



St. Mary's Primary School
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Complaints Policy

Purpose

The Catholic Diocese of Bathurst and all schools in the diocese are committed to providing a pleasant, safe and effective working environment for the students in our schools. The duty of care should be paramount in all schools. To this end, policies such as Occupational Health and Safety, Child Protection, Student Welfare, Staff Code of Conduct and Privacy have been developed.

With every good will, problems may still arise and it is important that these concerns be dealt with swiftly and effectively to address the issue, allay fears and prevent issues developing into major problems. Parents will be made aware of the policy through its publication on the CEO website and in school enrolment folders. All staff will be made aware of the Complaints Policy through staff training. It is expected that all complaints will be dealt with impartially, confidentially, fairly and speedily.

Principles

The following principles should govern all complaint handling processes:

- *Impartiality* - Complaints should be investigated in an open and unbiased way with both parties seeking a fair hearing and clarification of the issues. *No decisions or judgements should be made until all the facts are clear.*
- *Confidentiality* - All parties involved in the concern are asked to maintain confidentiality. The dignity and privacy of all concerned must be maintained.
- *A commitment to fairness* - Repercussions should not be feared following the lodging of a complaint made in good faith. Repercussions will not be tolerated.
- *Timeliness* - It is important that all complaints be dealt with speedily to ensure a quick resolution of the problem.

Process

- In general, parents should first address the problem with the staff member most closely concerned, as soon as possible after the incident. Contact your local school to find out who your first point of contact should be. This can often deal with the problem easily and effectively. An appointment should be made with the relevant staff member at school to outline the problem and seek a solution. Good will on both sides and clarification of the issue should ensure a happy resolution for both parties. It is good practice for the school to summarise the issue and resolution in writing and provide a copy to the complainant.
- If however, an informal approach is not successful in resolving the problem, a formal complaint may be lodged with the school through the Principal. This should be submitted in writing if possible, outlining the problem and the concerns about the initial handling of the issue. It is important that this is dealt with speedily and that a written response is made.
- Concerns may also be raised with the Catholic Education Office. Most concerns should however be dealt with at school level and the CEO would encourage this approach. If there is a particular reason why this is not possible, the CEO will appoint a consultant who will seek to resolve the concern by liaising with the school and the person expressing the concern. A written summary should again be provided.
- If the problem is still not resolved, reference to the appropriate external agency e.g. Anti-Discrimination Board, may be made.

NOTE: Child Protection concerns will be dealt with outside this process using the investigative processes set out by the Ombudsman. All Child Protection complaints must be passed on to the Catholic Education Office without delay.

Ten Tips for Handling Complaints

- Encourage people to communicate their concerns and assist them with this.
- Allow people to fully explain before jumping to conclusions.
- Listen carefully and ask for clarification.
- Investigate carefully. Follow the policy and be open.
- Be tactful. Be open and supportive of everyone's dignity.
- Avoid snap judgements. Be objective.
- Communicate constantly with the complainant.
- Consider the consequences.
- Admit any mistakes. Don't bear grudges. Don't blame.
- Explain the decision.

RECORD OF COMPLAINT

Complaint made by:

Date:

Details of complaint:

Interview Date:

Present:

Record of Interview:

Decision and Action Taken:

