

# St. Mary's Primary School

## Grievance Policy



### Rationale

St Mary's Primary School aims to promote a community, family environment that supports the learning and development of students. It is important that every member of the community, including staff, parents and students, are contributors to the building of the school community.

Whilst the positive achievements in the school are strongly appreciated, there are times when misunderstandings or disagreements can hinder the wellbeing of individuals or groups within the school community.

Positive, clear and effective processes for resolving grievances between the school and community members can assist in building strong relationships, dispelling anxiety and ultimately provide students with a settled and happy learning environment. The following procedures relate to any concerns that parents may have – whether these are serious grievance issues, or relatively minor concerns.

### Complaints Resolution: Guiding Principles

In receiving and responding to complaints, the following guiding principles will direct and shape the school's actions:

- We will work with the complainant with respect, courtesy and openness and with a genuine desire to achieve fair and reasonable decisions.
- We will listen to and respect the views of each person.
- Give opportunity for parents to clarify any concerns regarding their child, or the school.
- The complaint will be resolved as quickly as possible.
- Confidentiality, impartiality and the principles of natural justice will form the basis of the complaints resolution process.
- Personal information disclosed will be treated as confidential.
- Any person(s) facing the complaint will be provided with detailed information about the substance of the complaint and will have the opportunity to respond.
- Our resolution process will be grounded in sound and fair procedures for information sharing, investigation, conciliation and decision making.
- If a satisfactory outcome cannot be achieved, the school will provide the complainant with options for having the decision reviewed or mediated via an external authority.
- The communal needs of the school community will in most instances exceed the needs of any individual.

### Expectations of People Making a Complaint

In making a complaint the school requests and expects that the complainant will:

- Raise the concern or complaint as soon as possible after the issue has arisen
- Communicate and respond in ways that are constructive, fair and respectful
- Provide complete and factual information about the concern or complaint

- Observe confidentiality and a respect for sensitive issues
- Act in good faith to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
- Have realistic and reasonable expectations about possible outcomes/remedies.

If as a complainant you are a parent and your concern/complaint relates to your child's treatment by another student or students while at school, the school expects that you will refer your complaint directly to the school, via your child's class teacher, deputy principal or principal. Under no circumstances should you approach another student while in the care of the school to discuss the issue or chastise him or her. Direct contact with parents to resolve the matter is also discouraged if the complaint pertains to issues or incidents that have arisen at the school.

### **Informal and Formal Resolution Processes**

In accordance with our Vision and Mission, the school accepts that each person has a right to be heard and respected. All submissions are accepted in good faith, and all parties are expected to be open and reasonable, with regard to all dimensions of the issues in question.

At St Mary's Primary School we attempt to communicate and consult with parents in all matters. This happens through notes, meetings, Newsletters and the school website. School community members have an obligation to read notices and newsletters, to attend briefings and to seek clarification when required.

There may, however, still be times when members of the community have a complaint or need clarification about the things that are happening in the school or with their child.

### **In these cases, the following processes should be used in order to resolve grievances:**

1. We will try to establish the facts as clearly as possible, being wary of third hand information or gossip or of simple acceptance of the interpretations of a one-sided point of view.
2. If the matter involves your child or an issue of everyday class operation, make an appointment to see the classroom teacher, detailing the reasons for the appointment. The teacher will attempt to resolve the issue and will notify the principal of the matter.
3. If you still feel that the matter is unresolved, you are welcome to make an appointment with the principal to discuss the matter further. Follow up will include discussions between the principal, teacher and parents, and a strategy for further action will be planned.
4. If the grievance or concern is about broader school issues, school staff or issues that are difficult to discuss with classroom teachers, parents are invited to make an appointment to speak with the principal.
5. If issues cannot be resolved in the above ways, parents can speak with the Parish Priest, or with the Western Region Principal Consultant from the Catholic Education office at Werribee.
6. Once a grievance or matter of concern is raised, the following protocols are worked through until there is a resolution that is satisfactory.

- In all cases, confidentiality is respected. Only the people that need to know about the issue, will be involved. The people that need to be informed will be discussed at the meeting.
- Community members may be accompanied by another person, in a support role, at appointments to resolve grievances.
- All formal discussions and processes involving grievances will be documented.
- Every attempt will be made to address an issue and where resolution is possible it will be reached in a timely manner.
- If applicable, enable the personal against whom the complaint has been made to respond, and to be accompanied to any meeting by another person of his/her choice as a support person.
- Organise a process of mediation if a complaint cannot be satisfactorily resolved by the school.
- All discussions should be conducted in a calm and reasonable manner with respect to the dignity of all concerned. Aggressive or threatening behaviour has no place in the process and will not be accepted. If a meeting degenerates to unacceptable hostility it will be terminated and may be rescheduled if the principal believes that it would be productive to do so. Alternatively a mediation process can be led by an external facilitator.
- When a complaint is anonymous - The principal will exercise his/her judgement as to whether or not follow up action is taken with regard to anonymous complaints.
- Any complaints that relate to matters of child protection are automatically directed to the processes outlined in Child Protection protocol.

### **Avenues of Appeal**

If a complaint remains unresolved or if the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcomes, the complainant has the right to seek other avenues of appeal through authorities such as the Catholic Education, Western Region or the Parish Priest.

Also Refer to the Parent Code of Conduct.

### **Monitoring and Review**

This policy will be reviewed as required, but at least every four years.

**Created: 2019**

**Review: 2023**