St John’s Primary School
Lambton

COMPLAINT MANAGEMENT

JULY 2015

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St John’s Vision:

*In the tradition of Mercy,*

*Inspiring minds,*

*Growing in Christ.*
**PURPOSE**

This policy details the obligations of all staff at St John’s Lambton in line with the legislation, diocesan policies and established guidelines in the area of Complaint Resolution.

**RATIONALE**

St John’s school has both a desire and a responsibility to ensure that high standards of conduct are maintained by staff and students at all times, and that complaints are managed and resolved fairly, efficiently, promptly and in accordance with relative legislation.

**AIMS**

- To provide a harmonious, positive and productive school environment.
- To resolve complaints fairly, efficiently, promptly and in accordance with relative legislation.

**IMPLEMENTATION**

- Our school seeks to provide a positive, harmonious and productive environment.
- It is the Principal’s responsibility to provide a healthy and positive school environment that is free from discrimination and harassment. In doing so, the Principal must ensure that all staff are aware of their rights and responsibilities.
- 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. All cases of serious misconduct – sexual offences, criminal charges, or other serious incidents – must instead be referred to the CSO.
- It is incumbent upon the Principal to act where unacceptable conduct is observed or brought to his or her attention.
A complainant may at any stage choose to take their complaint directly to an external agency such as the Equal Opportunity Commission, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission or the Ombudsman.

It is important that all complaints, ensuing procedures and outcomes are fully documented.

The Principal may choose to respond to a complaint through an informal process in cases 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.

Formal processes will be used when informal processes haven’t been successful, a complainant seeks a formal process, or the principal believes the complaint warrants formal investigation.

Parties dissatisfied with the process can appeal to the previously mentioned external agencies.

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

COMPLAINT RESOLUTION PROCESS

Like all schools, St John’s has an agreed process for positively resolving concerns in our community.

Step 1

Complaints and Grievances should be raised at the earliest possible time. Classroom 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.

Step 2

Where the classroom based complaint and grievance is not resolved by the teacher this should also be directed to the Principal and/or delegate.

Step 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 Officer. The Parent Liaison and Resource Officer will refer the matter to the relevant Assistant Director for resolution.

Step 4

Where a 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 o
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.

**Step 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.

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

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<tr>
<th>Catholic Schools Office</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>841 Hunter St Newcastle West NSW 2302</td>
<td>Parent Liaison And Resources Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phone: 49791200</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:info@mn.catholic.edu.au">info@mn.catholic.edu.au</a></td>
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<td>mn.catholic.edu.au</td>
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<tr>
<th>Zimmerman Services</th>
<th>Executive Assistant To The Director Of Schools</th>
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<tr>
<td>50 Crebert Street Mayfield</td>
<td>841 Hunter St Newcastle West NSW 2302</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phone: 49791390</td>
<td>Phone: 49791207</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:dcpczcu@mn.catholic.org.au">dcpczcu@mn.catholic.org.au</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:director@mn.catholic.edu.au">director@mn.catholic.edu.au</a></td>
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**BUDGET**

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

**EVALUATION**

This policy will be reviewed when required.
COMPLAINTS & GRIEVANCES RESOLUTION PATHWAY

The key stages followed in the process are dependent upon whether the complaint or grievance amends itself at the initial meeting.

1. Is the complaint/grievance classroom based?
   - Cowboy
   - Peer
   - Teacher
   - Principal

2. Parent/Guardian/Community Agrees to resolution

3. Principal

4. Assistant Principal

5. Chair of School

6. Principal

IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER
- Problems are best resolved using a positive attitude. Anger is usually counterproductive; therefore, resolution on the complaint and grievances.
- Schools need time to investigate complaints and grievances. A quick fix is a non-facile procedure or desirable.
- Schools are complex environments, not all complaints and grievances can be resolved, opinions vary widely.
- With students, there are often as many perspectives as there are children.
- Schools are dedicated to act in the best interests of all.
- Confidentiality and privacy are respected. There will be times when actions taken in resolution of the complaints and grievances are not to be disclosed.
- In the interests of Procedures' fairness and Restorative Justice, the procedure is to discuss complaints and grievances outside of the process.
- Social media is not an appropriate forum to discuss complaints and grievances.

Contact
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE
41 Kanty Street, Newcastle West 2302
P.O. BOX 114 Newcaslte NSW 2300
Phone: 02 4927 1200
Fax: 02 4927 1295
Email: info@catholic.org.au
Visit us online: www.cm.catholic.edu.au

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE
PARLIAMENT AND RESOURCES OFFICE
Phone: 02 4927 1203
Mobile: 0499 791 303
ARMS AND SERVICES - CHILD PROTECTION UNIT
82 Peel Street, Newcastle NSW 2300
Phone: 02 4927 1295
Email: dcppecialist@catholic.org.au

INTRODUCTION

Diocesan schools are committed to providing a positive, safe environment for all staff and students. There are occasions, however, when members of our schools and wider communities can sometimes be concerned about something that is happening at a school that appears to be unsatisfactory or unreasonable.

This brochure explains what to do when discussions about an issuer or series of issues does not provide resolution.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction or concern with a school or the Catholic Schools office regarding policy, procedure and/or actions and decisions made.

A grievance is a real or imaginary wrong causing resentment and regarded as grounds for a complaint, a feeling of resentment or injustice at having been unfairly treated.

Complaints and grievances are addressed in a timely and confidential manner at the appropriate management level, in order to prevent minor problems from becoming serious. The dignity of each person involved is respected in the process, with all parties maintaining confidentiality.

A Complaints & Grievances policy has been developed to provide a consistent approach for all Diocesan schools.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Complaints will be dealt with responsibly and confidentially.

PROCEDURAL FAIRNESS

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

- Giving you the opportunity to make your case
- Offering reasonable assistance to enable the complaint to be made
- Informing the parties of the nature of the complaint investigation process and outcomes
- Handling the complaint process confidentially
- Advising complainants as quickly as possible and advising all parties of the outcome of the investigation
- Assessing the facts and circumstances of the situation objectively and determining the complaint fairly
- Advising parties of the outcome of the investigation
- Informing parties of the avenues of appeal

INCLUSIVITY

Our schools strive to be inclusive. This means schools are respectful, supportive and equitable environments.

DUE DILIGENCE

Our schools have a duty of care to all students and staff. Therefore prudent action must be taken in all cases.

RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

The overriding principle of all our interactions is that we strive to maintain relationships, hold parties accountable with the aim to repair any harm that may have been done.
Is the complaint/grievance classroom based?

Yes

Teacher

No

Principal

Assistant Principal/Executive may co-opt the support of this delegate and will be advised of the resolution process

Parent Resource Liaison Officer or the Executive Assistant to the Director of Schools

Not resolved

Not resolved

Assistant Director

Parent Resource Liaison Officer or the Executive Assistant to the Director of Schools

Not resolved

Not resolved

Assistant Director

Not resolved

Not resolved

Director of Schools

Not resolved

Not resolved

Director of Schools