



# Catholic Schools Office

## *Diocese of Armidale*

# A GUIDE TO MAKING A COMPLAINT

## INTRODUCTION

Our schools are committed to providing a harmonious and safe environment for all students, parents and staff. We understand that parents/ caregivers can sometimes feel concerned about something that is taking place at the school. It is important that these concerns are raised and responded to in a timely and respectful way. We value complaints and are committed to ensuring that every complaint is handled fairly, effectively and efficiently. This brochure summarises our approach to handling complaints. For more detailed information see our Complaints Handling Policy.

## WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction. Complaints may be reported verbally or set out in an email or letter. If the matter is serious, a written complaint is best.

## HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT?

If you have a concern that you wish to raise, you should first talk to the person with whom you have the issue.

If you feel that you cannot approach the person directly, you are not happy with their response, or the complaint is very serious, you should make an appointment to meet with the principal.

Any complaint received by a school that relates to the principal will be referred to the relevant School Performance Leader at the Catholic Schools Office Armidale.

## WHAT KIND OF COMPLAINTS ARE NOT DEALT WITH UNDER THE COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY?

- Child protection issues
- Employment relations
- Workplace bullying
- Harassment

The principal or Catholic Schools Office can advise you about specific procedures for making complaints of these types.

## OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

We will:

- deal with your complaint professionally, efficiently and fairly
- keep you informed of our progress
- give you reasons for our decisions
- treat you with courtesy and respect



## YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

To help us do the best job we can, we ask that you:

- clearly identify the matters you are complaining about and the outcome you hope for
- the first time you contact us with the complaint, give us all the information you are aware of
- provide us with your name and contact details. You can choose to remain anonymous but if this is your choice we won't be able to contact you about the outcome.
- tell us new facts as soon as you become aware of them, or let us know if you no longer want our help
- cooperate with us
- treat us with courtesy and respect

# HOW WILL WE ADDRESS YOUR COMPLAINT?

*We aim to ensure that more minor or straightforward matters are resolved simply and quickly by discussion between the appropriate people. When we receive your complaint we will:*

- give you the opportunity to explain both your concerns and the outcome that you are looking for
- offer reasonable assistance to help you to make your complaint and for you to understand the procedures we will follow to handle your complaint while maintaining confidentiality as far as possible. If the complaint is about the behaviour of another person, that person has a right to know the basis of the complaint and to respond
- resolve the complaint as quickly as possible and advise you and any person whose behaviour was the subject of the complaint of the outcome and the reasons for it
- assess the facts and circumstances of the situation objectively and resolve the complaint fairly
- ensure there are no adverse consequences for you or your child as result of you making a complaint.

## WHAT MIGHT BE THE OUTCOME?

*If the complaint is upheld, some possible outcomes might be:*

- an agreement on how to resolve the complaint
- a verbal or written apology
- an explanation
- the review of a policy or procedure
- where a staff member is the subject of the complaint, disciplinary action
- where a student is the subject of the complaint, there are a range of options as set out in the school's student support framework, 'Living Well, Learning Well'
- relevant training for staff and students
- monitoring of behaviour of staff/ students /parents
- counselling for the parties involved.

*Privacy considerations may mean that we are unable to give you any specific information about outcomes for any student or staff member who you are complaining about.*

## WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU ARE NOT SATISFIED WITH THE OUTCOME?

Where a complaint has been dealt with at the school but you are not satisfied with the outcome, or the complaint directly concerns the principal, you should contact the Complaints Manager at the Catholic Schools Office (02 6772 7388).

## HOW WILL RECORDS OF THE COMPLAINT BE MAINTAINED?

Records of complaints, interviews and other documentation relating to a complaint will be kept in a restricted access file.

## ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS

You can choose to remain anonymous when you make a complaint, but it may not be possible to act upon your complaint unless you provide your name, address and the name of the school that the complaint relates to.

