

St Margaret Mary's Primary Merrylands Complaints & Grievances Policy



Complaint handling can be effective in resolving a problem before it becomes worse, providing a remedy to a parent, student or community member who has suffered disadvantage. It provides a basis for nurturing good relations between StMM's school, its parent body and the wider community. Complaints also provide StMM's with information about issues, weaknesses and educational programmes. Good administration involves regular review of existing programs, and the lessons learnt from complaints can feed into that process. Acceptance of these points is reflected in a well-developed complaint handling system built on the essential principles for effective complaint handling.

What we believe:

- Every child has a right to learn, feel safe, secure, valued and respected
- Parents and teachers are partners
- The multicultural nature of our school is something to be celebrated
- Members of the school community are expected to exhibit responsible behaviour at all times.
- Every member of the school community has the right to feel safe and secure.
- Members of the school community are expected to treat each other with mutual respect.
- There should be clear guidelines available to all members of the school community on how to deal with all aspects of complaints or grievances.

What we do:

- Encourage all members of the school community to exercise responsible behaviour towards each other.
- Make every effort to provide a safe and secure environment for all members of the school community.
- Deal with all issues in a confidential manner keeping the individuals wellbeing at the centre of the process.
- Continually remind all members of the school community that it is important to treat each other with mutual respect.
- Make staff aware at staff meetings and briefing meetings that it is important to seek out and talk to a trusted colleague regarding all aspects of impending complaints or grievances.
- If appropriate, staff are encouraged to speak with the Principal in relation to complaints and grievances.
- A Complaints Register is maintained and kept in the Principal's Office
- All necessary documentation outlining the processes for dealing with complaints or grievances are made available to members of the school community when requested.

How we do it:

- Staff, students and parents are reminded at different times that the mission statement underpins all that occurs in the school community.
- Generally follow the procedures as outlined in Appendix A and based on the principles of PROCEDURAL FAIRNESS at St Margaret Mary's Primary
- The StMM's Leadership Team, school committees and all members of the school community are encouraged to maintain vigilance in all matters concerning safety and security.
- Staff are encourage to seek out trusted colleagues and mentors throughout the school community.
- Members of the school community are informed that complaints or grievances should be addressed to the principal or other appropriate member of the school community.
- Significant complaints are recorded in the school's complaint register which is securely kept in the Principal's office.

How we support it:

- Make documentation outlining the processes for dealing with complaints or grievances available to any member of the school community who requests it.
- Seek the advice the DoSP when necessary

Area of School: Partnership
Code for 247: 1816 MR 514
Review Responsibility: Leadership Team
Review Date: 2017

Procedure for handling complaints consistently.

Listen to the complaint. Accept ownership of the problem. Apologise. Don't blame others. Thank the parent / student or community member for bringing the problem to your attention.

Be understanding. Remember, the person is complaining about our school, not about you personally. Be calm, cheerful and helpful. Where possible, let the person know that you will take responsibility for resolving the problem.

Record the complaint. Detail the complaint so that you and other staff know exactly what the problem is. Have one place to record complaints and the actions taken to resolve them. This lets you see any patterns emerge over time. Complaints about a particular process or person might indicate that changes need to be made. Staff can also see what was done to resolve complaints in the past.

Make sure you have all the facts. Check that you understand the details while the person is making the complaint, and ask questions if necessary. This will also let them know that you are taking their complaint seriously.

Discuss options for fixing the problem. At the very least, a sincere apology costs nothing. Plan a way forward to give feedback and solutions to the person.

Keep your promises. Don't promise things that you can't deliver. In handling complaints it is better to under-promise and over-deliver.

Be quick. If complaints take several days to resolve or are forgotten, they can escalate.

Follow up. Record the person's / student contact details and follow up to see if they were happy with how their complaint was handled. Let them know what you are doing to avoid the problem in the future.

PROCEDURAL FAIRNESS at St Margaret Mary's Primary

Procedural fairness is a basic right of all when dealing with authorities. It refers to what is sometimes described as the 'hearing rule' and the 'right to an unbiased decision'.

ELEMENT 1 – The right to be heard, which includes:

- The right to know the purpose of the particular decision making process and the consequences that flow from it.
- The right to know the ways in which the issues will be determined.
- The right to be fully informed of the allegations and of any other information which will be taken into account in making a decision.
- The right to have a reasonable opportunity to respond to the allegations and any other information that will be taken into account in making a decision.
- The right to an appeal.

ELEMENT 2 – The right of a person to an impartial decision.

- The right to impartiality in the investigation and decision making process.
- The right to an absence of bias in the decision maker

Procedural fairness includes making available to students and parents or caregivers the policies and procedures under which disciplinary action is taken.

It also includes providing details of an allegation relating to a specific matter or incident.

This will usually involve providing an outline of the allegations made in witness statements and consideration of witness protection.

As part of ensuring the right to be heard, schools could establish any need for parents / caregivers to be provided with interpreter services and, if required, make arrangements for such services to be available.