



# **ST MARY'S SCHOOL MANSFIELD GRIEVANCES, COMPLAINTS & RESOLUTION POLICY**

# St. Mary's Primary School Mansfield

## Grievance, Complaints and Resolution Policy

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### Rationale

At St Mary's we strive to be communities of faith, hope and love, where communication takes place in an environment of openness, mutual respect, and in the interests of all students. We commit ourselves to developing an authentic Catholic school which is founded on the person of Jesus Christ and enlivened by the Gospel.

At St. Mary's School we have a desire and a responsibility to ensure that high standards of conduct are maintained by staff, students and parents at all times.

We believe that the resolution of conflict should be done fairly, efficiently, promptly and in accordance with relative legislation.

Staff members, parents and care-givers must have access to processes that allow them to resolve concerns/complaints in a supportive conciliatory environment.

Grievances are caused by ongoing concern/s or complaints which have escalated over a period of time or have not been successfully resolved.

Issues should usually be raised with the person concerned.

### Aims

At St. Mary's School we aim to-

- develop a harmonious, positive and collaborative relationship between staff, parents and students.
- welcome and value diversity of opinion.
- communicate clearly and openly within the community.
- implement fair and reasonable procedures to resolve conflict.

Legislations that underpin this policy include:

- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005
- Children Legislation Amendment (information Sharing) Act 2018
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- Disability Standards for Education 2005
- Child Safety Standards

## **Scope**

The following areas lie under the scope of the Complaints and Resolution policy.

### **Parents and care-givers may have concerns about;**

- Children's learning, behaviour or wellbeing.
- School organisation and management.
- Student health and safety issues.
- A child's or parent's conflict with a staff member.

### **Family rights and responsibilities:**

- Any parent or care-giver has the right to raise a concern and have it responded to without fear of repercussions and according to the principles of procedural fairness.
- Confidentiality will be respected and maintained by all parties involved.
- Parents may request an advocate to attend any meeting with them and have minutes taken.

### **Staff members' rights and responsibilities:**

- Any staff member has the right to raise a concern and have it responded to promptly, fairly and without fear of repercussions, according to principle of procedural fairness.
- Confidentiality will be respected and maintained by all parties involved.
- Staff may request an advocate to attend any meeting with them and have minutes taken.

## **Implementation**

At St. Mary's School-

- it is the principal's responsibility to provide a healthy and positive school environment that is free from discrimination and harassment. In doing so, principals must ensure that all are aware of their rights and responsibilities.
- generally, issues involving an individual child should be raised first with the class teacher.
- it is recommended that under no circumstances is any parent to approach or speak to a child, not his/her own, about that child's behaviour. This matter should be brought to the attention of, or discussed with, the classroom or supervising teacher, principal or assistant principal.
- the principal is required to use local complaints resolution procedures, where appropriate, for resolving complaints in relation to issues that fall within the school's area of responsibility. The Parish Education Board is available to all members of the school and parish community.
- it is incumbent upon the principal to act where unacceptable conduct is observed or brought to his or her attention.

- the principal may choose to respond to a complaint through an informal process in the case where the complaint is minor, the complainant wishes the matter to be dealt with informally or the complaint has arisen from lack of, or unclear communication.
- complaints must be addressed within a fair and reasonable time.
- when the unresolved issue/grievance involves-
  - a staff member as the complainant and he/she is unable to resolve it directly with a parent, the matter should be taken up with the principal or deputy-principal.
  - the principal, the matter should be taken up with the deputy-principal or Parish Priest.
  - another parent, the matter should be discussed with the principal or deputy-principal.
- grievances caused by ongoing concern/s or complaints which have escalated over a period of time or have not been successfully resolved must be dealt with by the principal or delegate.
- formal complaint resolution procedures are implemented. These can be found in the Catholic Education Melbourne 'Local Complaints Resolution Procedures' handbook, and contain the following steps. The formal process involves: -
  - Investigating the complaint including formal interviews, written statements, conveying the details of the complaint to the respondent in writing providing the opportunity for a written response.
  - Dismissing or accepting the complaint. Acceptance may involve verbal or written warnings, conciliation, counselling or consequences etc.
  - Preparation of a detailed confidential report.
  - Monitoring of the situation.
  - Parties dissatisfied with the process can appeal to external agencies such as Catholic Education Melbourne (CEM).
- other agencies may be called in for support, if a satisfactory resolution cannot be found at the school level, such as-
  - Catholic Education Melbourne (CEM) to mediate.
  - The Australian Education Union
  - Department of Health and Human Services, the Police, etc.
  - Child Protection (Child Safety, DHHS)

At St Mary's School:

- certain matters concerning child protection or other areas covered by specific legislation will be referred immediately to the relevant external agency.
- Mandatory Reporting legislation requires that teachers are legally bound to contact the Victorian Child Protection Services in some circumstances if they are concerned that a child is in danger.
- all complaints, ensuing procedures and outcomes will be fully documented.
- feedback will be provided to all parties regarding the procedure and/or outcome of inquiry into the complaint.

- all matters must be treated with utmost confidentiality and professional respect at all times.

### **Evaluation**

This policy will be reviewed in accordance with the School Improvement Plan and policy timeline, and relevant legislative changes.