



## PARENT & CAREGIVER CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

This Policy must also be read in conjunction with the DLCS Parent and Caregiver Concerns and Complaints Procedure (PCCC:V3).

The St Joseph's Parent and Caregiver Concerns and Complaints Policy describes the process for effectively managing concerns and complaints raised by a parent or caregiver around all issues associated with parish school life.

In a spirit of partnership between home and school there must be a commitment to respond positively to critical feedback to ensure that people have the opportunity to contribute to the continued improvement of St Joseph's Primary School. It is an expectation that all staff will ensure that a culture of consultation and open dialogue is nurtured at every level.

It is acknowledged that parents/caregivers can feel concerned about an incident or something that they believe is happening at school. The satisfactory resolution of any concern or complaint is vital to the Christian life and the wellbeing of the School community. It is recognised that parents and caregivers must have access to processes that allow them to resolve concerns and complaints in a supportive, conciliatory environment. Concerns and complaints need to be addressed as far as possible at the local level, responsively, openly and in a timely manner.

### **The Rights and Responsibilities of Parents/Caregivers**

- Any parent or caregiver has the right to raise a concern or complaint and have it responded to promptly and without fear of repercussions according to principles of procedural fairness. Many issues will be able to be resolved informally.
- Any concern or complaint should address the individual situation and not be presented in a group action to the school.





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- Any parent or caregiver has the right to confidentiality otherwise than required by law in regard to a concern or complaint that is raised at the school. However, where others need to be informed, this will be explained to the parent or caregiver raising the matter.
- Any parent or caregiver has a responsibility to maintain confidentiality in the best interests of all involved.
- Any parent or caregiver has a responsibility to promptly raise concerns or complaints so that these do not become overwhelming for either the child or the family.
- Formal complaints need be put in writing to be acted upon. Complaints received by email are regarded as 'in writing'.

## **The Process**

- The process will vary depending on the nature of the issue. In these procedures, complaints are regarded as more serious than concerns and will therefore be managed differently.
- For both concerns and complaints the issue is generally best dealt with in the first instance by the person who is the subject of the concern or who is responsible for the particular matter. This may not always be possible and the parents or caregivers may not feel able to talk to the person about whom they have a concern. In these situations, the complainant must decide the most appropriate person to address the complaint. In general:
  - a) Where the concern or complaint involves a staff member of the school, the matter should be taken directly to the Principal; and
  - b) Any parent complaint forwarded to DLCS that has not been raised with the school will be directed back to the school for the school's attention and the Principal notified of the contact [excluding any complaint about the Principal].
- Persons who phone DLCS to raise a concern or complaint about a school issue will be informed that the matter must be put in writing if they wish it to be progressed. The written complaint will be acknowledged and delegated to the





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appropriate DLCS staff member to follow up with the complainant and the Principal.

## Managing Concerns

- Any parent or caregiver has a responsibility to promptly raise the concern with the person best placed to deal with the concern so that these do not become overwhelming for either the child or the family.
- Where the parent or caregiver concern is not satisfactorily resolved directly with the school staff member involved, the matter should be taken up with a member of the School Executive.
- If the matter cannot be resolved within the school, the Principal should seek advice from the relevant DLCS staff member on the appropriate course of action.

## Managing Formal Complaints

- A formal complaint is defined as a complaint that is in writing, signed and directed to the Principal or DLCS. Complaints in writing directed to DLCS if not raised at the school level in the first instance, will be referred to the Principal for action.
- A meeting will be arranged at the earliest possible opportunity by the Principal. The Principal will determine the attendance for part or the whole of the meeting of any additional and relevant staff. The complainant will be aware of the attendees prior to the meeting.
- The meeting will be conducted formally, following an agenda organised by the Principal. The Principal will ensure a record will be taken with the participants of the meeting receiving a copy. Participants will have the right to note any disagreement with the record. This will be attached to the record of meeting. The meeting will seek a resolution of the complaint.
- A person raising a formal complaint may have an appropriate support person present during meetings or interviews. The support person acts as an observer and does not take an active role in the meeting. The Principal is to be advised of the attendance of a support person before any meeting or interview. Similarly, the Principal will advise of any other person they may invite to attend.





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- By mutual agreement it may be decided that further meetings are required.
- The meeting will be terminated if any person present becomes abusive, uses profane or threatening language or attempts to physically intimidate others present. The meeting record will be reflective of this outcome. Should this occur the relevant DLCS staff member will be notified.
- Access to relevant records may be given to parties directly involved in the process or to others by mutual consent whilst adhering to the diocesan Student Records Policy.
- The outcome of a complaint resolution meeting will be communicated to the parent or caregiver in writing. There may be an agreement to review its effectiveness within an agreed timeframe.
- Complainants not satisfied with the outcome of a complaint can refer the matter to DLCS by writing to the Director of Catholic Schools. Depending on the nature of the complaint a DLCS staff member or Assistant Director will be delegated to attend to the issue.
- The representative of the DLCS will liaise with the Principal and the complainant seeking a resolution. Advice may be offered to all parties to reconvene or a further meeting may be convened involving a representative of the DLCS in the process.
- Following this intervention the complainant will receive written advice from the DLCS representative. The Principal will receive a copy of this advice.
- Anonymous complaints or allegations will not be accepted except in the case of:
  - allegations of child abuse
  - allegations of misconduct of a sexual nature by a staff member against a student; and
  - alleged breaches of legislation, including the Crimes Act 1900 NSW).
- Where the complaint involves the Principal it may be directed, if the complainant believes it necessary, to the Director of Catholic Schools, DLCS. In this case the Principal will be informed of the complaint by the Director and the process to be





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followed. The Principal will receive any complaints raised against them in writing. The Parish Priest will also be notified.

## Time Frames

Unless another timeframe is mutually agreed upon, or where outside authorities are involved, a parent/caregiver can expect:

- o an acknowledgement of his/her concern as soon as possible but no longer than five (5) days; and
- o an initial attempt to address and resolve the matter as soon as practicable with updates provided throughout the process.

## Concerns and Complaints of a Child Protection Nature

- Legally required processes for the management of complaints that fall within the definitions of child protection legislation are administered by the DLCS which is accountable to the Office of the Children's Guardian and/or NSW Department of Community and Justice.

Policy Adopted: May 2020	Policy last reviewed: August 2024	Policy to be Reviewed: Ongoing Within five years of last review
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