



MANAGING COMPLAINTS OR GRIEVANCES

Rationale:

At Corpus Christi School we are committed to providing a pleasant work environment for all and to ensuring that high standards of conduct are maintained by staff and students at all times.

We acknowledge, however, that children, parents or staff can sometimes feel aggrieved about something that is happening at the school which appears to be discriminatory or to constitute harassment. This may form the basis of a complaint which needs to be managed and resolved fairly, efficiently, promptly.

Aims:

To provide a procedure by which parents/ guardians/ volunteers can have such complaints addressed fairly, efficiently and promptly.

Implementation:

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 the whole school community is aware of their rights and responsibilities.

The principal is required to use local complaints resolution procedures (see Appendix 1) , where appropriate, for resolving complaints in relation to issues that fall within the school's area of responsibility. All cases of serious misconduct – sexual offences, criminal charges, or other serious incidents – must instead be referred to the appropriate authorities.

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.

Note: A complainant may at any stage choose to take their complaint directly to an external agency such as, Catholic Education Melbourne, Victorian Independent Education Union, Victorian Equal Opportunity Commission, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission or the Ombudsman

Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's review cycle.

This policy was last ratified in February 2015.

Appendix 1

Complaints Handling Procedure of Corpus Christi School, Kingsville

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

Impartiality

Complaints 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

Complaints will remain confidential. The only people who will have access to information about the complaint will be the person making the complaint and the person investigating.

No victimisation

Complainants will not suffer in any way as a consequence. Corpus Christi School will ensure that a person who makes a complaint is not victimised in any way.

Timeliness

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

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 approach the person who is the cause of the complaint. 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 discrimination or harassment. Telling the person will give them a chance to stop or change what they are doing.

2. Go to the Principal, who will act as the Complaints Officer.

If you don't believe that you can approach the person directly, then go and explain the problem to the Principal of Corpus Christi School. The 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 your agreeing.

What happens next?

Once you have made the complaint the 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 to deal with your complaint, it will, with your consent, be referred to another appropriate person.

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.

The 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 Corpus Christi School is dealing with the complaint. The Principal will then take a written record of the complaint.

The 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 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 what action you would like taken, e.g. a written apology from the person, a written warning, etc.

Review

If the complaint remains unresolved it will be reviewed by the Parish Priest of Corpus Christi Parish, who will make a final decision as to the outcome of the complaint.

Possible outcomes

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

- ⇒ a written apology;
- ⇒ an official warning;
- ⇒ counselling;
- ⇒ disciplinary action; or
- ⇒ dismissal from Corpus Christi School.

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

- ⇒ relevant training for all staff; and/or
- ⇒ monitoring of behaviour of those involved.

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 Complaints Officer will make sure that whatever outcome is decided upon actually happens. He/she will also assess the effectiveness of the outcome from time to time.

Appeals

If you believe that the complaints procedure has not been followed properly, or that the outcome is unacceptable to you, you may appeal to the Parish Priest, who may designate a suitable third party if he so desires.

The Parish Priest 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 organise 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.

** This cannot and must not be construed as an implication of guilt. The monitoring of the behaviour of a particular individual should be interpreted as providing administrative support to protect that person from possible malicious complaint.*

*** In most cases, it will be difficult to prove that the complaint never happened at all unless the complainant makes this admission, or there is clear evidence from all attentive witnesses present that the incident did not take place. Failure to notice something on the part of witnesses does not prove that an incident did not take place. Go to an external agency*

If you are not happy with the way your complaint has been dealt with by Corpus Christi 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

This policy is to be reviewed as part of the school's review cycle.

This policy was last ratified in February 2015