

## COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

The policies of the school are the tools by which the school is helped in implementing its Mission and Vision.

In order to help achieve the Mission of Mary Immaculate, the integration of 6 components of the school's operating is necessary. These are:

- The school and system policies which impact upon student welfare
- The creation and maintenance of a positive school climate which enhances self esteem
- The acceptance of rights, responsibilities of students, teachers and parents
- The curriculum
- A Management of Student Behaviour Policy
- The teaching and authority of the Catholic Church exercised by the Parish Priest

### ***The Purpose of a Complaints Procedure***

In our Catholic Schools we are committed by providing a safe and supportive work and learning environment for all employees and students. Even with the best efforts and intentions we acknowledge that employees, students and parents can sometimes feel aggrieved about something that is happening at the school which appears to be discriminatory, constitute harassment or cause concern.

Examples of complaints covered by this procedure include:

- Issues related to student discipline procedures
- Issues related to learning and teaching
- Damage / loss of personal property
- Bullying and harassment

In conjunction with this complaints' policy, note should be taken of relevant legislation, guidelines, policies and procedures pertinent to the issue including for instance:

- Occupational Health and Safety issues
- Child Protections issues, eg., The Care and Protection of Our Children and Young People, Professional Conduct and Child Protection.
- Enrolment Policy and Procedure
- Suspension / Exclusion Policy
- Management of Student Behaviour
- Staff Relations' Policy

### ***The Complaints Handling Policy***

The Policy has a number of components

#### **(a) When to make a complaint**

A complaint could be made when ever an aggrieved person has attempted to discuss an issue with the person directly concerned, with the view of *discussing the issues and seeking a resolution and those attempts have failed.* The discussion between a parent and teacher could take the form of an interview and in which case a record of interview would always be kept.

Parents are advised not to directly approach the children of other families with a school-related complaint.

**(a) How to make a complaint and key elements of this complaint handling procedure**

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to offer a process by which employees / students / parents / community members can have complaints addressed. For example, if you feel that you are being harassed or discriminated against, this complaints handling procedure is available to you so your concerns can be dealt with in an appropriate manner.

If in the process of raising the concern, obtaining the facts and obtaining resolution is not producing a satisfactory outcome, the following procedure can be used.

This procedure can be used by

- All employees
- Students within the school
- Parents of students at the school
- Members of the wider community

**Key elements of our complaints handling procedure**

Key elements include:

- The need for impartiality
- The need for confidentiality involving only the persons dealing with the complaint, the person who made the complaint and the person being complained about
- The absence of victimisation: - A person and immediate family must be able to make a complaint without being victimised in any way
- Vexatious or malicious complaints: - Complaints must be made in good faith and with good will with the view of resolution and not retribution.
- The need for the complaint to be handled within as short a period of time as possible.

**Who to make the complaint to**

- The person concerned, giving them the chance to stop or change what they are doing but where you can not approach the person directly or if you are not happy with their response or reaction then: -
- Contact the school and the school secretary will advise who are the designated persons to deal with the complaint. The designated person will advise you about what your options are and what will happen if you make a formal complaint.
- Contact the Catholic Education Office – Head of Cluster Services. In the event of not being able to approach the relevant person directly at the school or if you have good reason not to raise the issue, then Head of Cluster Services will assist.

### **Finding the solution**

A designated person will listen to both sides of the story, interview relevant parties, and attempt to find a resolution for the issue. The resolution may result in:

- An agreement between the parties
- A verbal apology
- A written apology

A resolution may involve retraining, counselling and in some cases disciplinary action.

### **Appeals**

There are three avenues of appeal if you feel the complaints procedure has not been followed properly or that the outcome is unacceptable to you. (see CEO Policy)

### **Appendix**

1. Complaint Form
2. School Based Process for Resolution of Complaint
3. Process for Resolution of Complaint – Involving Catholic Education Office and / or External Agency
4. Complaint Action Form