



***St. Patrick's Catholic  
Primary School  
Lithgow***



**Complaints and Grievance  
Policy and Guidelines for  
Parents**

## ***Complaints and Grievances Policy and Guidelines***

### **PURPOSE**

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School is committed to providing a safe work environment for all workers and students. The purpose of this Complaints Handling Policy and Guidelines is to establish a framework for the handling of complaints that relate to the operation of St Patrick's School.

We acknowledge that as either a member of staff, a student, a parent or a member of the wider community you can sometimes feel aggrieved about something that is happening at a school which appears unsatisfactory, or unreasonable. You may make a complaint about any policy or procedure, decision, behaviour, act or omission (whether by the principal, members of the leadership team or other staff, students or parents) that may be considered to be unsatisfactory or unreasonable.

It is always our aim to seek to resolve issues through direct discussion between you and other parties. However there may be instances in which it is not possible to take up the issue with the other party directly or doing this does not resolve the matter. It is in such cases that the Complaints Handling Policy and Guidelines should be utilised.

A distinctive feature of the Complaints Handling Policy and Guidelines is to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that complaints are addressed in a timely and confidential manner at the lowest appropriate management level, in order to prevent minor problems or concerns from escalating. We expect that complaints will be brought forward and resolved in a respectful manner recognising the dignity of each person concerned in the process. The policy recognises that a number of more minor or simple matters can be resolved without recourse to the formal complaint handling process but rather, quickly and simply, by discussion between the appropriate people.

### **POLICY FRAMEWORK**

This is the framework that will govern a complaint you may wish to make. Through this policy we will:

- endeavour to increase the level of satisfaction and improve the relationship between St Patrick's School parents and the wider community
- improve the level of parent satisfaction with St Patrick's School, and the relationship of parents and families with school and teachers
- respect and recognise the innate dignity of each person in any way involved with the school
- recognise the rights of a person who is the subject of a complaint (the respondent)
- protect the confidentiality of both you and the respondent
- recognise and protect your right to comment and complain
- provide an efficient, fair and accessible mechanism for prompt investigation and resolution of complaints in accordance with the principles of natural justice
- ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, information is available on the complaints handling process
- enable the nature of complaints to be monitored to improve the quality of services by identifying and rectifying practices that may be impeding the quality of services
- ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the complaint handling process is transparent and comprehensive

The following principles inform the content of this policy:

#### **(a) Commitment**

This school will investigate all complaints in accordance with this policy. This will be reflected in the:

- adoption and distribution of the complaints handling policy and procedures

- appropriate training of workers in the implementation of this policy
- ongoing monitoring and evaluation of effectiveness of the Complaints Handling Policy and Guidelines

**(b) Responsiveness**

Complaints will be dealt with promptly. The process and the time needed to resolve an issue will vary depending on the nature and complexity of the issue.

**(c) Visibility**

The existence of this complaint handling policy and procedures, its purpose and the method of accessing it will be promoted internally for staff and externally to the community.

**(d) Subsidiarity**

The process of responding to a formal complaint will reflect the principle of subsidiarity. This means that we expect that complaints may be resolved wherever possible at the lowest level of management necessary for their proper resolution. The principal, therefore, will not be directly involved in the resolution of those complaints which are more appropriately handled by others in the school community.

**(e) Procedural fairness**

The principles of procedural fairness will be followed in all aspects of complaint handling. Procedural fairness includes:

- giving you the opportunity to put your case
- offering reasonable assistance to you to enable the complaint to be made and to know the complaint handling procedures
- informing the respondent of the substance of the complaint and providing an opportunity to respond
- providing the respondent with information about the complaint investigation process including outcomes
- handling the complaint process confidentially
- determining complaints as expeditiously as possible and advising you and the respondent of the outcome of the investigation;
- assessing the facts and circumstances of the situation objectively and determining the complaint fairly and equitably;
- providing you with details of the determination and reasons for the decision

**(f) Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is an obligation to the provider of information while privacy is an obligation to the subject of the information. In making a complaint you can feel secure that your complaint will remain confidential. Confidentiality will be respected at all times within the constraints of the need to fully investigate the complaint. The obligation to maintain confidentiality extends also to you as the complainant and the respondent.

**(g) Access and equity**

The complaints handling process needs to be accessible and additional assistance may be available to you if you are from a culturally and linguistically diverse background, have a disability or are a young person.

**(h) No victimisation**

If you make a complaint in good faith you will be protected from detrimental action including victimisation or unfair treatment.

**(i) Vexatious or malicious complaints**

There is an underlying assumption that complaints are made in good faith (and with good will) and with an intention for resolution as opposed to retribution.

### **(j) Anonymous complaints**

Anonymous complaints do not reflect the principles outlined above. If you make an anonymous complaint to the school you are encouraged to identify yourself in order for the procedures outlined in this policy to be implemented fully. If you choose to remain anonymous, then in the case of verbal or written complaints the complaint may not be acted upon.

Note that the position with regard to child protection matters (not covered by the Complaints Handling Policy and Guidelines) may be different.

## **POLICY CONTENT**

### **What constitutes a complaint?**

This procedure explains what to do if you have a complaint about any decision, behaviour, act or omission at St Patrick's School.

A complaint involves an expression of dissatisfaction or a concern about a CEDB employee or a volunteer, religious person, or contractor, or a process. It also includes concerns about organisational, curriculum or cultural matters. Complaints are an opportunity to identify issues and take action to improve the situation or relationship and drive a culture of continuous improvement.

### **What matters are not dealt with under this policy?**

There are specific complaint procedures in place for the following matters:

- child protection issues (ie. if the complaint is about alleged inappropriate physical contact, sexual misconduct, neglect, or psychologically harmful conduct by an adult towards any child or young person. All such complaints should be made directly to the principal.
- workplace bullying
- harassment
- enrolment
- employment relations

You can obtain further information about how to pursue complaints of this nature from the principal.

## **PROCEDURES**

After a complaint is received at a school, the following will happen:

### **Initial Phase**

- The principal or individual receiving the complaint will obtain information from the complainant about the issue and document this initial information
- The Principal will record the complaint in the Complaints Register
- The complainant will be informed of the delegated person who will investigate the complaint
- The Principal will contact the designated person and provide details of the complaint

### **Assess Phase**

- The designated person will contact the complainant and explain the Complaints Management Process. At this time additional Information may be gathered and documented
- The designated person will address the complaint with relevant parties and record responses. At this time clarification may be required and more than one communication may be required with the persons involved. All parties are welcome to have a support person present at any meeting
- In the interests of confidentiality, only relevant witnesses will be interviewed and the importance of confidentiality will be stressed. A breach of confidentiality will be dealt with as a serious matter
- The designated person will document the process and all information gathered at all stages

- If deemed necessary, the police or another outside agency may be contacted for involvement

### Resolution Phase

- The designated person will inform the Principal of the findings of the investigation and develop a response and processes for the resolution as appropriate
- If the complaint cannot be resolved at the school it may be escalated to the Consultant to Schools
- The designated person will notify all parties of the resolution. The complainant will receive a written notification of the outcome and any resolution or processes to be implemented. The designated person may also choose to discuss this with the complainant

### Follow up Phase

- The Complaints Register is completed for this complaint and all documentation attached. The Complaint is retained for the required period
- The designated person and/or principal will monitor the situation to ensure a culture of improvement
- If issues are uncovered during the school investigation, possible processes to implement include:
  - training for relevant people
  - behaviour monitoring
  - process monitoring
  - counselling
  - mediation
- Following the resolution of the complaint the following are possible outcomes:
  - review of processes or practices or culture
  - change of processes or practices or culture and ongoing monitoring of situation
  - training for relevant people
  - counselling
  - a written apology to the complainant
  - other action as deemed necessary
  - Involvement of CEDB and/or Consultant to School
- Follow up Monitoring processes will be
  - determined and enacted by the designated person and/or principal
  - recorded in the process.

## POLICY REVIEW

POLICY DATES	
<i>Formulated</i>	27th April 2019
<i>Implemented</i>	3rd May 2019
<i>Next Review Due</i>	3rd May 2022
POLICY AUTHORISATION	
<i>Principal</i>	Mrs Renae Dunleavy

## A PARENT'S GUIDE TO MAKING A COMPLAINT

