



ST JOHN'S PRIMARY SCHOOL MITCHAM

Complaints Handling Procedure Policy

Rationale

At St John's Primary School we are committed to providing a pleasant work environment for all employees and students. We acknowledge, however, that employees, parents and students can sometimes feel aggrieved about something that is happening at the school which appears to be discriminatory or to constitute harassment. An employee or student can have a complaint about any decision, behaviour, act or omission (whether by the Principal, members of the leadership team or other staff/students) that he/she feels is discriminatory or constitutes harassment.

The purpose of this document is to provide a procedure by which staff, students and parents can have such complaints addressed.

If you feel that you are being harassed or discriminated against, this Complaints Handling Procedure is available to you so your concerns can be addressed.

Key elements of our complaints handling procedure

The following are the key elements of our complaints handling procedure:

Impartiality - If you make a complaint, it will be investigated in a fair and impartial manner. No judgments or assumptions will be made, and no action will be taken until the investigation is complete. If a complaint is made against you, your rights will be protected and you will be given an opportunity to tell your side of the story.

Confidentiality - You can feel secure that if you do make a complaint under this policy it will remain confidential.

No victimization - You can also rest assured that if you make a complaint you will not suffer in any way as a consequence. The school authorities will ensure that a person who makes a complaint is not victimized in any way.

Timeliness - Each complaint will be finalized within as short a period as possible. All complaints should be finalized within one month.

Implementation

The following outlines what to do if you have a complaint

1. Approach the person involved.

In many situations, the most appropriate thing to do first is to tell the person who is the cause of the complaint how you feel. If the complaint is about their behaviour, tell them that it is offensive/hurtful/not acceptable. If it is about a work decision, tell them why you think it is discriminatory or harassment. Telling the person will give them a chance to stop or change what they are doing.

2. Go to the Principal/Deputy Principal

If you don't feel as if you can approach the person directly, then go and explain the problem to the Principal/Deputy Principal. The Principal/Deputy Principal will advise you about what your options are and what will happen if you decide to make a formal complaint. Nothing will be done in relation to the complaint without you agreeing.

What happens next?

Once you have made the complaint the Principal/Deputy Principal will then consider whether there are any reasons why he/she should not proceed to deal with the complaint. For example, the person you complained about may be a personal friend. If there is such a reason which indicates it is inappropriate for the Principal/Deputy Principal to deal with your complaint, it will, with your consent, be referred to another appropriate person.

Keeping in mind the above conditions, the Principal/Deputy Principal will then interview you. During this interview a number of things will be explained to you, such as what will happen if the complaint is found to be supported by the evidence, or if it is found to be not supported by the evidence. You will also be told where you can go for assistance if you are not happy with the way the school is dealing with the complaint. The Principal/Deputy Principal will then take a written record of the complaint.

The Principal/Deputy Principal will then talk to the person about whom the complaint is made, to hear that side of the story. Any witnesses will also be interviewed. These interviews will be conducted separately and impartially. The importance of confidentiality will be stressed to all parties and they will be warned of the consequences if there is a breach of confidentiality (e.g. possible defamation action, initiation of a complaint for harassment). The Principal/Deputy Principal will then tell you what the other people said and discuss what should be done to sort out the problem. You should tell the Principal/Deputy Principal what action you would like taken, e.g. a written apology from the person, a written warning, etc.

Possible outcomes

If the complaint is proved, the following are possible outcomes:

- A written apology;
- An official warning;
- Counselling
- Disciplinary action; or
- Dismissal.

If the complaint is unproved (not enough evidence), possible outcomes are:

- Relevant training for all staff, and/or
- Monitoring of behaviour of employees.

If the complaint is proved not to have happened at all, the following are possible outcomes:

- Counselling for the person who made the complaint;
- A written apology;
- An official warning;
- Disciplinary action; or
- Dismissal

The Principal will make sure that whatever outcome is decided upon actually happens. She/He will also assess the effectiveness of the outcome from time to time.

Appeals

Note that the person to whom an appeal is made depends upon who the Complaints Officer is in your school. It could be the principal if the principal is not the Complaints Officer.

Other avenues of appeal are:

In the Melbourne Archdiocese – the coordinating Chairperson, Pastoral Care Unit Catholic Education Melbourne

If you feel that the complaints procedure has not been followed properly, or that the outcome is unacceptable to you, you may appeal to the Principal if not involved in the Complaints Procedure itself or otherwise as listed above.

The principal or other designated person will look at the way the complaint was handled and examine the outcome. If he/she believes it was handled properly and that the outcome was appropriate he/she will take no further action; if he/she thinks that the complaint was not handled properly, or that the outcome was inappropriate, he/she will organize for the complaint to be looked at again.

The appeal will be dealt with by someone other than the person who first handled the complaint.

Engaging an External Agency

If you are not happy with the way your complaint has been dealt with by the school, you may wish to go to an external agency for further advice and assistance. You may take your complaint to the external agency at any stage in the procedure if you are unhappy with progress in dealing with your complaint.

Evaluation:

Date Developed/Reviewed	Ratified (date/who)	Date of Future Review
2019	2019 Ed' Board	2023