

COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES RESOLUTION POLICY - 2016

To be reviewed: 2019

RATIONALE:

At St Thomas' we are committed to providing a safe, inclusive and supportive environment for all members of the school community. This policy exists to implement procedures to safeguard the rights and acknowledge the responsibilities of all parties, should an unresolved grievance arise. If a staff member, parent or student has a complaint or concern which they believe has not been satisfactorily resolved at the level at which it has arisen, a grievance may exist. A resolution may be sought through informal discussions with the Principal (or Deputy Principal) about the problem in order to come to a mutually acceptable and reasonable resolution, or through a formal grievance procedure.

DEFINITIONS:

A grievance is defined as a real or imagined cause for complaint, especially unfair treatment.

A complaint is defined as a statement that something is unsatisfactory or unacceptable.

AIMS

- To resolve complaints as quickly and as fairly as possible.
- To ensure that the parents, students and staff are not victimised.
- To gain a mutually acceptable resolution of grievances in a fair, reasonable and equitable manner within an atmosphere of mutual respect, dignity and compassion.

IMPLEMENTATION

Procedures for Contacting School Staff

If parents have a concern or wishes to discuss an issue about a child, situation or procedure within a particular class or level the best procedure is to contact the classroom teacher using the approaches outlined below.

In all cases, if the matter is urgent and/or relates to the possible risk of harm to a child, member of staff or member of the community, the Principal should be informed immediately and the urgency of the matter conveyed. The Principal will determine who is the most appropriate person to deal with the issue and will ensure that contact is made as soon as possible.

- Contact the school, either by phone or by coming to the office personally, and ask the school administration officer to arrange for the teacher to contact you to make a

suitable meeting time. Teachers are not normally available to come to the phone or office during teaching time.

- Contact the appropriate teacher in writing asking them to set up a suitable meeting time with you.
- Approach the appropriate teacher at a time when they are not teaching or on duty to arrange a suitable time to meet.
- If parents have a concern or wish to discuss an issue about a situation that they consider affects the whole school or relates to a school policy or procedure they are to contact the Principal, or the Deputy Principal.
- If parents have a concern or wish to discuss an issue relating to a member of staff **or if** the concern or issue is of a sensitive nature they should make direct contact with the Principal.

What to do if you have a Complaint

- Complaints about school management should be directed to the Principal or Principal's nominee.
- Upon receipt of a written complaint or a transcribed oral one, the Principal or Principal's nominee will:
 - Discuss the issue with the person about whom the complaint is involved.
 - Provide a copy of the written complaint to the staff member who is the subject of complaint (if appropriate).
 - Clarify the issue(s) of complaint
 - Investigate and discuss options for a resolution with all parties.
- After investigation/advice, the Principal will decide on the option deemed to be most appropriate.
- The Principal will implement a decision and provide feedback to all concerned.

Parents

- Parents should not approach the children of other families with a school-related complaint, on school premises. Nor should a parent make contact with a child or their parent/guardian in any other setting about a complaint.
- Parents should not approach any child or parent with a non-school related complaint on school premises.

Procedures Which May Be Implemented When Matters Are Not Satisfactorily Resolved At The Local Level.

In the case of a formal complaint against the Principal, the complainant should contact the Parish Priest. The Parish Priest will investigate the complaint and inform the parties of his decision.

Should this matter not be resolved, a complainant may contact the Regional Principal Consultant of Catholic Education Melbourne.

The Regional Principal Consultant will:

- Clarify that the complainant has made contact with the school and that the matter has been aired and a reasonable hearing obtained.
- Review the current source of dissatisfaction.
- Consult with all parties in an endeavour to resolve the issues.
- Provide feedback to all parties regarding the resolution of the complaint.

Resolution:

- On rare occasions where resolution is unlikely, a decision will be made with the best outcome for all parties involved. This is ultimately a school parish decision.
- If a complaint is not upheld or not substantiated (e.g. there is insufficient evidence) but some issues come out of the investigation that are required to be addressed, then possible outcomes include:
 - Relevant training for employees and counselling or modelling for students and/or;
 - Monitoring of the behaviour of employees and/or students;
 - Counselling, if necessary.
 - Mediation at the local level.

If the complaint is proved not to have happened at all, or if there is evidence that the complaint was made with the main purpose or intent of causing distress to the other(s) named as the source of the grievance, the following are possible outcomes:

- Counselling, if necessary;
- A written apology from the person who made the complaint;
- An official warning;
- Referral for disciplinary action for students and staff;
- Legal action.

The relevant designated person will make sure that whatever outcome is decided upon actually happens.

Appeals

There are three avenues of appeal if you feel that the complaints procedure has not been followed properly, or that the outcome is unacceptable to you.

Appeals At School Level

- Appeals at school level are to be referred to the Principal if he/she:
- has not been involved in investigating or examining the complaints or is not the person named as the source of the grievance.
- If the Principal has been involved, the appeal should be referred to the Regional Principal Consultant of Catholic Education Melbourne.

The appeal will consider:

- The way the complaint was handled and examine the outcome;
- If he/she believes it was handled properly and that the outcome was appropriate he/she will take no further action;
- If he/she thinks that the complaint was not handled properly, or that the outcome was inappropriate, he/she will organise for the complaint to be looked at again.

Appeals at Catholic Education Melbourne level

- To the Regional Principal Consultant at Catholic Education Melbourne.

A person other than the person who first handled the complaint will always deal with an appeal.

To An External Agency

- If you are not happy with the way your complaint has been dealt with by the school or the Catholic Education Office, you may wish to go to an external agency for further advice and assistance.
- You may take your complaint to an external agency at any stage of the procedure if you are unhappy with progress in dealing with your complaint. The agencies that would most likely have jurisdiction are:
 - Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (Federal).
 - Victorian Anti Discrimination Board.

Record Keeping

- Records of complaints, interviews and other documentation relating to a complaint are kept at the school (when dealt with at school level) in a separate secure complaints file.
- If the complaint is about a person, documents are placed in a restricted access file.

- If there are any serious ongoing management or care issues relating to a complaint, there will need to be a cross-reference to the restricted file on the staff member or student file.
- A register of complaints will be kept at each school and each regional Catholic Education office location.

EVALUATION: This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three year cycle.