Stella Maris Primary School

Raising Concerns and Complaints Policy

*Concerns and complaints are best addressed by students, parents, teachers, principals and support staff working in partnership.*

Our Catholic School’s Beliefs and Values
The school’s Catholic Vision and Mission Statements should be considered when concerns and complaints are being raised.
The school’s approach to handling concerns and complaints is based on our values of:
• providing a safe and supportive learning environment
• building relationships between students, parents and staff
• providing a safe working environment for staff
• using Restorative Practices when appropriate

Concerns and Complaints Covered by the Procedures
*These procedures cover concerns and complaints about:*
• general issues of student behaviour that are contrary to the classroom and school rules
• incidents of bullying, safety or harassment in the classroom or the school yard
• learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
• communication with parents
• school fees and payments
• general administrative issues
• any other school-related matters except as detailed below.

*These procedures do not cover matters which are covered by other policies. Those matters include:*  
• student discipline matters involving expulsions  
• student critical incident matters  
• Parish matters  
• other criminal matters

Ownership and Scope
The Principal and school will develop its policy to address concerns and complaints in collaboration with staff and the school Education Board.
These procedures take effect from July 2013.

Expectations for all Parties
The school expects a person raising a concern or complaint to:
• do so promptly, as soon as possible after the issue occurs
• provide complete and factual information about the concern or complaint
• maintain and respect the privacy and confidentiality of all parties
• acknowledge that a common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
• act in good faith, and in a calm and courteous manner
• show respect and understanding of each other’s point of view and value difference, rather than judge and blame
• recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced.

The school will address any concerns and complaints received from parents:
• courteously
• efficiently
• fairly
• promptly, or within the timeline agreed with the person with the concern or complaint
• in accordance with due process, principles of natural justice and the Catholic Education Office’s policies.

Raising Concerns or Complaints
In the first instance, a complaint should be made to the school with a face to face meeting. Students are encouraged to raise concerns or complaints with their classroom teacher in the context of everyday interactions. When a concern or complaint is not addressed adequately face to face, the parents should telephone, visit or write to:
• the student’s teacher who will then address this issue but may communicate to the, Wellbeing Leader, Assistant Principal or Principal.

Generally:
•the classroom teacher will handle issues about learning and incidents that happened in their class or group
• the Student Wellbeing Leader or Assistant Principal if issues are more complex or students from several classes are involved
• the Assistant Principal about issues relating to staff members or complex student issues
• the Principal about issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members or very complex student issues.
• the Parish Priest about issues relating to parish policies and practices
• the use of social media platforms is not recommended

For contact details for any staff member, call the office on 95892641 or consult our website for email addresses.
If you are not sure who to contact, contact the Assistant Principal on 95892641.

Help with Raising Concerns or Complaints
Complainants can seek the services of an advocate when they feel they are unable to express their concern clearly. An advocate can be a friend or someone who is available through an appropriate support organisation who does not receive a fee for service.
All parties involved in addressing a complaint may seek the services of a mediator when there is difficulty coming to an agreement.
A complainant who wishes to use these support services should ensure the person addressing the concern or complaint is aware of their intention and is in agreement.

Managing Parent Concerns and Complaints Information
All complaints received will be recorded by the staff members involved.
• name and contact details (with permission) of the person with a concern or complaint
• the date the concern was expressed or complaint made
• the form in which the concern or complaint was received (such as face-to-face, by telephone, in writing, by email)
• a brief description of the concern or complaint
• details of the school officer responding to the concern or complaint
• action taken on the concern or complaint
• the outcome of action taken on the concern or complaint
• any recommendations for future improvement in the school’s policy or procedures.

However, in the first instance, when the complaint is easily resolved in a telephone call, a brief note in the school’s/principal’s/teacher’s diary or computer recording the issue and the resolution may be all that is required.

Where appropriate, complaints may also be recorded in the school’s student reporting database.

Addressing Concerns or Complaints
The school will make every effort to resolve concerns and complaints.
A copy of the concerns and complaints procedures is on the school website.
All complaints will be noted and acted on promptly by the staff member who receives the complaint.
The school will acknowledge all complaints made. It will provide the complainant with a timeline for investigating the complaint.
The Assistant Principal or Principal will investigate complaints that cannot be resolved by the classroom teacher and will provide a response to the complainant.
Concerns and complaints about general school matters (such as the timing of events, school policies and facilities) will be addressed by the Principal or a relevant staff member.
The school will make every attempt to resolve a concern or complaint as quickly as possible. If your complaint involves many students and a range of issues, the school will need more time to investigate and resolve it.
Should the complaint involve complex issues, an initial face to face discussion is preferred. If a complex issue, the school might need to take advice from the Parish Priest and/or the Catholic Education Office which may take more time. The school will discuss with the complainant the new timeline for addressing the complaint and the reasons for any delays. In all cases, the school will try but not guarantee to resolve a concern or complaint.

Resolution
If a concern or complaint is substantiated in whole or part, all parties will offer an appropriate resolution.
For example, at its discretion and depending on the circumstances, the school might offer:
• an explanation or further information about the issue
• mediation, counselling or other support
• an apology, expression of regret or admission of fault
• to change its decision
• to change its policies, procedures or practices
The school will implement the resolution as soon as practicable.
The agreed plan will be monitored

Complaint dismissed
A complaint can only be dismissed:
• after it has been investigated
• if an investigation has determined that the complaint cannot be substantiated

**Complaint unresolved**

A complaint is considered to be unresolved if the complainant does not agree on a course of action and/or a remedy, or if the remedy cannot be implemented. In such cases, a school must involve the Parish Priest as the employer and/or the Catholic Education Office to assist in resolving the complaint. It may not always be possible to fully resolve all complaints to the complainant’s satisfaction. This could happen if the complainant has unrealistic expectations about the outcome of their complaint, or if the school, Catholic Education Office or Church’s policies or regulations are contrary to their views.

**Referral of Concerns or Complaints**

If a person with a concern or complaint is not satisfied with the outcome determined by the school, they should contact the Parish Priest. If still not satisfied they should contact the Catholic Education Office’s Regional Office.

**Communication and Training**

The school’s procedures for addressing concerns and complaints is published on the school’s website. The school will:
• brief all members of staff (including volunteers) about its procedures to address concerns and complaints annually
• provide staff with (or provide access to) training and support appropriate to their responsibilities under the procedures

**Monitoring the Parent Complaints Policy**

The school will monitor parent concerns and complaints and consider issues raised through the parent complaints process, and any other relevant information from the parent opinion survey, when undertaking a review of the school’s policies, procedures and operations. The school will review its information about complaints made over time to:
• identify common or recurring issues that may need addressing
• assess the effectiveness of these and other procedures and whether they are being followed
• use information provided to the school through the parent opinion survey on the views of parents.

This policy is adapted from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development’s ‘Addressing Parents’ Concerns and Complaints Effectively: Policy and Guides,’ Melbourne, 2009 with reference to Catholic Schools Organisational Guide

Office for Government School Education

This policy was ratified in 2013
This policy will be reviewed in each review year
This policy was last updated in 2016