

COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES RESOLUTION POLICY 2013

for parents/carers and the wider community

AUGUST 2013

| DOCUMENT SUMMARY | |
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| Responsible Officer | Parent Liaison Officer, Assistant Directors |
| Effective Date | May 2013 |
| Superseded Docs | Complaints Management Policy 2006 |
| Review Date | March 2016 |
| School Actions | School Policy – Each school adopts the system policy and develops its own procedures aligned to the principles and practices outlined in the system policy. |
| Associated Docs | Anti-Bullying Policy 2012 Pastoral Care and Welfare Policy 2003 Child Protection Policy 2010 Workplace Internet Email and Network Policy 2010 Privacy Policy 2002 SEVDEV Policy 2012 |

NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Inspired by the message and example of Jesus Christ, Catholic schools live out a distinctive educational vision. Supported by the Catholic community of which they are a vital part, they invite students and their families into a faith-filled educational experience.

As a key ministry of parishes and the diocese, Catholic schools encourage and support parents in their responsibility for the faith formation of their children. This formation is supported by prayer and opportunities to participate in the life, mission and liturgy of the broader Catholic community.

Our schools commit to:

- nurturing each individual's growth in faith and unique potential
- offering outstanding educational experiences founded on Catholic values
- fostering partnership between parents and staff in the education of their children
- creating communities of respect for each other, the wider society and the earth
- encouraging active engagement in social justice issues, the service of others and the promotion of peace.

Catholic schools are part of a long tradition of Catholic education provided by religious and lay teachers in Australia and this diocese for over 180 years. They fulfil parents' rights to choose the schooling for their children which reflects their own values, beliefs and hopes.

Complaints and Grievances Resolution Policy 2013

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CONTENTS

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 1. Rationale | 4 |
| 2. General Principles | 4 |
| 3. Aims..... | 5 |
| 4. Implementation..... | 5 |
| 5. Budget | 7 |
| 6. Evaluation..... | 8 |
| 7. Support Documents..... | 8 |
| 8. Glossary | 9 |

1. RATIONALE

The Complaints and Grievances Resolution Policy has been developed to provide a consistent approach for all Diocesan schools. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction or concern with a school or the Catholic Schools Office regarding policy, procedures and/or actions and decisions made.

The schools of the Maitland-Newcastle Diocese are committed to living the values of the Gospel. In the spirit of justice, peace, love and reconciliation, we aim to:

- Develop a positive and collaborative partnership between home and school.
- Welcome and value diversity of opinion.
- Understand the needs of students and families.
- Have clear and open communication within the community.
- Appropriately respond to and resolve issues that arise in schools in the best interests of all.

“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

2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 Matters concerning Child Protection and other areas covered by specific legislation will be referred immediately to the relevant external agency.
- 2.2 This policy operates in conjunction with other Diocesan 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.
- 2.3 Parents/Carers have the right to raise a complaint and grievance and have it responded to promptly, fairly, without fear of repercussions and according to principles of procedural fairness. This complaint and/or grievance may be formal or informal in nature. These principles of procedural fairness will be followed in all aspects of the complaint handling process including an opportunity for parents/carers to state their case, informing the parties of the nature of the case, handling the complaint confidentially, addressing complaints in a timely fashion, remaining objective, advising parties of the outcome and informing parties of the avenues of appeal.
- 2.4 Parents/Carers have the right to confidentiality in regard to a concern that is raised at the school. On occasions, others may need to be informed; this will be explained to the parent /carer raising the concern.
- 2.5 Parents / Carers have a responsibility to raise their concerns with the school at the earliest possible time

- 2.6 The overriding principle of all our interaction is that we strive to restore relationships; holding parties accountable with the aim to repair any harm they may have been done

3. AIMS

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

4. IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 School Responsibilities

- 4.1.1 Schools are required to develop their own Complaints and Grievances procedures from the CSO policy.
- 4.1.2 Principals are responsible for the implementation of the school Complaints and Grievances Policy
- 4.1.3 Staff and members of the school community need to be familiar with the school's Complaints and Grievances Policy and established processes for managing complaints. This should include clear information as to which persons manage particular complaints and their roles in the process.
- 4.1.4 A parent information brochure is to be made available in the school foyer and published on the school website
- 4.2 Confidentiality will be respected and maintained by all parties. (Refer 2.4)
- 4.3. 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 or is perceived to arise, an independent person may be involved.
- 4.4 Every endeavour will be made to address concerns within a reasonable timeframe.
- 4.5 The Principal, or their delegate, has the authority to manage concerns and complaints at school.
- 4.6 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.
- 4.7 Principals 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.

- 4.8 Accurate and appropriate documentation will be kept with due regard to the confidentiality of the concerned parties. (See Support Document No.1 Record of Complaint)
- 4.9 The outcome of a complaint or grievance will be communicated to the parent/carer with further follow up if required.
- 4.10 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.
- 4.11 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.

4.2 CSO Responsibilities

- 4.2.1 The Catholic Schools Office will have in place a complaints and grievances policy and monitor procedures and the implementation of the policy and associated support documents in all diocesan schools.
- 4.2.2 Complaints and grievances that are not resolved at a school level may be referred to the Parent Liaison and Resources Officer at the CSO or the Executive Assistant to the Director of Schools.
- 4.2.3 The Parent Liaison Officer where necessary will refer complaints and grievances to the relevant Assistant Director for resolution.
- 4.2.4 Where the complaint or grievance remains unresolved by the Assistant Director the Parent/Carer or the Assistant Director may refer the matter to the Director of Schools for review.

4.13 Process

The Key Steps followed in this process are dependent upon whether the complaint and/or grievance emanates from a Primary setting of s Secondary setting.

| PRIMARY SCHOOLS | SECONDARY SCHOOLS |
|--|--|
| 1. 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 the principal and/or their delegate. Should this not be possible, the Principal is the appropriate person to address your concern. | 1. Complaints and Grievances should be raised at the earliest possible time. Subject based complaints and grievances should be raised with the student's subject class teacher. Welfare based complaints and grievances should be raised with the appropriate Student Coordinator. Should this not be possible the parent/carer should direct the complaint and grievance to the principal who may co-opt the support of the appropriate Assistant Principal |
| 2. Where the class based complaint and grievance is not resolved by the teacher this should also be directed to the Principal and/or delegate | 2. Where the curriculum or welfare based complaint and grievance is not resolved by the appropriate co-ordinator this should be directed to the Principal who may co-opt the support of the appropriate Assistant Principal. |

PRIMARY SCHOOLS

SECONDARY SCHOOLS

3. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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.

4. 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.

5. 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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4.14 Contact

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE

841 Hunter St Newcastle West NSW 2302
 Phone: 49791200
info@mn.catholic.edu.au
mn.catholic.edu.au

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE

PARENT LIAISON AND RESOURCES OFFICER
 Phone: 49791303
 Mb: 0409 791 303

ZIMMERMAN SERVICES

50 Crebert Street Mayfield
 Phone: 49791390
dcppcu@mn.catholic.org.au

EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT TO THE DIRECTOR OF SCHOOLS

841 Hunter St Newcastle West NSW 2302
 Phone : 49791207
director@mn.catholic.edu.au

5. BUDGET

- 5.1 Each year an appropriate school budget is to be allocated for complaints management reflecting this policy and the priorities of the school system strategic plan.

- 5.2 Diocesan and local budgets should support the appropriate training and professional development of staff.

6. EVALUATION

6.1 This policy will be evaluated after three (3) years of its implementation or as the need arises. The process will involve relevant members of the Catholic Schools Office and representatives from diocesan schools and the parent community.

7. SUPPORT DOCUMENTS

To assist schools in handling a complaint or grievance, the following support documents are available.

1. Parent Information Brochure/ Agreed Process Primary
2. Parent Information Brochure/ Agreed Process Secondary
3. Complaints And Grievances Record Proforma
4. Complaints And Grievances Pathway Primary
5. Complaints and Grievances Pathway Secondary

8. GLOSSARY

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| Appeal | An impartial, determinative process available to all parties to a complaint wherein an independent person reviews both the way in which the complaint management process has been conducted and the integrity of its outcome(s). |
| Complaint | An expression of dissatisfaction or concern with a school or the Catholic Schools Office regarding policy, procedures and/or actions and decisions made. |
| Formal complaint | A grievance that requires investigation with a written response |
| Informal complaint | A comment, or concern or that may or may not require a response, to ensure that a member of staff is aware of the issue and that it is brought to the attention of the principal. |
| Complaints management | An established system of responding to and handling complaints and suggestions regarding matters causing dissatisfaction or concern. |
| Confidentiality | Protection given to the non-disclosure of things said and done; an ethical duty held by persons to ensure that matters are held to be private and in confidence between themselves and others. |
| Due diligence | The care taken by a reasonable person to ensure that others do not suffer unnecessary harm or disadvantage; the obligation bestowed upon a person to act responsibly, efficiently and prudently in the carrying out of his or her duties. |
| Duty of care | A legal requirement that a person exercise a reasonable standard of care toward others in order to protect them from unnecessary risk of harm; professional duty of care exists at a level higher than that placed upon a member of the general public. |
| Grievance | A real or imaginary wrong causing resentment and regarded as grounds for complaint a feeling of resentment or injustice at having been unfairly treated |
| Impartial | Responding to all persons equally, free of bias and with no preconceived opinion; taking no personal advantage from espousing either side of a disagreement or conflict. |
| Inclusivity | Respectful, supportive and equitable school communities. All embracing. |
| Privacy | The extent to which a person can determine which personal information is to be shared with whom and for what purpose; a legally bestowed principle that ensures that certain information remains protected from disclosure. |
| Procedural fairness | An obligation placed upon organisations and persons making decisions affecting the rights and welfare of others to engage in decision-making with due diligence, transparency and without bias. Procedural fairness affords certain rights to persons including the right to know of matters alleged, the right to respond and the right to appeal decisions made. |
| Restorative Practice | The overriding principle of all our interaction is that we strive to restore relationships: holding parties accountable with the aim to repair any harm that may have been done. |