



DRAFT

COMPLAINT HANDLING POLICY WORKING POLICY

Introduction

Catherine McAuley Westmead, is committed to developing an educational and organisational culture based on mutual trust and respect. We are committed to providing a safe and supportive work and learning environment for all employees and students.

We acknowledge that employees, students and parents may sometimes have a complaint about a decision, behaviour, act or omission that they feel is unacceptable. Whilst most issues can be resolved through direct discussion with the parties, there may be instances in which this is not possible.

Scope of the policy

This policy provides a process for those employed at Catherine McAuley Westmead, and those receiving services from Catherine McAuley Westmead, to raise a complaint. This includes students, employees, parents, pastors and members of the wider community.

Complaints may relate to any practice or policy of the school related to the treatment of or education of students. In addition to this policy, the Parramatta Catholic education system has some specific complaints processes. The *Child Protection Kit* has specific policies and procedures to address complaints of child abuse and reportable conduct. *Maintaining Right Relations Policy and Procedures* addresses complaints of harassment, bullying and discrimination. Nothing in this document replaces the processes outlined in these documents.

Underlying Principles

Catherine McAuley Westmead, is committed to the following principles to ensure complaints are addressed appropriately.

- Complaints will be investigated in a fair and impartial manner.
- A person facing a complaint is entitled to know detailed information about the substance of the complaint and to have the opportunity to respond.
- Confidentiality will be observed.
- The complaints management process will be conducted in a manner that is respectful of all parties.
- Persons making a complaint will not be victimised.

- It is expected that complaints are made in good faith and are not vexatious or malicious.
- Complaints will be addressed in a timely manner and complainants will be advised if the matter cannot be finalised within one month.

Options available to persons with complaints

1. Deal with the situation personally

In matters in which there is no risk of harm to any person it is preferable to discuss the issue of concern with the relevant person to endeavour to reach an amicable resolution.

2. Contact the School

While a person feels unable to approach the relevant person directly or is not satisfied with her/his response, or where the matter may be more serious in that the complainant believes a person is at risk of harm, a person may wish to contact the school. An inquiry at the school reception may be the first point of contact for people with complaints. The person initially receiving a serious or unresolved complaint will note that a complaint has been made and refer it to the Principal or her/his delegate (Year Coordinator, Subject Coordinator, other members of the Leadership Team).

Intake Process

On being notified that a serious or unresolved complaint has been made, the Principal or her/his delegate will contact the complainant and complete a signed and dated *Complaint Record A* (for an issue of Child Protection), or *Complaint Record B* (for all other issues).

(i) Record the complaint/enquiry by clearly recording the following information:

- contact details of the complainant
- nature of the matter including the details of the complaint (what is the matter, who is involved, when it happened, where it happened, any contextual information) and the resolution that is sought
- any advice provided

(ii) Assess and record how the complaint will be managed:

- The person responsible for dealing with the complaint will assess how the complaint is to be managed. The action section of the *Complaint Record A or B* is completed to clarify how the complaint/enquiry will be managed.

(iii) Maintain accurate and confidential records:

- The completed *Complaint Record* is forwarded to the Principal for filing in the school *Complaints Register* held in the Principal's Office.
- In cases where an inquiry/investigation into the matter proceeds, a separate file is established or documentation is included in the relevant staff or student file.

- The *Complaint Record* identifies any relevant file that has been established or utilised in relation to the matter
- When the enquiry is finalised/closed, this is noted on the *Complaint Record*.

Appeal

A person who is not satisfied that the matter has been resolved appropriately may choose to appeal to the Principal of the school if the Principal has not been involved in investigating or examining the complaint, or is not the person named as the source of the grievance.

Alternatively an appeal may be made to the Area Administrator of the relevant school who may be contacted at the Catholic Education Office (phone 9840 5600).

3. Contact the Catholic Education Office

There may be occasions when a person wishes to take their concern directly to the Catholic Education Office. It may be they are not satisfied with the school's response or have other legitimate reasons for not approaching the school directly, such as a conflict of interest.

The Catholic Education Office has a community liaison line for taking general inquiries or concerns. The CEO officer will take the complaint and refer it to the relevant CEO personnel. In some instances the CEO officer may advise that the complaint is more appropriately dealt with at the school level. In general, the CEO Officer will refer the complaint to the Area Administrator for the school involved.

Addressing complaints

Complaints assessed as relevant to a particular school or CEO procedure will be handled in accordance with the relevant procedure, for example student management procedures, child protection procedures, *Maintaining Right Relations* procedures, employee disciplinary procedures.