

## Complaints Management Policy

### Commitment to Child Safety

All students enrolled, and any child visiting, have a right to feel safe and be safe all of the time. The wellbeing of children in our care will always be our first priority and we have zero tolerance for child abuse. At Sacred Heart we strive to maintain a child safe and child friendly environment where children feel safe and are free to enjoy life to the full without any concern for their safety. We are committed to continually reviewing our Child Safe policies and practices to ensure that every effort is made for ongoing improvement of our Child Safe environment.

We at Sacred Heart recognise that some groups of children are particularly vulnerable and we are committed to promoting the cultural safety of Aboriginal/linguistically diverse children and also promoting the safety of children with a disability.

### Identity Statement

‘An active learning community working in partnership with families,  
inspiring strength through faith and love’

### Vision Statements

At Sacred Heart School we believe:

- In celebrating our Catholic Faith in a life-giving community of witnesses who serve God and society
- In fostering open and supportive relationships with families as the primary educators of their children
- In educating the whole child in a learning environment where teamwork and collaboration are central, so that each child becomes a valuable contributor to society
- In providing a curriculum, which cultivates effective lifelong learners through commitment to inform, current teaching and learning practice
- In building relationships based upon mutual respect, trust and care in an environment of justice, equality, compassion and hope

### Graduate Outcomes

At Sacred Heart School we seek to educate students to:

- Be inspired by Christ
- Live an active and healthy lifestyle
- Be discerning and adaptable lifelong learners in a contemporary world
- Have a social conscience and respect for life, self, others and the environment
- Be optimistic, resilient and confident to take their own path and reach their potential
- Have the ability to work as an individual, and as part of a team

## Rationale

Governments and the community expect schools to have in place best-practice procedures to manage grievances and complaints. Sacred Heart is required to have a complaints management policy and procedure in respect to the minimum standard of student welfare. Having an effective complaints management process for Sacred Heart:

- enhances staff relationships with parents, students and the broader school community
- encourages the resolution of concerns and disputes at the earliest possible stage
- creates expectations that the complaints management process will be respectful and courteous
- avoids escalation of vexatious or frivolous complaints
- empowers staff by giving them a clear path to resolve issues in a consistent, systematic and responsive way
- enables valuable feedback about Sacred Heart is not meeting parents' and students' needs
- ensures that Sacred Heart complies with its legal obligations
- assists Sacred Heart to continually improve its internal systems and controls
- protects and enhances the Sacred Heart's reputation.

Sacred Heart School has both a desire and a responsibility to ensure that high standards of conduct are maintained by staff and students at all times, and that complaints are managed and resolved fairly, in an atmosphere of acceptance, respect and pastoral care and in accordance with relative legislation.

## Definition and Scope

A grievance or complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived issue where a response or resolution is expected. The dissatisfaction may arise from a perception that Sacred Heart has:

- done something wrong
- failed to do something it should have
- acted unfairly or inappropriately.

The complaint may be about an individual staff member, a student or a policy or procedure. Examples may include issues related to:

- student discipline procedures
- learning and teaching
- students requiring educational adjustment
- damage/loss of personal property
- bullying and harassment by students against other students

This policy **does not** cover the complaints:

- that are of a child protection nature. These must be addressed in accordance with child protection laws and reporting obligations (see Sacred Heart's Child Safe Policies and PROTECT: Identifying and responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools)
- from staff about aspects of their work or employment conditions. Sacred Heart handles these matters in accordance with relevant internal policies and procedures.

## Implementation

Sacred Heart School will ensure that all complaints will be treated seriously, addressed professionally, competently and in a timely manner, and apply principles of procedural fairness and confidentiality.

It is the Principal's responsibility to provide a healthy and positive school environment that is free from discrimination and harassment. In doing so, the Principal must ensure that all staff are aware of their rights and responsibilities.

The Principal is required to use the complaint resolution procedures, where appropriate, for resolving complaints in relation to issues that fall within the school's area of responsibility. It is incumbent upon the Principal to act where unacceptable conduct is observed or brought to his or her attention.

It is important that all complaints, ensuing procedures and outcomes are fully documented. The Principal may choose to respond to a complaint through an informal process in cases where the complaint is minor, the complainant wishes the matter to be dealt with informally, or the complaint has arisen from lack of or unclear communication.

Formal processes will be used when informal processes haven't been successful, a complainant seeks a formal process, or the Principal believes the complaint warrants formal investigation.

## Formal Complaint Procedure

1. Receive the Complaint.
2. Acknowledge the complaint promptly and provide complainant with Sacred Heart's Complaint Management Policy.
3. Investigate the complaint to an established and clear timeline. Investigation can include formal interviews, written statements, conveying the details of the complaint to the respondent in writing, providing the opportunity for a written response.
4. Dismissing or accepting the complaint. Acceptance may involve the Catholic Education Office, verbal or written warnings, conciliation, or counselling, etc.
5. Preparation of a detailed confidential report.
6. Monitoring of the situation.

Refer to Appendix 1 for Flow Chart of Procedures for Handling Complaints.

- Parties dissatisfied with the process can appeal to the previously mentioned external agencies.
- All matters must be treated with utmost confidentiality, and professional respect at all times.
- The Parish Priest and the Catholic Education Office will be kept informed of all complaints.

## Key References

**C.E.C.V. (2017)** *Complaints Management: Practical Guide for Schools*. Melbourne: Catholic Education Commission Victoria.

## Appendix 1: Flow Chart of Procedures for Handling Complaints

