

Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure

Lorien Novalis welcomes feedback from all members of the School community and takes all complaints or concerns that may be raised seriously. This Complaints Handling Policy is designed to assist you to understand how to make a complaint.

In this Policy, we use the terms “staff” and “staff member” to include all teaching and non-teaching staff, Board members, volunteers, contractors and external providers.

What Is a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to Lorien Novalis related to our services or operations, or the complaints handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.

Complaints about child abuse or other harm, or other breaches of our Child Safe Codes of Conduct, relating to conduct by:

- current or former staff members
- current or former students
- other people on Lorien Novalis premises or at School excursions or events

are managed differently from other complaints.

For whistleblower complaints, please see our separate Whistleblower policy available on our website.

Refer to the section at the end of this Policy - Complaints About Child Safety Incidents or Concerns At or Involving the School or its Staff Members — for more information.

Lorien Novalis' Commitment

Lorien Novalis is committed to handling complaints effectively and efficiently. To manage complaints effectively, we have established a Complaints Handling Program in line with:

- Principle 6 of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, using the Office of Child Safety's "Complaint Handling Guide: Upholding the rights of children and young people"
- the international complaints handling standard (ISO 10002:2018 Quality management – Customer satisfaction – Guidelines for complaints handling in organizations)*
- the Australian/New Zealand complaints handling standard (AS/NZS 10002:2014 Guidelines for complaint management in organizations)*
- the Australian Privacy Principles (APP).

There is no fee associated with making a complaint.

Regular analysis of complaints received and the implementation of rectification action, where deficiencies are identified, are key to the Lorien Novalis commitment and are overseen by the Board.

Complaints may be made anonymously or using a pseudonym. If you make an anonymous complaint, we will be unable to provide you with feedback on the progress and outcome of your complaint. It may also limit our ability to fully investigate the complaint if we are unable to contact you to obtain further details.

Informal Complaints Resolution

The vast majority of issues causing concern in schools can be handled quickly and in an informal manner. Parents / Guardians are encouraged to discuss any concerns as they arise with the relevant parties. We encourage you to seek answers to questions and concerns at the first instance, as usually this will result in the resolution of a complaint in an informal and amicable manner.

Your Class Teacher or Class Guardian should always be your first point of contact regarding any concerns or feedback about your child's education. There are a number of ways in which you can do this:

- Write an email to your Class Teacher or Guardian expressing your concerns.
- Make an appointment to have a phone conversation or to meet with the Class Teacher or Guardian. You can do this by either calling the Office or contacting the Teacher or Guardian directly.

The Class Teacher or Guardian will then wish to take the appropriate steps required to address or resolve your complaint, so please be patient and rest assured that they are working in your and your child's best interests.

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 the school office: info@lorien.nsw.edu.au
2. Writing a letter to Lorien Novalis addressed to "The Complaints Manager".
3. Telephoning the Office and asking to speak to the Principal.

All formal complaints will be logged through our 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 complaints management system where they are screened by the Principal, or in the case of complaints against the Principal or a member of the Board, by the Chair of the Board. A complaint about the Chair of the Board is directed to the Principal or the Deputy Principal. Complaints about the Principal or a member or the Chair of the Board will be properly investigated but they will not be dealt with by the Principal or Board Chair.

Step 2 – All valid complaints, except those made anonymously, will be acknowledged in writing, as soon as practicable, and allocated a status, priority and target resolution date. It is our policy, where possible, to resolve all disputes within 14 days.

Step 3 – The Principal (or, if the complaint is about the Principal, a member of the School Board or the Chair of the School Board, the person whom the Chair of the Board or Principal asks to investigate the complaint) will conduct an investigation into the issues raised, following principles of procedural fairness, and make a determination.

Step 4 – Following the determination, if appropriate, the Principal (or, if the complaint is about the Principal, a member of the School Board or the Chair of the Board, the person who has undertaken the investigation of the complaint) will formulate a resolution and, except where the complaint was anonymous, provide a written response to the complainant. The matter will be closed if this response is accepted.

Step 5 – If the response is not accepted, the matter will be reviewed internally by the Principal or the Principal’s delegate, who may seek additional information or submissions from the relevant parties. The Principal or their delegate seeks to resolve all disputes within 14 days from the date that the review process is initiated. The matter will be closed if the response of the Principal, or their delegate, is accepted. If the complaint was about the Principal or a member of the School Board or the Chair of the Board, the Deputy Principal will review the matter.

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, and/or the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome or the way that the complaint has been managed, the complainant may pursue external resolution alternatives.

Confidentiality and Privacy

Lorien Novalis is committed to maintaining the confidentiality of information throughout the complaints process. This includes maintaining the privacy of information relating to the person making the complaint and any person named in the complaint.

Complaints About Child Safety Incidents or Concerns At or Involving Lorien Novalis or its Staff Members

Complaints and allegations of:

- breaches of the Child Safe Codes of Conduct
- child abuse or other harm of a current or former student by:
 - current or former staff members
 - current or former students
 - other people on School premises or at School events
- “reportable conduct” as defined in the Children’s Guardian Act 2019 (NSW)
- other child safety related staff misconduct

are managed by the School in a different manner from other complaints.

This is because of the additional confidentiality and privacy requirements surrounding these kinds of matters.

We refer to these as child safeguarding-related complaints.

If your complaint is a child safeguarding-related complaint, please make your complaint to The Senior Child Safety Officer (Konrad Korbacz at konradk@lorien.nsw.edu.au) or if this person is the subject of your complaint please notify Greg Parkes (Senior Child Safety Officer) at gregp@lorien.nsw.edu.au.

For more information about how the School manages child safeguarding-related complaints, as well as **any** child safety incidents or concerns at or involving the School or its staff members, please refer to our **Procedures for Managing Child Safety Incidents or Concerns At or Involving the School or its Staff, Volunteers or Contractors**, and **Procedures for Handling Allegations of Staff Misconduct and Reportable Conduct**, available on our public website.