

**ST BEDE'S CATHOLIC COLLEGE**  
**COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES RESOLUTION POLICY**



APPLICABLE TO	Staff, students and parents
DOCUMENT OWNER	Principal
APPROVAL DATE	3 November 2017
APPROVED BY	Principal
SCHOOL ACTIONS	School Policy – Staff and parents are to ensure practices are consistent with this policy.
LAST REVIEW DATE/S	Not Applicable
NEXT REVIEW DATE	3 November 2018
RELATED DOCUMENTS	MN CSO Complaints and Grievances Resolution 2013 MN CSO Complaints and Grievances Support Material

## **1. RATIONALE**

St Bede's Catholic College, Chisholm is a school that is committed to living the values of the Gospel. The school has a responsibility for ensuring that all staff, parents and students maintain a high standard of conduct at all times. Grievances and complaints are treated seriously and managed and resolved fairly, efficiently, promptly and in accordance with the relative legislation requirements and processes that are outlined in this policy. The Complaints and Grievances Resolution Policy has been developed to provide a consistent approach within the College.

## **2. AIMS**

2.1 We aim to:

- Provide a harmonious, positive and productive school and community environment.
- Understand the needs of students and families.
- Welcome and value diversity of opinion.
- Have clear and open communication within the community.
- Resolve complaints and grievances fairly, efficiently, promptly and in the best interests of all.

*The constant aim of the school is contact and dialogue with the students families, which is encouraged through the promotion of the parents association.*

The Catholic School on the threshold of the Third Millennium

2.2 This policy aims to address the concerns of parents/carers and the wider community. These concerns may include:

- Students' learning, behaviour or wellbeing
- School organisation and management
- Student health and safety issues
- Other issues that may come from the wider community

### **3. GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

3.1 A complaint occurs when a member of the school community believes that an action or decision has been taken (or not taken) within the school that they perceive to be a breach of a relevant Act or regulation, infringes upon the principles of merit or equity, or is otherwise unreasonable.

3.2 Undisclosed or unresolved grievances or complaints create distress and can be a violation of a person's rights.

3.3 Resolution of grievances and complaints at a local level, where appropriate, is the desired outcome.

3.4 Matters concerning child protection and other areas covered by specific legislation will be referred immediately to the relevant external agency.

3.5 This policy applies in conjunction with other school policies but it does not apply to matters relating to:

- Staff appraisal
- School evaluation and development
- Child protection allegations and queries
- Critical incidents
- Employment contracts
- Salaries and awards
- Workers compensation/return to work programs
- Criminal matters

3.6 Parents/Carers have the right to raise a complaint and grievance and have it responded to promptly, fairly, without fear of repercussions and according to principles of procedural fairness. This complaint and/or grievance may be formal or informal in nature. These principles of procedural fairness will be followed in all aspects of the complaint handling process including an

opportunity for parents/carers to state their case, informing the parties of the nature of the case, handling the complaint confidentially, addressing complaints in a timely fashion, remaining objective, advising parties of the outcome and informing parties of the avenues of appeal.

- 3.7 Parents/Carers have the right to confidentiality in regard to a concern that is raised at the school. On occasions, others may need to be informed; this will be explained to the parent /carer raising the concern.
- 3.8 Parents / Carers have a responsibility to raise their concerns with the school at the earliest possible time.
- 3.9 The overriding principle of all our interaction is that we strive to restore relationships; holding parties accountable with the aim to repair any harm that may have been done.

## **4. IMPLEMENTATION**

### **4.1 School Responsibilities**

- 4.1.1 The principal is responsible for the implementation of the school Complaints and Grievances Policy.
- 4.1.2 Staff and members of the school community need to be familiar with the school's Complaints and Grievances Policy and established processes for managing complaints. This should include clear information as to which persons manage particular complaints and their roles in the process.
- 4.1.3 A parent information brochure is to be made available in the school foyer and published on the school website.
- 4.1.4 Confidentiality will be respected and maintained by all parties. (Refer 3.7)
- 4.1.5 Concerns will be resolved according to the principles of procedural fairness as follows:
  - the person considering the concern will act impartially
  - anyone involved in the matter has the right to be heard fully
  - all relevant information will be taken into account
  - where a conflict of interest arises or is perceived to arise, an independent person may be involved.
- 4.1.6 Every endeavour will be made to address concerns within a reasonable timeframe.
- 4.1.7 The Principal, or their delegate, has the authority to manage concerns and complaints at school.

- 4.1.8 Any person raising or responding to a concern may have a support person present during meetings or interviews. The support person should act as an observer but may take a more active role with the mutual agreement of all parties.
- 4.1.9 Principals and staff are within their rights to discontinue the meeting/discussion and require the parent/carer to leave the school grounds should the parent/carer become abusive. Ongoing abusive or aggressive action may result in police intervention.
- 4.1.10 Accurate and appropriate documentation will be kept with due regard to the confidentiality of the concerned parties.
- 4.1.11 The outcome of a complaint or grievance will be communicated to the parent/carer with further follow up if required.
- 4.1.12 Anonymous complaints or allegations will be considered by the Principal in consultation with the Assistant Director of Schools. All complaints in regard to matters relating to Child Protection will be referred to Zimmerman Services
- 4.1.13 It is expected that Complaints and Grievances will be lodged in a manner that respects the dignity of the person receiving them. Similarly, staff are expected to receive the Complaint and/or Grievance with the same level of respect.

## **4.2 CSO Responsibilities**

- 4.2.1 The Catholic Schools Office will have in place a complaints and grievances policy and monitor procedures and the implementation of the policy and associated support documents in all diocesan schools.
- 4.2.2 Complaints and grievances that are not resolved at a school level may be referred to the Parent Liaison and Resources Officer at the CSO or the Executive Assistant to the Director of Schools.
- 4.2.3 The Parent Liaison Officer where necessary will refer complaints and grievances to the relevant Assistant Director for resolution.
- 4.2.4 Where the complaint or grievance remains unresolved by the Assistant Director the Parent/Carer or the Assistant Director may refer the matter to the Director of Schools for review.

### 4.3 Process

4.3.1 The initial key steps followed in this process are different for primary and secondary settings. At St Bede's Catholic College it is important these steps are clearly outlined and followed:

The key steps are as follows:

<b>School setting</b>
1. Complaints and Grievances should be raised at the earliest possible time. Subject based complaints and grievances should first be raised with the student's subject class teacher. If the complaint is not resolved the matter should be raised with the relevant Studies Coordinator. Wellbeing based complaints and grievances should be raised with the Student Coordinator. Should this not be possible the parent/carer should direct the complaint and grievance to the principal who may co-opt the support of the appropriate Assistant Principal
2. Where the curriculum or wellbeing based complaint and grievance is not resolved by the appropriate coordinator, this should be directed to the Principal who may co-opt the support of the Assistant Principal.
3. Where a complaint or grievance is not resolved by the Principal after all efforts have been made to do so, or the complaint or grievance is about the Principal, the parent/carer should refer the concern to the Catholic Schools Office via the Parent Liaison and Resources Officer or the Executive Assistant to the Director of Schools. The Parent Liaison and Resource Officer will refer the matter to the relevant Assistant Director for resolution.
4. Where the complaint or grievance remains unresolved, the Parent/Carer or the Assistant Director may refer the matter to the Director of Schools for review. A formal avenue of appeal is available in accordance with the Diocesan Pastoral Care Policy. All such appeals should be made to the Director of Schools in writing and in a timely manner.
5. If ultimately the Parent/Carer is not happy with the way their complaint or grievance has been dealt with by the school or the Catholic Schools Office, they may wish to go to an external agency or legal advocate for advice and assistance.

4.3.2 Teachers/carers and staff should familiarise themselves with the Diocesan Complaints and Grievances Resolution Pathway.

#### 4.4 Contact

<b>CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE</b> 841 Hunter St Newcastle West NSW 2302 Phone: 49791200 info@mn.catholic.edu.au	<b>CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE PARENT LIAISON AND RESOURCES OFFICER</b> Phone: 49791303 Mb: 0409 791 303
<b>ZIMMERMAN SERVICES</b> 50 Crebert Street Mayfield Phone: 49791390 dcppcu@mn.catholic.org.au	<b>EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT TO THE DIRECTOR OF SCHOOLS</b> 841 Hunter St Newcastle West NSW 2302 Phone : 49791207 director@mn.catholic.edu.au

#### 5. BUDGET

- 5.1 Each year an appropriate school budget is to be allocated for complaints Management reflecting this policy and the priorities of the school system strategic plan.
- 5.2 The school budget should support the appropriate training and professional development of staff.

#### 6. EVALUATION

This policy will be evaluated one year from its implementation and then every three (3) years or as the need arises.

#### 7. GLOSSARY

Appeal	An impartial, determinative process available to all parties to a complaint wherein an independent person reviews both the way in which the complaint management process has been conducted and the integrity of its outcome(s).
Complaint	An expression of dissatisfaction or concern with a school or the Catholic Schools Office regarding policy, procedures and/or actions and decisions made.
Formal complaint	A grievance that requires investigation with a written response
Informal complaint	A comment, or concern that may or may not require a response, to ensure that a member of staff is aware of the issue and that it is brought to the attention of the principal.

Complaints management	An established system of responding to and handling complaints and suggestions regarding matters causing dissatisfaction or concern.
Confidentiality	Protection given to the non-disclosure of things said and done; an ethical duty held by persons to ensure that matters are held to be private and in confidence between themselves and others.
Due diligence	The care taken by a reasonable person to ensure that others do not suffer unnecessary harm or disadvantage; the obligation bestowed upon a person to act responsibly, efficiently and prudently in the carrying out of his or her duties.
Duty of care	A legal requirement that a person exercise a reasonable standard of care toward others in order to protect them from unnecessary risk of harm; professional duty of care exists at a level higher than that placed upon a member of the general public.
Grievance	A real or imaginary wrong causing resentment and regarded as grounds for complaint. A feeling of resentment or injustice at having been unfairly treated
Impartial	Responding to all persons equally, free of bias and with no preconceived opinion; taking no personal advantage from espousing either side of a disagreement or conflict.
Inclusivity	Respectful, supportive and equitable school communities. All embracing.
Privacy	The extent to which a person can determine which personal information is to be shared with whom and for what purpose; a legally bestowed principle that ensures that certain information remains protected from disclosure.
Procedural fairness	An obligation placed upon organisations and persons making decisions affecting the rights and welfare of others to engage in decision-making with due diligence, transparency and without bias. Procedural fairness affords certain rights to persons including the right to know of matters alleged, the right to respond and the right to appeal decisions made.
Restorative Practice	The overriding principle of all our interaction is that we strive to restore relationships: holding parties accountable with the aim to repair any harm that may have been done.