

Community Complaints Policy

1. Rationale

Good Samaritan Catholic Primary School strives to be a community of faith, hope and love where communication takes place in an environment of transparency, respect, compassion, tolerance and inclusion in the interests of all students.

In keeping with Catholic social teaching, a respect for the innate dignity of each person shapes all of 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 the right to have their grievance or complaint addressed, and we will work positively and resolutely to achieve a satisfactory outcome for the people involved. Positive, clear and effective processes for resolving grievances between the school and community members assists in the building of strong relationships, dispels anxiety, and ultimately provides students with an enhanced learning environment.

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

2. Our Values

Catholic schools have a moral, legal and mission-driven responsibility to create nurturing a school environment where all people are respected, their voices are heard and they are safe and feel safe.

We are called to emulate Jesus' call to love God and to love each other. We look to the values taught to us in scripture and the Christian tradition to guide us:

Mercy	We act with kindness and with a heart full of love.
Compassion	We seek to understand the needs of others and are willing to help them.
Justice	We treat everyone fairly, recognising that each individual has both rights and responsibilities.
Respect	We value the sacredness and dignity of each person.
Excellence	We strive to be the very best we can possibly be.

3. Definition

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with an action taken, decision made, service provided or handling of an issue at a Good Samaritan Catholic Primary School.

For the purposes of this policy a person or persons making a complaint is referred to as 'the complainant'.

4. Scope

This policy outlines the Good Samaritan Catholic Primary School complaints resolution process for complaints from parents, guardians, carers and community members (the Complainant).

Procedures for making a complaint are presented in Section 8 of this policy.

This policy does not relate to critical incidents, emergency management, criminal offences, conduct of religious clergy or other religious persons.

5. Complaints Resolution Guiding Principles

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

- i. we will work with the complainant with respect, courtesy and openness and with a genuine desire to achieve fair and reasonable decisions;

- ii. the complaint will be resolved as quickly as possible;
- iii. confidentiality, impartiality and the principles of natural justice will form the basis of our complaints resolution process;
- iv. 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;
- v. personal information disclosed will be treated as confidential;
- vi. our resolution process will be grounded in sound and fair procedures for information sharing, conciliation, investigation and decision-making; and
- vii. 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.

6. Expectations of People Making A Complaint

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

- 1. raise the concern or complaint as soon as possible after the issue has arisen;
- 2. communicate and respond in ways that are constructive, fair and respectful;
- 3. provide complete and factual information about the concern or complaint;
- 4. observe confidentiality and a respect for sensitive issues;
- 5. act in good faith to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties;
- 6. 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 teacher or Village Learning Leader.

Under no circumstances should a parent approach another student while they are 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.

7. Procedures

7.1 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 child's class teacher or Village Learning Leader.

If there is any uncertainty about the most appropriate person to address a concern or complaint, you are encouraged to contact the school. Reception staff will refer you to the appropriate person.

7.2 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 accidents) 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.

7.3 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 or a senior member of staff 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 personal 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.

Serious or Repeated Complaints, or Allegations of Misconduct

Where a complaint related 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.

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 Melbourne (www.cem.edu.au).