

Grievances Policy

Rationale

At St. Mary's, we believe that partnerships between students, teachers and parents are important to educational success. We strive to be a community of faith, hope and love where communication takes place in an environment of transparency, respect, compassion, fairness, inclusion and a Christian concern for all. Within the reality of the schooling experience, it is recognised that from time to time misunderstandings and issues will arise, and that these need to be resolved satisfactorily in partnership with members of the school community.

An atmosphere of trust and openness is essential. We need to be able to talk to each other when we have concerns, so that a solution can be worked out. The response to grievances by all parties should be founded on a belief in the dignity of each person, on respect, compassion, integrity and truth, and a central recognition that all parties are working in the best interest of the child.

Implementation

St. Mary's expects that everyone will be treated with respect and encourages an openness to listening to the concerns of parents and students. Members of the school community can expect that their concerns will be taken seriously. While the school has a responsibility to consult and to communicate both clearly and effectively with the community, community members also have an obligation to read notices and newsletters, to attend Parent Nights, and to seek clarification with the appropriate person when required.

St Mary's seeks to work in partnership with all stakeholders. If a person has a current complaint, criticism or concern, they are expected to follow the guidelines below.

Guidelines for Raising Concerns or Complaints

Concerns or complaints will be able to be resolved by following the process below:

Concerns regarding issues with children

1. The concern or complaint shall be discussed with the teacher.
2. The concern or complaint shall be discussed with the Principal/Deputy principal.
3. If no progress, the concern or complaint shall be put in writing to the Parish Priest.
4. If no progress, the concern or complaint will be put in writing to Catholic Education Melbourne.

Concerns regarding issues with staff members

1. The concern or complaint shall be discussed with the staff member.
2. The concern or complaint shall be discussed with the Principal.
3. The Principal shall investigate, and the teacher or staff member shall be told of the concern or complaint.
4. The staff member shall be given the opportunity to reply.
5. If no progress, the concern or complaint shall be put in writing to the Parish Priest.
6. If no progress, the concern or complaint will be put in writing to Catholic Education Melbourne.

Concerns regarding the Principal

1. The concern or complaint to be discussed with the Principal.
2. If no progress, the concern or complaint shall be put in writing to the Parish Priest.
3. The Principal shall be given the opportunity to reply.
4. If no progress, the concern or complaint be put in writing to the Catholic Education Melbourne.

When raising a concern, parents have a responsibility to:

- Provide complete and factual information in a timely manner
- Deliver your complaint in a non-threatening manner
- Not make frivolous or vexatious complaints or include deliberately false or misleading information.
- Treat and speak of all involved parties, including students, staff and parents with respect
- Treat matters with confidentiality

Classroom Issues

If the matter involves your child or an issue of everyday class operation, an appointment to see the classroom teacher noting the reasons for the appointment is required.

Under no circumstances is it acceptable to:

- Interrupt classes or “catch” the teacher on the yard or outside the school to discuss the issue;
- Reprimand another child anywhere on or outside of the school premises;
- Make contact with other parents to discuss or seek to resolve the issue

Professional Reputation of Staff

The school has a responsibility to maintain a safe workplace for all employees, which includes protecting staff from personal attack and abuse.

The professional reputation of teachers is directly linked to their livelihood and ongoing employment opportunity. While teachers are responsible for maintaining professional standards they are also subject to the same rights as any citizen in respect of a personal attack on their professional reputation, such attacks constitute defamation.

Where a teacher’s professional standards are the subject of serious concern, the matter will be referred to the Victorian Institute of Teaching, an independent representative professional body established to recognize, promote and regulate the profession of teaching. Within its charter this body investigates and makes findings on instances of serious misconduct to protect the integrity of the profession.

Where there is evidence of defamatory statements made against any members of St. Mary’s staff, the school will refer the matter to be fully investigated by the Legal Officer of the Catholic Education Office of the Archdiocese of Melbourne. Individual staff also have the option to seek legal advice and action through the (VIEU) Victorian Independent Education Union (for members) and / or a private solicitor.

The Principal will provide you with appropriate Catholic Education Office contact names and numbers if issues cannot be resolved at the school level.

Child Protection Procedures

St. Mary’s School has obligations to comply with the legal requirements and procedures that relate to mandatory reporting and managing the risk of child abuse under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic.), the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic.), the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic.), *Children Legislation Amendment (Reportable Conduct) Act 2016* (Vic.) and Ministerial Order No. 870 – *Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools* made under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (Vic.).

If, in the course of carrying out their duties, a mandatory reporter forms a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection from physical harm or sexual abuse, and that the child’s parents are unwilling or unable to protect the child, they must report that belief to the Department of Health and Human Services/Child Protection and/or Victoria Police, as described in the St. Mary’s *Child Safety Policy* and *Child Protection Reporting Obligations Policy*.

Documentation

All formal discussions and processes involving complaints will be documented

Confidentiality

All grievances are to be kept confidential. To maintain confidentiality in so far as that is reasonable, all participants in the process should only share information about the complaint to those who need to know.

Ratified: August 2017

Review Date: 2020

Responsibility: Leadership Team & Education Board