

St. Justin's Catholic Primary School Oran Park



Complaints Handling Policy & Procedures

2014

COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE AT ST. JUSTIN'S ORAN PARK

Rationale

St. Justin's Oran Park is committed to providing a safe and supportive work and learning environment for all students, employees and volunteers. We acknowledge that students, employees and parents can sometimes feel aggrieved about something that is happening at the school, which appears to be discriminatory, constitute harassment or cause concern.

An employee, student, parent or community member may have a complaint about a decision, behaviour, act or omission (whether by the Principal, members of the leadership team or other staff / students) that they feel is discriminatory or unreasonable.

In most cases the issue can be resolved by raising the complaint directly with the staff member involved in the issue. However, this is not always possible and sometimes several attempts at local face to face resolution may have been attempted with little success.

Examples of complaints covered by this procedure include:

- issues related to student discipline procedures
- issues related to learning and teaching
- damage/loss of al property
- bullying and harassment

Other relevant legislation, guidelines, policies and procedures:

Note should be taken that other Diocesan policies may be pertinent to the issue, including:

- Occupational Health and Safety Legislation
- Child Protection issues
 - The Care and Protection of our Children and Young People*
 - Professional Conduct and Child Protection*
- *Enrolment Policy and Procedures*
- *Suspension and Exclusion Policy*
- *Staff Relations Policy*

Making a complaint or raising an issue

It is recognised that complaints or issues may be received in a variety of ways: letter, in person, phone, email or fax.

Where possible the complaint or issue should be raised directly with the staff member concerned with the issue. Alternatively responsibilities for bus and behaviour matters are delegated to a member of the School Leadership Team. The Leadership Team comprises the school executive – Principal, Assistant Principal, Coordinators and Religious Education Coordinator. The attached flowchart acts as a guide for raising the issue.

Some complaints, because of the seriousness of their nature, should be referred immediately to the Principal – e.g. child protection issues or behaviours which place others at risk of serious harm.

Parents are ill advised to approach the children of other families or their parents with a school complaint. This is a sensitive area and in order to protect all parties it is advisable to work through the relevant teacher or member of the School Leadership Team. Attention is drawn to the Crimes (School Protection) Act 2003 which makes it an offence to assault, stalk, harass or intimidate any school student or member of staff or even enter school premises with the intention to commit such an offence.

Before making a formal complaint

There should always be an attempt to raise the problem or concern with the staff member involved in the issue. If this process of raising the concern, obtaining the facts, and obtaining a resolution is not producing a satisfactory outcome, the following procedure may be used.

What to do if you have a complaint

Approach the person involved

In many situations, the most appropriate and fair thing to do is to tell the staff member who is the cause of the complaint how you feel. Telling the person will give them a chance to stop or change what they are doing or explain their decisions and why.

Contact the school

Where you feel you cannot approach the staff member directly or you are not happy with their response or reaction, then you can explain the problem to the appropriate staff member at the school. An inquiry at the school reception may be the first point of contact for people with complaints. You will be advised as to the staff member designated to deal with the nature of the complaint. The person may be a Coordinator or the Assistant Principal or Principal.

Contact the Catholic Education Office – Head of School Services

Where you feel you cannot approach the staff member directly or you are not happy with their response or reaction, and you have a good reason not to raise the issue with either the school designated person or the school Principal, then you can contact the Catholic Education Office (CEO) and explain the problem and the issues. The CEO officer can advise you about your options.

Please note that if the CEO officer forms the view that your complaint is more appropriately dealt with at school level, then you will be advised of that and the school will be advised as well. Where students and parents make complaints these will automatically be referred back to the school unless the complaint is against a decision of or about the Principal and has previously been raised with the Principal without resolution.

Key elements of procedural fairness

Impartiality

If you make a complaint, it will be investigated in a fair and impartial manner. No judgements or assumptions will be made, and no action will be taken until the investigation is complete. If a complaint is made against you, your rights will be protected and you will be given an opportunity to tell your side of the story

Confidentiality

You can feel secure that if you do make a complaint under this procedure it will remain confidential. The only people who have access to the information about the complaint will be the person making the complaint, the person to whom the complaint is made, the person investigating and Catholic Education staff who may be involved. The person about whom the complaint is made also has a right to be informed.

No victimisation

You can also rest assured that if you make a complaint you will not suffer in any way as a consequence. The principal of the school will ensure that a person who makes a complaint is not victimised in any way.

Vexatious or malicious complaints

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

Timeliness

Each complaint will be finalised within a short a period of time as possible. Complainants will be advised if for any reason the complaint cannot be dealt with within a reasonable period of time.

What happens next?

Once you have made a complaint to the school or CEO officer, that person will consider who is best to deal with the complaint. The designated person will then interview you. The designated person will take a record of the complaint.

The designated person will then speak to the person about whom the complaint is made to hear their side of the story. Any witnesses will also be interviewed. Procedures of natural justice will be followed. The importance of confidentiality will be stressed to all parties.

Within reasonable time the designated person will respond to the complainant and inform them of the outcome.

Review

If the complaint remains unresolved it will be reviewed by either the Principal, or Head of School Services or Head of Human Resource Services. They will make a final decision as to the outcome of the complaint.

Appeals

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

Appeals at school level

- To the Principal if the Principal has not been involved in examining the complaint
- To the Head of School Services if the Principal has been involved

Appeals at Catholic Education Office level

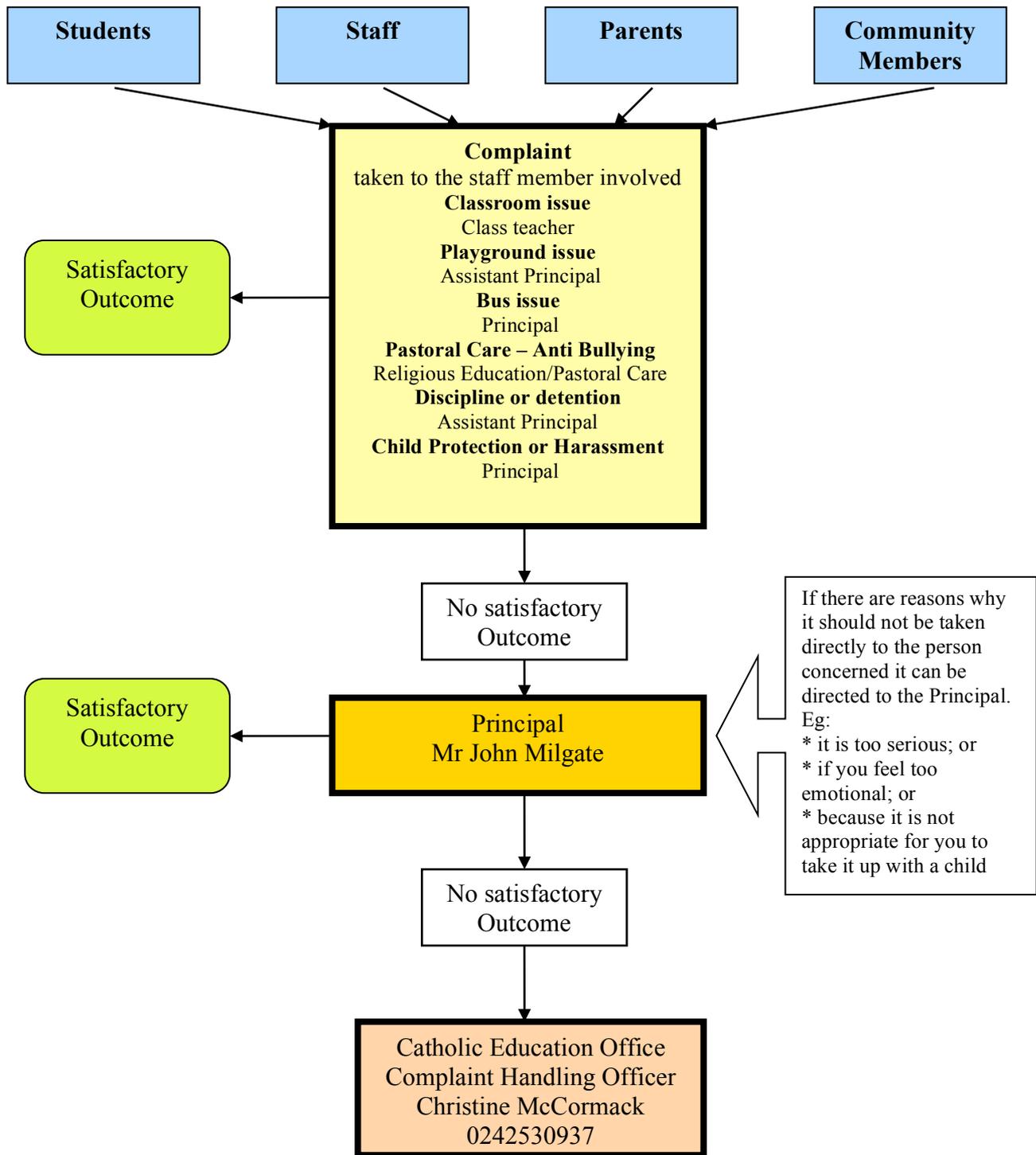
- To the Head of Human Resource Services or Director as appropriate

To an external agency

If you are unhappy with the way the complaint has been dealt with by the school or the Catholic Education Office you may wish to take your complaint to an external agency at any point if you are unhappy with the progress in dealing with the complaint. The agencies that would most likely have jurisdiction are:

- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
- NSW Anti Discrimination Board

St Justin's Oran Park Process for Resolution of a Complaint or Issue



School Leadership Team comprises: Principal, Assistant Principal, Religious Education Coordinator, Coordinators