COMPLAINTS & GRIEVANCES RESOLUTION POLICY

2016
Rationale

“The constant aim of the school should be contact and dialogue with the pupils’ families, which should also be encouraged through the promotion of parents’ associations”.

The Catholic School on the threshold of the Third Millennium

Schools are valued as special places where staff, students and parents have a right to a safe and supportive environment. From time to time, disagreements and conflict may arise which may result in complaints and grievances being expressed.

To create a safe and supportive environment at St Benedict’s it is essential to develop principles characterised by procedural fairness, inclusivity, due diligence and restorative practices, especially in the resolution of complaints and grievances.

Parents/Carers have the right to raise a complaint and grievance and have it responded to promptly, fairly, without fear of repercussions.

Clear, published processes to address complaints and grievances in a timely and confidential manner is an essential part of the provision of quality service.

Aims

- This policy aims to clarify procedures to address the concerns of Parents / Carers and the wider community. These concerns may include:
  - Student’s learning, behaviour and welfare
  - School organisation and management
  - Student health and safety issues
  - Other issues that may come from the wider community

- The St. Benedict's Complaints and Grievances Policy is written to complement the school's Anti-Bullying Policy.

NB

Matters concerning Child Protection and other areas covered by specific legislation will be referred immediately to the relevant external agency.

This policy operates in conjunction with other diocesan / school policies but 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
- worker’s compensation/return to work programs
- criminal matters
Implementation

- This policy operates within the context of and is based on the Catholic School’s Office “Complaints and Grievances Resolution Policy (2016)”.
- The Principal is responsible for the implementation of the school’s Complaints and Grievances Policy.
- Staff and members of the school community need to be familiar with the school’s Complaints and Grievances Policy which provides clear information as to which persons manage particular complaints and their roles in the process.
- Class based complaints and grievances should be raised with the student’s class teacher.
- The first point of call with any class related issue is the classroom teacher. All other complaints and grievances should be directed to a member of the School Executive. This is included in the first newsletter of the year, the class teachers’ Term 1 Parent Handout and the Parent Handbook.
- Staff confirm their awareness and understanding of the requirements of the school’s Complaint and Grievances Policy annually.
- The policy is available on the school website and hard copy is available on request.
- Confidentiality will be respected and maintained by all parties.
- 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 an independent person may be involved
- Every endeavour will be made to address concerns within a reasonable timeframe.
- The Principal, or their delegate, has the authority to manage concerns and complaints.
- 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.
- The Principal 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.
- Details of a complaint raised should be recorded on a Complaint Record (Appendix 1).
- The outcome of a complaint or grievance will be communicated to the parent/carer with further follow up if required.
- A brief summary should be recorded in Gate 21 in the Student Info “Notes” section. Staff should keep a copy of any Complaint Records and the original should be given to the Principal and filed in the Complaints & Grievances Reports folder in the Principal's Office.
-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.
- 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.
- Timely feedback is provided to the person who raised the concern.
- Complaints and Grievances not resolved at a school level may be referred to the Parent Liaison and Resources Officer at the CSO or the school’s Assistant Director of Schools.
- The Parent Liaison Officer where necessary will refer complaints and grievances to the relevant Assistant Director for resolution.
- A copy of the Complaints and Grievances Key Reference Points (Appendix 2) is kept in the staff room.
- A Complaints and Grievances flow Chart (Appendix 3) gives clarity to the process.

Concerns that are clearly identified as bullying are dealt with using procedures outlined in the school’s Anti-Bullying Policy. Those related to Child Protection are to be addressed using the school’s Child Protection Policy.
**Key Steps**
Complaints and Grievances should be raised at the earliest possible time. Class based complaints and grievances should be raised with the student’s class teacher. All other complaints and grievances should be directed to a member of the School Executive.

Where the class based complaint and grievance is not resolved by the teacher this should also be directed to a member of the School Executive.

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.

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.

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.

**Resources**

**CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE**
841 Hunter St Newcastle West NSW 2302
Phone: 4979 1200
info@mn.catholic.edu.au
mn.catholic.edu.au

**CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE**
**PARENT LIAISON AND RESOURCES OFFICER**
Phone: 4979 1303
Mb: 0409 791 303

* The Catholic Schools Office “Complaints and Grievances Resolution Policy” (2013)
* The Catholic Schools Office Addressing Harassment and Bullying in the Workplace Policy (2010), the school’s Anti-Bullying (2017) and Student Well-Being (2016) Policies
* The Catholic Schools Office “Complaints and Grievances Parents and Community Information Brochure”

**Budget**

Each year an appropriate school budget is to be allocated for complaints management reflecting this policy and the priorities of the school and diocese.

**Evaluation**

This policy will be evaluated as required.
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<th>COMPLAINT REPORTED BY:</th>
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<td>NATURE OF COMPLAINT:</td>
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<td>DESIRED OUTCOME:</td>
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COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES KEY REFERENCE POINTS

All staff should be aware of and have a clear understanding of the school’s Complaints and Grievances Policy (2016) and the Catholic School’s Office Complaints & Grievances Resolution brochure.

Class based complaints and grievances, including bullying, should be raised with the student’s class teacher. When an allegation of bullying is made the Complaint Assessment Questions should be used and the responses should be recorded accurately on the Bullying Assessment Response. If there is evidence to support an allegation of bullying, contact the Principal and/or delegate and table the Bullying Assessment Response sheet. All other complaints and grievances should be directed to a member of the School Executive.

A Complaint Report is to be used to record the key facts. The nature of the complaint or grievance and any follow up, including feedback to the person who has raised the concern, should be clearly outlined.

When a class based complaint or grievance has been responded to, a copy of the Complaint Report should be retained by the teacher dealing with the matter and a copy should be given to the Principal and filed in the Complaints and Grievances folder in the Principal’s office. A brief summary should be recorded in Gate 21 in the Student Info “Notes” section.

Where a class based complaint and grievance is not resolved by the teacher, direct it to a member of the School Executive.

Where a complaint or grievance is not resolved by the Principal after all efforts have been made to do so, the parent/carer should be advised to 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.

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.

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.

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COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES
FLOW CHART

Incident/ conflict has occurred

Discuss with class teacher

Issue remains unresolved

What grade is my child in?

K - 2
Consult Miss Collins

Issue remains unresolved

Consult Mr Hornby-Howell

3 - 6
Consult Mr Bailey

Issue remains unresolved