



KNOWLEDGE IS THE ULTIMATE SOLUTION

Complaint Handling Procedure for Staff Misconduct or Reportable Conduct

Western Grammar School
15 Cannery Road, Plumpton NSW 2770

1 Introduction:

Western Grammar School (WGS) manages complaints involving allegations of staff misconduct and reportable conduct differently from other complaints. This is dealt separately because the sensitive nature often raises potential privacy and confidentiality issues, and in some cases the WGS has external legal reporting obligations.

WGS requires all staff to comply with its policies, codes of conduct and standards of professional behaviour that are intended to prevent staff misconduct and reportable conduct. Staff are required to report any breaches of these policies, codes and professional standards.

It is also critical that the broader WGS community reports incidents of, or concerns about, staff misconduct and reportable conduct (both defined below) to ensure the safety and wellbeing of students and that WGS complies with its legislative reporting obligations.

WGS has a legal obligation to investigate and report to the NSW Children's Guardian all allegations of reportable conduct made against staff at WGS as defined by the Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW) (Children's Guardian Act).

For the purposes of this procedure, "staff" and "staff member" is defined to include teaching and non-teaching staff, WGS board members, volunteers, contractors and external providers.

2 Definition of Staff Misconduct:

WGS defines "staff misconduct" as conduct by a staff member that:

- breaches a code of conduct or other key school policies/procedures.
- behaves in a manner opposing WGS's Vision, Mission and Values.
- displays purposeful neglect of duties/responsibilities.
- involves alcohol and/or other substance abuse.
- is physically, verbally or emotionally abusive.
- otherwise endangers the safety or wellbeing of students or others at WGS.

Staff misconduct which puts the wellbeing of a student at risk is considered a child safety incident or concern for our Child Protection Policy.

3 Definition of Reportable Conduct:

The Children's Guardian Act defines reportable conduct as including:

- any sexual offence or sexual misconduct, committed against, with or in the presence of a child (including child pornography offences or an offence involving child abuse material) including grooming behaviours.
- any assault, ill-treatment or neglect of a child.
- any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child.

Reportable conduct is considered a child safety incident or concern for the purposes of our Child Protection Policy.

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

4 Making A Complaint About or Allegation of Staff Misconduct or Reportable Conduct:

If you would like to make a formal complaint or allegation of staff misconduct or reportable conduct, you can do so by:

- Sending an email to the Principal or Principal's Delegate.
- Writing a letter to the Principal or Principal's Delegate.
- Telephoning the School and asking to speak with the Principal or Principal's Delegate.

If the Principal is the subject of your complaint or allegation of misconduct or reportable conduct, please contact the Chairman of the School Board (our Admin Manager on 02 9677 9229 can provide contact details).

5 Investigating and Managing Staff Misconduct and Reportable Conduct:

WGS initially investigates all complaints and allegations to determine whether the conduct in question amounts to staff misconduct, as defined in this procedure and in the child protection policy, or reportable conduct that must be further investigated and reported to the NSW Children's Guardian. All investigations uphold the principles of procedural fairness and confidentiality - information is only shared with relevant persons.

5.1 Staff Misconduct:

When a complaint or allegation does not include conduct that is defined as reportable conduct following the initial investigation, but it is determined through investigation that staff misconduct has occurred, WGS will notify the complainant of the finding and corrective actions

that will be taken. Staff misconduct is managed through staff code of conduct policies and procedures relating to internal grievances, staff discipline and termination.

5.2 Reportable Conduct:

After the Principal or Principal's delegate of WGS becomes aware of a reportable allegation or conviction they must ensure that an appropriate investigation of the reportable allegation or conviction is conducted and completed within a reasonable time.

The Principal or Principal's delegate must notify the Children's Guardian of the findings of the internal investigation of the matter.

The Principal of WGS must inform the affected child and their parents/carers about any reportable conduct's investigation unless it is "not in the public interest" to inform them.

Sometimes, where reportable conduct obligations arise, WGS also have other mandatory reporting obligations. In these situations, WGS will prioritise its procedures for mandatory reporting to the Department of Communities and Justice and/or to Police and will seek advice from those agencies on the best way to proceed with the internal reportable conduct investigation.

6 Making A Finding of Reportable Conduct:

If the internal investigation results in a finding of reportable conduct, following the notification to the NSW Children's Guardian, WGS will conduct a final risk assessment of the conduct, the staff member and the circumstances and act to mitigate ongoing risks.

7 Disclosing Information to The School Community:

A parent or carer of a student who is an alleged victim of staff misconduct or reportable conduct has a legitimate interest in being told that the student is an alleged victim and of the nature of the complaint or allegation. The parent/carers and student also have a legitimate interest in being informed of the process, progress and findings of any investigation, and of any action that might be taken after the investigation is completed.

Section 57 of the Children's Guardian Act imposes disclosure obligations and prohibitions on the Principal of the school. The disclosure obligations and prohibitions apply to information about a reportable conduct investigation. This includes information about the progress of an investigation, the findings and any action taken in response to the findings.

The Principal or Principal's delegate must inform the affected student and their parents/carers about the reportable conduct investigation unless it is "not in the public interest" to inform them.

The Principal or Principal's delegate must not disclose information about a reportable conduct investigation to anyone other than the affected student and their parents/carers. However, there are some exceptions to this rule. Disclosures can be made to certain people and entities, such as investigators and carers, if the disclosure is made to promote the safety or wellbeing of the child.

8 Where to Find More Information:

The NSW Children's Guardian provides information on reportable conduct and the School's obligations to report.

For more information about our policies and procedures relating to staff misconduct, reportable conduct or complaints handling generally, please utilise our contact us via our "Contact Us" website page.

9 Responsibility for This Procedure:

The Principal and Principal's delegate is responsible for implementation and regular review of this Procedure.

10 Publishing This Procedure:

The Principal is responsible for checking annually that this procedure is published on the WGS's website or distributed among WGS community.