

## Key Definitions

**Complaint:** An expression of dissatisfaction with a decision, action, omission, or conduct by the school, where a resolution is sought.

**Complainant:** A student, parent/carer, or staff member raising the concern.

## Complaints Category

| Complaint Type          | Definition  | Key Characteristics  |
|-------------------------|---|--|
| General Complaints      | Expression of dissatisfaction with service delivery, policies, procedures, or staff conduct that does not involve child safety concerns   | Standard complaint handling procedures apply; resolved through normal escalation pathway                                   |
| Child Safety Complaints | Any complaint involving allegations of harm, neglect, inappropriate conduct toward a child, or failure to provide adequate duty of care   | Immediate escalation required; reportable conduct obligations under <i>Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005</i> (Vic) apply |
| Appeals                 | Formal requests to review decisions made by Hester Hornbrook, including enrolment decisions, assessment outcomes, disciplinary measures, or other administrative determinations | Procedural fairness requirements; specific review pathways; written reasons required                                       |
| Systemic Issues         | Complaints that identify broader organisational problems requiring policy review or procedural change   | May trigger organisational improvements; considered for policy amendments  |

## Additional Information in Complaints Policy and Procedure

You can find the below information within the full Complaints Policy located on the school website:

- If complainant remains dissatisfied with Executive Principal's decision, how to request a review from the Hester Hornbrook Board Chair
- Complainants may seek external review through the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) if internal processes do not achieve satisfactory resolution
- Procedural Fairness and Natural Justice
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Confidentiality and Information Management
- Support Services and Referrals
- Monitoring and Review
- Training and Communication

## OVERVIEW OF OUR COMPLAINTS PROCESS

At Hester Hornbrook Academy, student safety is our top priority. This brief overview explains how we keep every student safe, supported and included – at school, online, on excursions, and in any school-related space. It outlines everyone's responsibilities and shows how we meet the Victorian Child Safe Standards.

SEE HESTER HORNHOOK'S FULL  
'COMPLAINTS POLICY'  
ON OUR SCHOOL WEBSITE

For further information speak with a member from the Campus Leadership Team

## Informal Complaint Resolution Pathway

Step 1C: Initial Concern Resolution (0-5 Working Days)

| Component                    | Details   |
|------------------------------|---|
| <b>Process</b>               | Students, families, or staff raise concerns directly with the person involved or their immediate supervisor   |
| <b>Key Features</b>          | (a) informal discussion encouraged where appropriate and safe;<br>(b) no written record required unless requested by complainant;<br>(c) focus on immediate resolution and relationship repair;<br>(d) support person may be present at complainant's request;<br>(e) outcome documented if formal record requested |
| <b>Child Safety Override</b> | If any child safety concerns arise, immediate escalation to the Executive Principal (Step 1F) is required   |

Step 2C: Trusted Staff Member Support (5-10 Working Days)

| Component                     | Details   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| <b>Process</b>                | If Step 1C is inappropriate or unsuccessful, complainant approaches any trusted Hester Hornbrook staff member for assistance  |
| <b>Key Features</b>           | (a) staff member provides initial support and guidance;<br>(b) informal mediation or facilitated discussion may occur;<br>(c) referral to appropriate specialist support services if needed;<br>(d) complainant maintains choice about next steps;<br>(e) brief written record made for quality assurance purposes;<br>(f) outcome communicated to complainant in writing |
| <b>Staff Responsibilities</b> | (a) acknowledge complaint within 24 hours;<br>(b) assess for child safety concerns and escalate if necessary;<br>(c) provide emotional support and practical assistance;<br>(d) explore resolution options with complainant;<br>(e) document process and outcomes;<br>(f) advise complainant of right to formal complaint if unresolved                                   |

## Formal Complaints Resolution Pathway

Step 1F: Formal Investigation by Executive Principal (10-25 Working Days)

| Component                       | Details   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>Process</b>                  | Complainant submits formal Complaint/Appeal Form to Executive Principal, triggering comprehensive investigation   |
| <b>Contact Details</b>          | <a href="mailto:admin@hhacademy.vic.edu.au">admin@hhacademy.vic.edu.au</a>  |
| <b>Investigation Panel</b>      | For complex and/or serious matters, the Executive Principal may convene a multidisciplinary panel comprising:<br>(a) Executive Principal or delegate (Chair);<br>(b) relevant Head of Campus or senior staff member;<br>(c) external independent member, including if conflict of interest exists;<br>(d) cultural advisor if complaint involves cultural safety concerns   |
| <b>Investigation Procedures</b> | (a) acknowledgment of complaint within 2 working days;<br>(b) preliminary assessment for child safety concerns;<br>(c) development of investigation plan with clear timelines;<br>(d) collection of relevant documentation and evidence;<br>(e) interviews with relevant parties (with support persons);<br>(f) consideration of reasonable adjustments or interim measures;<br>(g) draft findings provided to parties for response;<br>(h) final written decision with clear reasoning provided within 21 working days |
| <b>Child Safety Protocol</b>    | Where child safety concerns arise:<br>(a) immediate notification to Commission for Children and Young People if reportable conduct alleged;<br>(b) mandatory reporting obligations fulfilled within 24 hours;<br>(c) interim safety measures implemented pending investigation;<br>(d) external expertise engaged if required;<br>(e) ongoing safety monitoring throughout process  |