



Complaints Handling Guide

St Mary's Flexible Learning Centre welcomes feedback from all members of the Flexible Learning Centre community and takes 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 St Mary's Flexible Learning Centre, related to our services or operations, or the complaints handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.

St Mary's Flexible Learning Centre's Commitment

St Mary's Flexible Learning Centre is 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 10002:2014 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 the Flexible Learning Centre's 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.

How Do I Make a Formal Complaint?

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 eastern.network@ereafsn.edu.au
2. Writing a letter to the Flexible Learning Centre addressed to "The Complaints Manager".
3. Telephoning the Flexible Learning Centre and asking to speak to your child's Head of Campus or Network Principal.
4. If the complaint is in relation to the Network Principal, or Head of Campus, telephone the EREA Regional Director (Eastern Region) on (03) 94263200 or write a letter addressed to the Regional Director for the Eastern Region at EREA PO Box 91 Richmond VIC 3121.

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, the Complaints Manager, or, in the case of a complaint directly related to conduct by the Network Principal, Deputy Network Principal or Member of the School Board, the EREA Regional Director.

Step 2 – All valid complaints will be acknowledged in writing as soon as practicable, and in any event within 10 business days. They will be allocated a status, priority and target resolution date. It is our policy, where possible, to commence an initial investigation and make a preliminary determination within 10 business days of acknowledging the complaint.

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 the matter will be reviewed internally by the Network Principal or the Network Principal's delegate, who may seek additional information or submissions from the relevant parties. The Network Principal or their delegate seek to resolve all disputes within 20 business days of the acknowledgement of the complaint. The matter will be closed if the response of the Network Principal, or their delegate, is accepted. Where appropriate, the matter may be escalated to the EREA Regional Director.

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.

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. The Flexible Learning Centre 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.

What is reportable Conduct?

A complaint may fall under the definition of Reportable Conduct.

Section 25A of the Ombudsman Act defines what type of conduct is, or is not, Reportable Conduct.

Reportable Conduct means:

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

A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 years.



What Conduct is Not Reportable Conduct?

Reportable Conduct does not extend to:

- conduct that is reasonable for the purpose of discipline, management or care of children, having regard to the age, maturity, health or other characteristics of the children and any relevant codes of conduct or professional standards; or
- the use of physical force that, in all the circumstances, is trivial or negligible, but only if the matter is to be investigated and the result of the investigation recorded under workplace employment procedures.

Some examples of conduct that would not constitute Reportable Conduct include touching a child to get their attention, to guide them or comfort them, a Flexible Learning Centre teacher raising their voice to attract attention or restore order in a classroom, or conduct that is established to be accidental.

Key Definitions

The NSW Ombudsman has provided guidance on the meaning of key terms used in the definition of Reportable Conduct. Those terms are:

- sexual offence;
- sexual misconduct;
- assault;
- ill-treatment;
- neglect; and
- behaviour that causes psychological harm