



# ST JOSEPH'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

544 Balcombe Road, Black Rock, Vic 3193

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## Parent Complaints Policy

Ratified - Staff and Education Board 2015

Review - 2018

## RATIONALE

A timely and professional response to parent complaints is an effective means of encouraging communication, building trust and resolving issues for the betterment of all concerned.

## GOALS

To develop and implement a process by which parents can confidently raise concerns in the knowledge that they will be listened to and their concerns will be professionally managed in a timely, confidential and appropriate manner.

## IMPLEMENTATION

Relationships with parents are important to us and we take complaints raised by parents seriously through the following procedures:

- 1.** Parents making complaints should ascertain the facts as best they can, and contact the school at their earliest convenience.
- 2.** Parents with complaints should contact the school by telephone, in person, in writing or email.
- 3.** If the matter involves your child or an issue of everyday class operation, make an appointment outside of class time, to see the class teacher detailing the reasons for the appointment. Parents visiting the school to make a complaint are advised that it is highly unlikely that staff will be immediately available to investigate the complaint.
- 4.** Parents making complaints are to be well-behaved, confidential and courteous. Parents who are unreasonable, threatening or discourteous can expect their discussions with staff to be terminated until such time as an alternative discussion time is arranged by the school.
- 5.** The school will record the details of all complaints including the name and contact details of the persons making the complaints. The school will then refer the complaint to the most appropriate person to investigate. There will be occasions that this will be someone other than the principal.
- 6.** The investigating staff members may communicate with the parent or student to discuss the matter further prior to a formal meeting.
- 7.** If the scope of the investigation is beyond the capacity or jurisdiction of the school, the matter will be referred to the appropriate authority and the parent will be informed of the referral in consultation with the principal.
- 8.** Parents discussing complaints with staff may be accompanied by an advocate if they wish.
- 9.** The investigating staff member may have an assistant to record the details of the investigation.
- 10.** Any investigation conducted by the school will be done so in a timely, efficient and confidential manner, ensuring the fair principles on natural justice are applied for all. Parents will be provided with an anticipated time-frame for a resolution.
- 11.** At the conclusion of the investigation, the staff member will discuss feedback and the appropriate course of action to be taken with all parties and this will be recorded.

- 12.** If in the view of the parent the matter remains unresolved, the parent will be provided with details as to how they can refer the matter to the Catholic Education Regional office.
- 13.** In some cases, the school, the parent or other involved parties may seek to involve an impartial mediator.
- 14.** All records of parent complaints, subsequent investigations and outcomes will be recorded and noted confidentially.
- 15.** All staff will be made aware of our school's complaints handling procedures and will be supported with training on how to minimise, respond to and manage parent complaints.
- 16.** An appointment should be made with the Principal to discuss issues involving school policy, operations beyond your child's classroom, concern about staff or grievances that are not easily resolved.
- 17.** All formal discussions and processes involving grievances will be documented.
- 18.** The principal will determine whether or not an anonymous complaint will be investigated.



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## Appendix 2: Complaints Policy

### 1. INTRODUCTION

At St Joseph's we are committed to building a school culture that features positive and respectful relationships. As a Catholic school, these relationships are grounded in the values of the gospel, in particular the values of justice, compassion, reconciliation, truth and love. In keeping with Catholic social teaching, a respect for the innate dignity of each person shapes all our relationships.

In building and nurturing this culture, we acknowledge that students and parents can sometimes feel aggrieved about something that is happening at the school. Every member of our school community has a right to have their grievance or complaint addressed, and we will work positively and resolutely to achieve a satisfactory outcome for the people involved.

This policy outlines our principles and procedures for receiving and resolving complaints. It ought to be read in conjunction with related policies and core documents of the school, namely:

- Complaints and Grievance Policy
- Appendix 1 Parent - School Relationship Code of Conduct

### COMPLAINTS RESOLUTION: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In receiving and responding to complaints, the following guiding principles will direct and shape the school's actions:

- We will work with the complainant with respect, courtesy and openness and with a genuine desire to achieve fair and reasonable decisions.
- The complaint will be resolved as quickly as possible.
- Confidentiality, impartiality and the principles of natural justice will form the basis of our complaint's resolution process.



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- The person(s) facing the complaint will be provided with detailed information about the substance of the complaint and will have the opportunity to respond.
- Personal information disclosed will be treated as confidential.
- Our resolution process will be grounded in sound and fair procedures for information sharing, conciliation, investigation and decision making.
- If a satisfactory outcome cannot be achieved, the school will provide the complainant with options for having the decision reviewed or mediated via an external authority.
- The communal needs of the school community will in most instances exceed the needs of any individual.

## 2. EXPECTATIONS OF PEOPLE MAKING A COMPLAINT

In making a complaint, the school requests and expects that the complainant will:

- raise the concern or complaint as soon as possible after the issue has arisen
- communicate and respond in ways that are constructive, fair and respectful
- provide complete and factual information about the concern or complaint
- observe confidentiality and a respect for sensitive issues
- act in good faith to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
- have realistic and reasonable expectations about possible outcomes/remedies.

If as a complainant you are a parent, and your concern/complaint relates to your child's treatment by another student or students while at school, the school expects that you will refer your complaint directly to the school, via your child's class teacher, homeroom or year level coordinator. Under no circumstances should you approach another student while in the care of the school to discuss the issue or chastise him or her. Direct contact with parents to resolve the matter is also discouraged if the complaint pertains to issues or incidents that have arisen at the school.

## 4. PROCEDURES

### 4.1 Key Referral People

Complainants are encouraged to make contact with members of the school staff who are most closely connected with the complaint/concern. For parents, this will be your



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child's class teacher. If there is any uncertainty about the most appropriate person to address a concern or complaint, you are encouraged to contact the school. Office staff will refer you to the appropriate person.

## 4.2 Email Communications and Teaching Staff

Due to teachers' classroom and supervision duties, a complainant's first contact is best made by email, with an appointment request for either a phone conference or face-to-face meeting. Complainants are asked to outline concerns or issues (e.g. learning program, discipline, student/peer incidents) so that the staff member can prepare for the meeting/phone conference. Complainants and staff are strongly discouraged from sending or discussing confidential, contentious and/or emotional information via email. These matters are best discussed face-to-face or over the phone.

## 4.3 Informal and Formal Resolution Processes

If initial communication between the parties does not resolve the complaint (an 'informal' resolution process), then the complainant should:

- contact the principal to make an appointment for either a phone conference or a face-to-face meeting;
- outline the nature of the complaint, either verbally or in writing, and the steps taken to resolve it.

In moving to a more formal process, the principal or a senior member of staff will:

- organise a meeting/phone conference
- fully document the complaint, any actions taken to resolve it and outcomes of those actions
- further and fully investigate the matter
- ensure that no one is victimised as a result of a complaint being made
- if necessary, enable a complainant to be accompanied by another person of his/her choice as a support person
- enable the person against whom the complaint has been made to respond, and to be accompanied to any meeting by another person of his/her choice as a support person
- organise a process of mediation if a complaint cannot be satisfactorily resolved by the school.

## 4.4 Serious or Repeated Complaints, or Allegations of Misconduct



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Where a complaint relates to an allegation of physical, emotional or sexual abuse, or when complaints are sufficiently serious or repeated, the principal will take action to report the matter to the appropriate authorities, ensure a comprehensive investigation, and work with all parties to facilitate a resolution.

#### 4.5 Avenues of Appeal

If a complaint remains unresolved, or if the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcomes, the complainant has the right to seek other avenues of appeal through authorities such as the Catholic Education Office or the Parish Priest of Nazareth Parish Rickett's Point.