a parent/carer/guardian feels that the complaints procedure has not been followed properly, or they believe the outcome is unfair or unjust, an appeal can be lodged about the decision. The appeal can be started by simply contacting the Principal (where appropriate to do so) or Catholic Education Sandhurst Ltd.

- For Staff Members

Where a staff member feels that the complaints procedure has not been followed properly, or they believe that the outcome is unfair or unjust, an appeal of the decision can be made directly to the Principal (if they have not been involved up until this point) or a representative of Catholic Education Sandhurst Ltd. If sought, a suitable support person can be part of this process to assist the staff member involved.

The appeal process will look at the way the complaint was handled and examine the outcome. If it is determined that the process or outcome was appropriately conducted then no further action will take place. If it is determined that the complaint was not handled properly, or that the outcome was inappropriate, the complaint will be re-heard by a person who was not originally involved.

## Further Appeals

If the person making the complaint believes that the determination continues to be unjust, or the Complaint Procedure has not been correctly followed, there may be the opportunity to seek to have the complaint resolved through an external agency. These could include the Independent Education Union (Victoria & Tasmania), the Victorian Equal Opportunity Commissioner's Office, the Human Rights Commission, the Police or the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).