



COLLEGE POLICY

Complaints and Procedures

1. Rationale

Catholic schools serve as models for all who seek to create genuine communities. Such communities are always founded upon shared commitment to the common good (Bishops' Mandate, 6).

On occasions there may be a disagreement with a decision and a dispute or complaint may arise within a Catholic school.

The interactions and protocols of Catholic schools emphasise the sacredness of human life and the dignity of the individual.

St Mary MacKillop College is committed to ensuring that dispute and complaints are dealt with fairly, objectively and in a timely manner, and that processes reflect the principles of participation, co-responsibility and subsidiarity.

2. Definitions

Complaint means an expression of dissatisfaction with St Mary MacKillop College's policies, procedures, decisions, omissions, quality of service, staff or student behaviour.

Investigation means a fact-finding process – a search for, gathering and examination of information to establish facts. It is one step in a decision-making process which starts with an issue and ends with a decision.

Procedural fairness means that a matter has been resolved to the satisfaction of Catholic Education Western Australia Ltd (CEWA Ltd) with respect to the paramount importance of the student(s). The rules of procedural fairness require:

- a hearing appropriate to the circumstances;
- lack of bias;
- evidence to support a decision; and
- inquiry into matters in dispute.

Student means a child or young person enrolled in St Mary MacKillop College.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all members of the St Mary MacKillop College community.

4. Principles

- 4.1 All decisions are to reflect the paramount importance of our student(s).
- 4.2 Any person may complain orally or in writing about any matter arising from the operations of St Mary MacKillop College.
- 4.3 Complainants are personally responsible and liable for the content of their complaints.
- 4.4 A complaint made in accordance with this policy is a complaint about St Mary MacKillop College, notwithstanding the naming of any staff member in a complaint.
- 4.5 It is preferable that the complaint is verifiable, however if a complaint or any other information of unknown origin (i.e. anonymous) provides information that would cause the Principal concern, it should be considered by the Principal so that they can determine the appropriate course of action.
- 4.6 Complaints will be managed in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, which requires that nothing should be done by a higher authority, agency or level that could be done as well or better by a lower one.
- 4.7 Complaints and their resolution will contribute to continuous learning and improvement so that the potential and opportunity for incidents to be repeated are minimised.
- 4.8 Any review of a complaint will be based on procedural fairness.
- 4.9 Information on a complaint will only be disclosed to those parties who have a need to know to investigate and resolve the complaint.
- 4.10 Once a decision has been made, parties may request a review of the decision in accordance with the procedures.

5. Procedures

5.1 Information about the process for dealing with disputes and complaints will be readily available to all members of the school community. The information will be provided in clear language and, so far as is reasonable, in formats accessible to all, so that no complainant is disadvantaged. Information provided will include:

- where and how complaints can be made;
- the process for handling complaints;
- time periods associated with various stages in the process;
- options for remedy or redress; and
- how to obtain feedback on the status of a complaint.

This policy is available on the College website, on SEQTA Engage and Student portals, and in the staff handbook. A physical copy will also be available in the school's administration area.

- 5.2 A complaint can be made by any person regarding the provision of education or related matter. Where an immediate party cannot be identified, such as if it is anonymous or from an unverifiable source, the information will be assessed and duly considered.
- 5.3 Where there is an appropriate CEWA Ltd or College policy or procedure that provides a specific mechanism for addressing the complaint, that policy or procedure will be followed.
- 5.4 Where there is a binding legislative or regulatory mechanism (including an Enterprise Bargaining Agreement) that addresses the issue(s) raised in the complaint, that legislative or regulatory mechanism will be followed.

SCHOOL-BASED PROCEDURE FOR COMPLAINTS

- 5.5 When a complaint arises, the immediate parties involved should attempt to resolve the issue in the first instance.
- 5.6 Upon receipt of a complaint, the complaint will be recorded with supporting information. The record of the initial complaint will identify the remedy sought by the complainant, and any other information necessary of the effective handling of the complaint.
- 5.7 Receipt of a complaint will be acknowledged to the complainant wherever possible. The College is unable to notify complaints made anonymously, or where the complainant cannot be identified.
- 5.8 Upon receipt, each complaint will be assessed in terms of severity, safety implications, complexity, impact and the need for immediate action.
- 5.9 The complaint investigator will make every reasonable effort to investigate all relevant circumstances and information surrounding a complaint. The level of investigation will be commensurate to with the severity of the complaint.
- 5.10 Parties can involve a support person(s) to assist them throughout the investigation process.
- 5.11 Following an appropriate investigation, the complaint investigator will inform the parties involved of the outcome and/or any action(s) relevant to the complainant or to the parties involved.
- 5.12 If the complainant accepts the proposed decision or action, action(s) taken will be recorded and the matter will be closed.
- 5.13 If a complainant is dissatisfied with the proposed decision or action, they will be informed of alternative forms of internal and external recourse available.

5. Procedures

INTERNAL ESCALATION

- 5.14 The Principal is responsible for the resolution of disputes and complaints within the school referred to them by the immediate parties, in accordance with procedural fairness.
- 5.15 The Principal will be mindful of managing the wider effects that a dispute or complaint may have on the school community.
- 5.16 The Principal can request assistance and expertise from the Employee Relations Team at CEWA Ltd to aid in the resolution of the dispute or complaint.
- 5.17 The Principal will maintain appropriate records of information used to make a decision in response to any dispute or complaint. This includes statement(s) by the parties involved, where applicable.
- 5.18 The Principal will inform the complainant (unless anonymous) and relevant parties of the outcome of their investigation and decision.
- 5.19 Where a dispute or complaint is about the Principal and/or there is no likelihood that it can be resolved at the school level, the immediate parties can refer the matter to the Bunbury Regional Officer or the Executive Director of CEWA Ltd.

EXTERNAL REVIEWS OF DECISIONS

- 5.20 Any party can request a review of the Principal's decision, in writing, to the Bunbury Regional Officer or the Executive Director of CEWA Ltd.
- 5.21 A person has the right to appeal to the Minister for Education regarding a dispute or complaint under the School Education Act 1999 (WA). An appeal will only be heard on a breach in process and will not be a re-examination of the merits of the case.
- 5.22 A person can make a complaint to an external body or tribunal at any time. The relevant person (i.e. the Principal) may choose to suspend addressing the complaint until the external body or tribunal rules on the complaint, or the external complaint is directed back to CEWA Ltd for resolution.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND LEARNING

- 5.23 The Principal will ensure that complaints are recorded in a systematic way so that information can be easily retrieved for reporting and analysis.
- 5.24 Reporting and analysis will be undertaken to monitor trends and identify any systemic issues in the management or day-to-day operation of the College.
- 5.25 The Principal will continually monitor the College's handling of complaints to ensure its effectiveness in responding to and resolving complaints, and to identify and correct deficiencies in its operation.

CONFIDENTIALITY, PRIVACY AND RECORD STORAGE AND RETENTION

- 5.26 Complaint records can contain personal and confidential information which must not be disclosed to unauthorised persons.
- 5.27 The College will maintain complaint records on their official records management system.
- 5.28 The College will not destroy or dispose of complaints records contrary to the CEWA Ltd Record Retention Schedule and the State Records Act 2000 (WA).



Complaints Process

INFORMATION FOR OUR COLLEGE COMMUNITY

Informal Complaints Resolution

Many issues in our College can be handled quickly and in an informal manner. In most instances, they can be resolved through informal discussions with the immediate parties involved.

Even if a complaint can be resolved informally, our College staff are required to keep a record of the complaint and, where warranted, bring the complaint to the attention of the College Leadership Team.

How Do I Make a Formal Complaint?

If you have been unable to resolve a matter informally, or simply wish to make a formal complaint, you can do so by contacting a member of the College Leadership Team by phone and/or email:

College Telephone: (08) 9752 7400

Principal: Frank Norton
frank.norton@cewa.edu.au

Head of Senior School (Yrs 10-12): Tony Papasergio
tony.papasergio@cewa.edu.au

Head of Middle School (Yrs 7-9): Michael Bradley
michael.bradley@cewa.edu.au

Head of Primary (PreK-Yr 6): Joanna Paini
joanna.paini@cewa.edu.au

Business Manager: Rachel DeMamiel
rachel.demamiel@cewa.edu.au

Our Internal Complaints Handling Process:

Step 1

All formal complaints will be brought to the attention of the Principal and logged on the College's complaints register. Where a complaint is levelled against the Principal, you can submit your complaint to the CEWA Bunbury Regional Officer on (08) 9726 7201, and/or submit your complaint in writing to the Executive Director of Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) Ltd – debra.sayce@cewa.edu.au or PO Box 198, Leederville WA 6907.

Step 2

All complaints will be acknowledged in writing as soon as practicable, and allocated a status, priority and target resolution date.

Step 3

The Principal or a member of the College's Leadership Team will investigate the issues raised. They may seek additional information, and/or external advice or support. The investigation of all complaints adheres to the rules of procedural fairness.

Step 4

Following the investigation, a determination is made. The Principal or member of the College's Leadership Team provide a written response to the complainant, including the determination made and reason(s) for the decision. If the response is accepted, the matter will be closed.

Step 5

All complaints received will be entered onto the College's complaints register for ongoing monitoring and continuous improvement. Where appropriate, corrective action(s) will be taken to address any systemic failures revealed throughout the reporting and analysis of complaints.

Step 6

If the matter remains unresolved, the complainant may pursue external resolution through the CEWA Bunbury Regional Officer on (08) 9726 7201, and/or submit your complaint in writing to the Executive Director of Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) Ltd – debra.sayce@cewa.edu.au or PO Box 198, Leederville WA 6907.



Details of reporter <i>(You can make an anonymous report by leaving this section blank)</i>		
Name:		
Telephone:		Preferred method of contact
Email:		<input type="checkbox"/> Telephone
Postal address:		<input type="checkbox"/> Email
Suburb:		<input type="checkbox"/> Post
Details of the problem being reported		
<p><i>Please provide full details of your complaint, e.g.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>where did this happen?</i> <i>when did this happen?</i> <i>is it still happening?</i> <i>what is the resolution you are seeking?</i> <i>is anyone else currently dealing with your complaint?</i> <p><i>[Attach additional pages if required]</i></p>		
Name and position of people involved if the complaint relates to the conduct of the College staff:	Name	Position
Attach any additional relevant information or indicate where supporting evidence may be found:	Supporting evidence	Attached
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
Name and contact details of other people who may have additional information:	Name	Contact information
Statement		
<p>I take full responsibility for the information supplied to support my complaint. I have reported my complaint in good faith.</p>		
<p>_____ Signature of reporter <i>(Do not sign if you want to make an anonymous report)</i></p>	<p>_____ Date report submitted</p>	