



## 5.1.4 COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE

### Vision

*St Mary of the Cross school is  
a vibrant, contemporary, Catholic learning community  
that values  
peace, justice, respect and excellence*

### Purpose of this Procedure

St Mary of the Cross Catholic Primary School, is committed to providing a safe environment for all members of our community.

However, at times individuals may have a complaint about decisions, behaviours, actions or omissions.

The purpose of this document is to provide a procedure by which members of the community can have such complaints addressed in an appropriate and timely manner.

### Key Elements of the Complaints Handling Procedure

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|-------------------------|--|
| <b>Impartiality</b>     | If someone makes a complaint, it will be investigated in an impartial manner. No judgments or assumptions will be made, and no action will be taken until the investigation is complete.   |
| <b>Fair Hearing</b>     | If a complaint is made against you, your right to a fair hearing will be protected.<br>All parties to the complaint will have an opportunity to be heard.  |
| <b>Confidentiality</b>  | If someone makes a complaint, it will remain confidential. The only people who will have access to information about the complaint will be the persons directly involved.  |
| <b>No Victimization</b> | If someone makes a complaint they will not suffer in any way as a consequence. St Mary of the Cross Catholic Primary School authorities will ensure that a person who makes a complaint, or their family, will not be victimized in any way. |
| <b>Timeliness</b>       | Each complaint will be dealt with promptly and will be finalised within as short a period of time as possible.   |

## What to do if you have a complaint

### Approach the person

- In many situations, the most appropriate thing to do is to first tell the person who is the cause of the complaint how you feel. If the complaint is about their behaviour, tell them that it is offensive/hurtful/not acceptable.
- Telling the person will give them a chance to stop or change what they are doing.
- This is the preferred option for all minor complaints.
- Adults must not, **under any circumstances**, approach children in the school – Adults must refer all matters to St Mary of the Cross Catholic Primary School authorities for a course of action in these cases.
- Parents who approach other parents regarding a complaint should do so away from the school buildings or away from within earshot of children.

### Go to one of our Complaints Officers

(Refer to the list below)

- If it is felt that you can't approach the person directly, then explain the problem to one of our Complaints Officers. These people have been trained to handle these situations.
- The Complaints Officer will consider whether there are any reasons why he/she should not proceed with the complaint. (eg. the person you complained about may be a personal friend), it will, with your consent, be referred to another appropriate person.
- The Complaints Officer will advise you of your options and the procedure for lodging a formal complaint.
- Nothing more will be done about your complaint without your agreement

### If an Official Complaint is lodged:

- The Complaints Officer will conduct an interview with you. Initially during this interview a number of things will be explained to you, such as, the investigation procedure, possible outcomes and the appeals procedure.
- The Complaints Officer will then take a written record of the complaint. You will be asked to sign the complaint report to ensure that it is an accurate record of the complaint.
- The complaints Officer will then talk to the person about whom the complaint has been made to discuss the issue.
- The importance of confidentiality will be stressed to all parties and they will be cautioned of the consequences if there is a breach of confidentiality (eg. possible defamation action, initiation of a complaint for harassment)

The Complaints Officer will maintain communication with all parties to the complaint.

- The Complaints Officer will endeavour to assist in the resolution of the complaint between the parties and negotiate an appropriate outcome.

## Possible Outcomes

If the complaint is proven, the following are possible outcomes:

- A verbal apology may be issued
- A written apology may be issued
- An official warning may be issued
- Counseling may be provided
- Disciplinary action may be instigated

If the complaint is unproven, (not enough evidence), possible outcomes are:

- Relevant training for staff and/or monitoring of behaviour of employees may be instigated
- Apology to accused staff member, student, parent may be issued
- Counseling may be instigated

If the complaint is proven not to have happened at all, the following are possible outcomes:

- A verbal apology may be issued
- Counseling for the person who made the complaint may be instigated
- A written apology may be issued
- An official warning may be issued
- Disciplinary action may be instigated

The Complaints Officer will ensure that the negotiated outcome is implemented.

## Review and Appeals Process

### Review

If the complaint remains unresolved it will be reviewed by another Complaints Officer and the Parish Priest who will make a final decision as to the outcome of the complaint.

### Appeals

- An Appeal can be made against an outcome of a complaint.
- An Appeal may be made to the Catholic Education Office, Western Area Office, Werribee

The Appeals Officer will examine the way the complaint has been handled and examine the outcome. If he/she believes it was handled properly and that the outcome was appropriate he/she will take no further action. All official documentation will be made available to the Appeals Officer. If the Appeals Officer thinks that the complaint was not handled properly, or that the outcome was inappropriate, he/she will organise for the complaint to be reviewed.

## St Mary of the Cross Catholic Primary School Complaint Officers

The following persons shall act as Complaints Officers for St Mary of the Cross Catholic Primary School:

Principal:	Leon Colla
LCEC Wellbeing Co-ordinator:	Marianne Massarany
Deputy Principal:	Brendan Shanahan
Parish Priest:	Fr Ian Ranson

## Appeals Officers

Catholic Education Office, Western Area Office, 47 Synnot Street, Werribee  
Zone Principal Consultant: Ms Kerin Thornloe  
Telephone: 9731 3900