

Complaints Handling Policy

SILVER LINING FOUNDATION AUSTRALIA LTD
YALLORIN YIMBA SILVER LINING SCHOOL – Version 2, AUGUST 2025

Complaints Handling Policy

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Purpose: | The purpose of this policy is to ensure that student, parent and employee complaints and disputes are dealt with in a responsive, efficient, effective and fair way. | |
| Scope: | Students, parents and employees, including full-time, part-time, permanent, fixed-term and casual employees, as well as contractors, volunteers and people undertaking work experience or vocational placements. | |
| Accreditation and Governance Requirements: | <p>To attain and maintain accreditation a school must have, and implement written processes about receiving, assessing, investigating and otherwise dealing with complaints made by its staff, students or a student's parent or guardian/carer. Processes must include principles of procedural fairness, including, for example, the right of interested parties to the complaint to be heard. The school's governing body must ensure that staff, students, parents and carers are made aware of the processes and that the processes are readily accessible.¹</p> <p>The Complaints Handling Policy is a <u>mandatory</u> policy required for accreditation and legal purposes. Mandatory policies are those that the board is responsible for overseeing as part of their governance responsibilities and should be reviewed annually.</p> | |
| Status: | Version 2 - Approved | Supersedes: Version 1 August 2023 |
| Authorised by: | School's Governing Body. | Date of Authorisation: August 2025 |
| References and Related Policy and Documents: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2017 (Qld)</i> • <i>Australian Education Regulation 2013 (Cth)</i> • <i>Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)</i> • <i>Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld)</i> • <i>Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)</i> • <i>Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld)</i> • <i>Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)</i> • <i>Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)</i> • <i>Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth)</i> • <i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)</i> • <i>Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)</i> • SLFA Employment Contracts • SLFA Staff Code of Conduct Policy • SLFA Child Protection Policy • SLFA Work Health and Safety Policy • SLFA Board Charter • SLFA Disability Discrimination Policy (Students) | |
| Review Date: | Annually | Next Review Date: August 2026 |
| Policy Owner: | SLFA School Governing Body (the Board of Directors) | |

¹ Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2017 reg 7.

Policy Review Records

| Version Number | Date of Authorisation | Review Due Date | Date Reviewed | Review Outcome |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------|----------------|---|
| 1 | February 2019 | February 2020 | September 2020 | <p>Policy modified in consideration of pending Blue Card laws in 2020. New Version 2 implemented.</p> <p><i>Note: this policy was a generic policy used by all SLFA schools – prior to each school having its own individual Complaints policy.</i></p> |
| 2 | September 2020 | September 2021 | July 2023 | <p>Minor amendments to text and formatting.</p> <p><i>Note: this policy was a generic policy used by all SLFA schools – prior to each school having its own individual Complaints policy.</i></p> |
| 1 (for SLS Cluden – new Temp. SAS Site) | August 2023 | August 2024 | August 2025 | <p>New Temporary Special Assistance School application resulted in the school having it's own policy which started at Version 1. School's name changed from Silver Lining School (Cluden) to Yallorin Yimba Silver Lining School.</p> |
| 2 | August 2025 | August 2026 | | <p>School's name changed from Silver Lining School (Cluden) to Yallorin Yimba Silver Lining School.</p> |

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| POLICY REVIEW RECORDS | 3 |
| POLICY STATEMENT | 5 |
| DEFINITIONS | 5 |
| CONFIDENTIALITY | 5 |
| COMPLAINTS THAT MAY BE RESOLVED UNDER THIS POLICY | 6 |
| MATTERS NOT MANAGED UNDER THIS COMPLAINTS POLICY | 6 |
| COMPLAINTS HANDLING COMMITMENT AND PRINCIPLES | 7 |
| RESPONSIBILITIES WHEN MAKING, RECEIVING AND HANDLING COMPLAINTS | 7 |
| <i>SLFA AND THE SCHOOL</i> | <i>7</i> |
| <i>ALL PARTIES TO A DISPUTE</i> | <i>8</i> |
| <i>EMPLOYEES RECEIVING AND/OR MANAGING COMPLAINTS</i> | <i>8</i> |
| COMPLAINT HANDLING PROCEDURE | 8 |
| COMPLAINTS REGISTER | 10 |
| MONITORING AND REPORTING | 11 |
| IMPLEMENTATION, AWARENESS AND TRAINING | 11 |
| COMPLAINT FORM | 12 |
| COMPLAINANT DETAILS | 12 |
| COMPLAINT DETAILS | 12 |
| ACTIONS ALREADY TAKEN TO HANDLE THE COMPLAINT TO DATE (IF ANY) | 13 |
| DECLARATION BY COMPLAINANT | 13 |
| EMPLOYEE DECLARATION | 14 |
| POLICY DECLARATION FORM | 14 |

Policy Statement

Silver Lining Foundation Australia (SLFA) and its Yallorin Yimba Silver Lining School ('the School') is committed to ensuring that student, parent and staff complaints are dealt with in a responsive, efficient, consistent, transparent, effective and fair way.

SLFA and the School views complaints as part of an important feedback and accountability process. SLFA and the School acknowledges the right of students, parents, carers and staff (including volunteers) to complain when dissatisfied with an action, inaction or decision of SLFA or the School.

SLFA and the School will ensure employees can recognise, receive, and appropriately referred complaints to the informal or formal complaints procedure.

SLFA and the School encourages constructive criticism and complaints and appreciates that time spent on handling complaints or concerns raised can be an investment in enabling better service to students, parents, carers and employees and other stakeholders.

Definitions

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Complaint | An expression of dissatisfaction made to or about SLFA or its School, related to SLFA or the School's services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required. ² |
| Informal Complaint | A complaint about a matter that is likely to be simple, straight forward, easily manageable, or minor, where a simple or quick resolution is appropriate such as discussion of the matter with a relevant staff member. |
| Formal Complaint | A complaint about a matter that is serious, complex or may pose a threat to the health and safety of any person. Examples include serious allegations or breaches of policy, complaints against a senior staff member, including the School Principal, or an informal complaint that could not be resolved informally. Assessment of the complaint is required by the SLFA Executive Officer or their delegates (who will also be part of the SLFA executive management team). |
| Complainant | The person, organisation or their representative making a complaint. ³ |
| Respondent | The person who is referred to in a complaint by a complainant as the person responsible for their concerns or who can best respond to their concern. |

Confidentiality

As far as is reasonably possible and with regard to legal requirements, complaints and parties to a complaint will be kept in confidence.

² Standards Australia, Guidelines for complaint management in organizations (ISO 10002:2018, NEQ), s.4.3

³ Standards Australia, Guidelines for complaint management in organizations (ISO 10002:2018, NEQ), s.4.2

Complaints that may be resolved under this Policy

SLFA and the School encourages anyone who feels impacted by an issue involving SLFA or the School to promptly lodge a complaint. The Complaints Handling Policy can address matters such as (but not limited to):

1. SLFA, the School, staff, volunteers or students having done something wrong.
2. SLFA, the School, staff, volunteers or students having failed to do something they should have done.
3. SLFA, the School, staff, volunteers or students having acted unfairly or impolitely.
4. Issues of student, staff or volunteer behaviour that are contrary to the *SLFA Code of Conduct (Staff) Policy* (for staff) and behaviour practices and standards for students.⁴
5. Issues relating to non-compliance with a process outlined in SLFA policies or procedures, for example, Disability Discrimination Policy, Child Protection Policy, Privacy Policy.⁵
6. Issues related to the Schools learning programs and educational programs, assessment and reporting of student learning.
7. Issues related to any fees or payments.
8. Issues related to communication with students or parents or between staff.
9. Issues related to SLFA and School policy and procedure.
10. General administrative issues.

Student complaints may be brought by students or by parents / carers on behalf of their student as appropriate in the circumstances.

Child protection matters must be addressed under the *Child Protection Policy* and not under this policy.

Matters NOT managed under this Complaints Policy

The following matters are outside of the scope of this policy and should be managed under the appropriate policy:

1. **Child protection** concerns including allegations of sexual abuse, likely sexual abuse or harm to children should be dealt in accordance with the law and SLFA's *Child Protection Policy*.
2. **Student bullying** concerns should be dealt with under SLFA's *Anti-Bullying Policy*.
3. **Student discipline** matters, including matters involving suspension or expulsion, should be dealt with under the School's *Restorative Practices Procedures*.
4. **Employee complaints** relating to their employment and workplace should be directed to their employee's supervisor, except where the complaint is about their supervisor, in which case they should speak with the SLFA Executive Officer (or their delegate). Matters will then be addressed under relevant legislation, policy and procedure.
5. **Workplace bullying** should be directed in the first instance, to the relevant supervisor. Matters will then be addressed under relevant legislation, policy and procedure.
6. **Student or employee violence or criminal** matters should be directed to School Principal, the SLFA Executive Officer or their delegates in their absence, who will involve the Police as appropriate.
7. **Disputes between board directors and/or members**, should be dealt with in accordance with SLFA Constitution, Board Charter or other relevant policy.
8. **Formal legal proceedings** should be managed as appropriate in the circumstances.

⁴ Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2017 s.16(2)(a).

⁵ Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2017 s.16(5).

Complaints Handling Commitment and Principles

1. SLFA and the School is committed to ensuring effective complaints handling by:
 - (a) Promoting the active interest and support of staff in complaints handling.
 - (b) Implementing effective policy and procedures.
 - (c) Endorsing a positive environment that encourages and helps staff, students, parents and carers to make complaints.
 - (d) Providing adequate resources, training and support for staff about complaints handling.
2. SLFA is committed to managing complaints effectively and according to the following principles:
 - (a) Complaints will be taken seriously.
 - (b) Complaints will be dealt with fairly and objectively, without judgement and addressed in a reasonable timeframe.
 - (c) Complaints should be resolved with as little formality and disruption as reasonably possible, having regard to the nature of the complaint.
 - (d) Interested parties to the complaint (for example, the complainant and any respondent) will be heard and/or may provide relevant information in relation to the complaint.
 - (e) Confidentiality and privacy will be maintained as much as possible.
 - (f) The complainant and any respondent will be offered support as appropriate.
 - (g) Victimising behaviour towards a complainant, respondent or other people associated with the complaint, will not be tolerated.
 - (h) Complainants that lodge a complaint on reasonable grounds will not suffer any other reprisals on the basis of the lodging the complaint

Responsibilities when making, receiving and handling complaints

SLFA and the School

SLFA and the School has the following role and responsibilities:

1. Develop, implement, promote and act in accordance with SLFA's *Complaints Handling Policy*.
2. Appropriately communicate SLFA's *Complaints Handling Policy* and procedures to students, parents and employees and other relevant stakeholders.
3. Ensure that the *Complaints Handling Policy* is readily accessible by staff (including volunteers), students and parents/carers.
4. Upon receipt of a complaint, manage the complaint in accordance with the *Complaints Handling Policy*.
5. Ensure that appropriate support is provided to all parties to a complaint.
6. Take appropriate action to prevent victimisation or action in reprisal against the complainant, respondent or any person associated with them.
7. Appropriately implement remedies.
8. Appropriately train relevant employees on complaints handling procedures.
9. Keep records of complaints and complaint outcomes.
10. Conduct a review/audit of the *Complaints Register* from time to time.
11. Monitor and regularly report to the school's Governing Body (SLFA Board of Directors) on complaints.
12. Report to SLFA and the School's insurer when a complaint is relevant to an insured risk.
13. Immediately refer to the School's governing body any claim for legal redress.

All Parties to a Dispute

The complainant and respondent both have the following roles and responsibilities:

1. Apply and comply with SLFA's *Complaints Handling Policy* and procedures.
2. Lodge a complaint as soon as possible after the issue arises.
3. Provide complete and factual information – and in a timely manner.
4. Not provide deliberately false or misleading information.
5. Not make frivolous or vexatious complaints or retaliatory complaints.
6. Act in good faith and maintain a mutually beneficial relationship of trust and cooperation.
7. Act in a calm, courteous and non-threatening manner.
8. Acknowledge that a common goal is the best way to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties.
9. Recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which they must balanced.
10. Maintain and respect the privacy and confidentiality of all parties.
11. Not victimise or act in reprisal against any party to the dispute or any person associated with them.

Employees Receiving and/or Managing Complaints

SLFA staff receiving and/or managing complaints have the following roles and responsibilities:

1. Act in accordance with SLFA's *Complaints Handling Policy* and procedures.
2. Refer the complainant to SLFA's *Complaints Handling Policy* and provide additional information as necessary.
3. Maintain confidentiality as far as is reasonably possible.
4. Keep appropriate records.
5. Forward complaints to more senior School employees, including the School Principal, or SLFA executive staff such as the SLFA Executive Officer (or their delegates) if the complaint cannot be resolved at the initial level, or if it involves serious issues that require the involvement of more senior School or SLFA executive staff.
6. Not victimise or act in reprisal against the complainant, respondent or any person associated with them.
7. Seek assistance from the School Principal or other SLFA executive staff about the complaint procedure and policy.
8. Provide the complainant with a copy of SLFA's *Complaints Handling Policy* (if requested).
9. Follow any other applicable SLFA policy, procedure and / or legal requirements relevant to the complaint.

Complaint Handling Procedure

A complainant should follow the steps below when making a complaint:

1. Lodging a Complaint

- (a) Complaints can be lodged with the most appropriate SLFA staff member at the local level, for example the initial contact point for many complaints is a student's teacher.
 - i. The School Principal can receive complaints at townsville@slfa.edu.au
 - ii. Complaints can also be sent to the SLFA Central Office at admin@slfa.edu.au
- (b) Written complaints are preferred to minimise the possibility of any miscommunication; however, complaints may be made verbally.
- (c) Complaints about the School Principal or the SLFA Executive Officer must be lodged with the SLFA Board of Directors by sending an email to chairman@slfa.edu.au
- (d) Complaints about a SLFA Board Director can be sent to the Board Chair at chairman@slfa.edu.au

- (e) Complaints about the SLFA Board of Directors as a whole group should be referred to the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board (Qld) by phoning (07) 3513 6773 to discuss concerns.
 - i. Note: the NSSAB only has jurisdiction to hear complaints relating to a school's governing body under the [Education \(Accreditation of Non-State Schools\) Act 2017](#) (Qld).
- (f) Complaints can be lodged through various methods, including:
 - i. Phone
 - ii. Email
 - iii. In person (by appointment).
- (g) If the complainant is uncomfortable directing their complaint to the most appropriate staff member at the local level, or wants to make a formal complaint, they can submit a complaint by:
 - i. completing a [Complaint Form](#), or
 - ii. lodging a complaint directly with the SLFA executive officer by emailing executive@slfa.edu.au
- (h) Where an anonymous complaint is lodged, SLFA or the School will follow the Complaints Handling Policy, when there is sufficient information to do so.
- (i) Complaints raised under this policy that are not to be addressed under this policy will be redirected to the relevant policy for handling. See above – '[Matters not managed under this Complaints Policy](#)' for the types of matters that may be addressed under a different SLFA policy).

2. Acknowledgement, Assessment and Referral

The SLFA staff member receiving complaint will:

- (a) acknowledge the complaint received within two business days, outlining the next steps and where possible the estimated time frames for handling the complaint; and
- (b) assess the complaint using the definitions of informal and formal complaints in this policy, and refer the complaint to the informal or formal complaints process.

3. Registration and Support

- (a) The recipient of the complaint will inform the School Principal (or other SLFA executive staff member) of the complaint immediately and the School Principal or SLFA executive staff member will promptly enter it onto the *Complaints Register*, regardless of whether it proceeds through the informal or formal process.
- (b) The recipient of the complaint will offer support to the complainant as appropriate, which may include assistance with completing forms or understanding procedures – and will seek guidance or support from their supervisor if required.
- (c) If a student is a complainant, respondent or victim, or the child of a complainant, respondent or victim of a matter being managed through this policy, the School may offer the student support where appropriate e.g. discussing suitable adjustments with parents/caregivers.

4. Informal complaints handling process

- (a) The informal process is designed to resolve issues promptly and collaboratively at the local level (i.e. at the School).
- (b) It may involve constructive discussion and negotiation between the complainant and the relevant staff member(s).
- (c) If the complaint cannot be resolved informally, it will be escalated to the formal process.

5. Formal complaints handling process

- (a) The formal process begins with the assessment of the complaint by a designated staff member (e.g. the School Principal or a SLFA executive management staff member or the SLFA Board Chair for complaints against the School Principal or SLFA Executive Officer).
- (b) The School Principal or executive management staff member may gather additional information through investigation, interviews, or evidence review.
- (c) The School Principal or a SLFA executive management staff member, in collaboration with the staff member who received the complaint, will determine appropriate action, which may include:
 - i. Mediation
 - ii. Disciplinary measures
 - iii. Implementation of policy changes
 - iv. Referral to external agencies (e.g. police)
 - v. Provision of written updates to the complainant throughout the process
 - vi. Other actions the School Principal or SLFA executive management staff member determine as appropriate in the circumstances.

6. Complaint Closure

- (a) The complaint register will be updated with the date the complaint is closed and a brief summary of the outcome.
- (b) The complainant will receive written notification of the outcome and any actions taken where appropriate.

7. Appeals Process

Complainants may appeal the outcome of a complaint by writing to:

- (a) the School Principal (for complaints not previously managed by the School Principal)
- (b) the SLFA Executive Officer or their delegate who will be a staff member from the SLFA executive management team (for complaints not previously managed by the SLFA Executive Officer)
- (c) the SLFA Board Chair (for complaints previously managed by the Executive Officer or their delegate, or complaints about the School Principal).

Complaints Register

SLFA and its School will maintain a *Complaints Register* with details such as:

- 1. the name of the person making the complaint (the complainant) and who the complaint is about (the respondent);
- 2. date the complaint was received;
- 3. a brief description of what the complaint is about;
- 4. the employee(s) managing the complaint;
- 5. the actions taken in handling the complaint;
- 6. the outcome of the complaint;
- 7. date the complaint was finalised/closed; and
- 8. any other relevant information.

Documents relating to complaints and resolutions and the *Complaints Register* will be securely stored.

All complaints shall be entered onto the *Complaints Register* as soon as practicable after the complaint is received. The School's *Complaints Register* will not contain complaints about the School Principal.

Records of complaints about the School Principal will be maintained by the SLFA Board of Director's with access restricted to the Board of Directors.

To safeguard confidentiality and maintain the integrity of the complaint process, access to the entire *Complaints Register* will be limited to the School Principal and other SLFA executive management staff.

The School Principal may authorise the sharing of specific, relevant entries from the *Complaints Register* with other designated staff members (such as the senior leadership team), provided measures are taken to protect the confidentiality of all parties involved, particularly ensuring that respondents to a complaint do not gain inappropriate access to information about the allegations against them.

Monitoring and Reporting

SLFA and the School is committed to monitoring and reporting on complaints, while ensuring principles of confidentiality and privacy are maintained. Monitoring and reporting will occur by:

1. Tracking and collating complaints, including all relevant records, using a secure system with strictly limited access to ensure confidentiality of information.
2. Reviewing information about complaints to:
 - (a) identify common or recurring issues that may need addressing;
 - (b) monitor the time taken to resolve complaints;
 - (c) monitor the number and reasons for complaints referred for review;
 - (d) assess the effectiveness of the *Complaints Handling Policy* and other policies and procedures and whether they are being correctly implemented and make improvements where necessary.

Implementation, Awareness and Training

SLFA and the School is committed to raising awareness of the process for lodging and resolving complaints at SLFA and the School, including through the development and implementation of this policy and related procedures, and via the clear support and promotion of the policy and procedures.

1. SLFA and the School is committed to promoting and increasing awareness of the *Complaints Handling Policy* to students, parents, carers and staff (including volunteers). New students and their families and new staff (including volunteers) will be made aware of the policy and procedures upon commencement with SLFA and at the School. The policy is accessible from the SLFA Central Office, the School's administration and the SLFA website – <http://www.silverlining.org.au/>
2. SLFA is committed to training relevant employees (especially senior staff) on how to resolve complaints in line with this policy and related procedures. The policy will be discussed in staff meetings at regular intervals and records of staff participation will be kept.
3. SLFA and the School will keep appropriate records of complaints, will monitor complaints and their resolution and will report on a high-level basis to the SLFA Board of Directors – the School's Governing Body, on complaint handling at the School.
4. SLFA and the School will act to encourage students, parents and employees to contribute to a healthy work and school culture where complaints are resolved with as little formality and disruption as possible.

COMPLAINT FORM

Complainant Details

Please provide your details so that we may respond to your complaint.

| | | |
|------------------------------------|---|--|
| Name | | |
| Address | | |
| Phone | Email | |
| Preferred method of contact | | |
| I am: | <input type="checkbox"/> a student <input type="checkbox"/> a parent, guardian or carer <input type="checkbox"/> staff member | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other - please specify: | |

Complaint Details

Provide the following details as they relate to the complaint.

[illegible]

Actions already taken to handle the complaint to date (if any)

Have you already raised your concerns with the school prior to completing this form?

Answer yes or no below.

☐ **No.** Why not?

| |
|--|
| |
| |
| |
| |
| |

☐ **Yes.** Please provide the following details if you have previously raised this complaint:

| | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| Name of person who dealt with your complaint | |
| What response did you receive to your complaint? | |
| | |
| Date complaint lodged | Date of response or outcome |

Privacy information

In lodging a complaint you are providing personal information, including your name and contact details. All personal information you provide is handled in accordance with the Australian Privacy Principles contained in the [Privacy Act 1988 \(Cth\)](#). We will use relevant personal information provided for the purpose of assessing and/or investigating your complaint. It may be necessary to disclose relevant information to the SLFA Board of Directors and/or SLFA or the School or other persons named in this complaint to help with our investigation. In other instances the information collected in this form may be disclosed without further consent where authorised or required by law.

Declaration by complainant

| | |
|---|--------------------------|
| <p>In submitting this Complaint Form, I confirm the information provided that I have provided in this form is, to the best of my knowledge, true and correct and is not vexatious or frivolous.</p> | |
| <p>Name: _____</p> | |
| <p>Signature: _____</p> | <p>Date: / /</p> |

EMPLOYEE DECLARATION

Policy Declaration Form

I acknowledge that I have read the **COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY**, that I understand its content and that any questions I may have had about this policy have been clarified to me.

I understand that it is my responsibility to perform any obligations and responsibilities under this policy, any related policies and any relevant legislation, to the best of my ability and that I should continue to seek clarification or ask questions about the policy, procedures and any of my obligations under it, should I need to.

I understand that I can seek guidance or assistance from my supervisor and other SLFA leadership and executive staff whenever I need to.

EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE

| | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Name: | |
| Job Title: | Signature: |
| Work Location: (e.g. school name, Central Office, Saddler Springs, etc) | Date: dd / mm / yyyy |

EXECUTIVE OFFICER* OR PRINCIPAL / HEAD OF CAMPUS

| | |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| Name: | Signature: |
| Job Title: | Date: dd / mm / yyyy |

*Note: Governance Officer may sign as Executive Officer's delegate.

RECORD KEEPING PROCEDURE:

1. **Employee:** **SCAN** fully signed and completed form to admin@slfa.edu.au and cc your supervisor (e.g. Principal, Executive Officer) into the email.
2. **Supervisor:** **FILE** scanned form in employee's hardcopy HR folder at work site.
3. **Central Office:** **SAVE** scanned form to employee's digital Staff PD & Training folder in 365 and update the Policy Training Register.
4. **Employee:** keep a hard or digital copy of the signed form for your own personal records (you can email a copy to your personal email if you wish to).