



Complaint Management and Resolution Policy

May 2023

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS BROKEN BAY

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Rationale

Catholic Schools Broken Bay (CSBB) is committed to providing a harmonious and safe environment for all students, parents/carers, and staff. This policy is intended to ensure that complaints are received, managed, and resolved fairly, efficiently and effectively. This Policy provides guidance on the key principles and concepts of the Complaint Resolution system for both parents/carers, staff and others who wish to make a complaint.

Guiding Principles and Objectives

Effective management and resolution of complaints assists CSBB to build partnership in education through open communication about concerns, complaints, and issues. It includes supporting participation giving opportunities for parents and members of the school community to provide feedback and constructive suggestions to schools and the system.

This policy document is consistent with the requirements prescribed by the New South Wales Education Standards Authority (NESA) with respect to ensuring all schools in Catholic Schools Broken Bay Diocese provide a safe and supportive environment to their students and establishes a process for raising and responding to matters of concern, complaints and grievances identified by students, families, or the wider community.

This policy is based on the following guiding principles, which are informed by the Australian Standard-Guidelines for Complaint Management in Organisations (AS/NZ 100002:2014).

1. **Subsidiarity:** We encourage matters to be raised with the most relevant person whenever possible, and for decision-making to occur as close to the affected people as able.
2. **Procedural fairness:** We will engage in fair and reasonable decision-making, which is balanced, has concern for all parties, avoids disadvantage to complainants, and upholds the common good.
3. **Visibility:** We make available information about how and where to make a complaint, as well as how the complaint will be handled. This includes the provision of a Feedback form. The actions undertaken to respond to a complaint are documented, including the reasons underpinning any decisions made.
4. **Accessibility:** Complaints can be made in person, by phone or in writing. Where a complaint is made in person or by phone, a request may be made to document the complaint in writing. Support will be given to parents/carers with disability, including enabling the parent/carer to seek the services of an advocate.

5. **Responsiveness:** We aim to resolve complaints promptly. All parties will be kept informed of progress and the reasons for any decisions and any resulting outcomes or actions.
6. **Objectivity and accountability:** We treat each complaint in an equitable, objective, transparent and unbiased manner.
7. **Protection of Privacy:** Personal and identifiable information concerning any complaint should be actively protected from disclosure except where needed in relation to the complaint. This means that the complaint should only be discussed with those directly involved in the complaint resolution process.
8. **Student-focused:** We welcome feedback including complaints and are committed to resolving complaints with the educational wellbeing of students as the priority.
9. **Reconciliation:** We seek to maintain, restore, and strengthen relationships through complaints management. The innate dignity of all people will be respected in the complaint handling process.
10. **Continuous Improvement:** We regularly review our complaint resolution processes for improvement. Complaint data and feedback is used to identify recurrent themes and to implement improvement measures where appropriate.

Policy Statement

1. CSBB is committed to:
 - supporting an environment where issues and concerns can be raised
 - providing a fair, efficient, and accessible complaints resolution process
 - timely resolution of complaints, at the first level where possible
 - strengthening the way in which we handle and resolve complaints.
2. A complaint can be an expression of dissatisfaction made by a member of the CSBB community about any aspect of services provided by CSBB, about the performance of a staff member or school, or in relation to application or non-application of existing practices, policies, or procedures.
3. All members of a school and the wider CSBB community have an obligation to treat others with respect and civility, and not raise frivolous, malicious, or vexatious complaints.
4. Most complaints are to be addressed and managed at an individual school level and be informally resolved at the most immediate level possible, that is, directly between the individuals who are party to the complaint.
5. Where a complaint is made to CSBB central office that has not been initially discussed at school level, then the complainant will usually be directed back to the school in the first instance.
6. Wherever possible, staff should attempt to directly resolve a complaint raised by a parent or member of the school community by seeking to understand the matter, providing relevant information and/or feedback regarding the raised concern.

7. If a complaint cannot be resolved directly or face to face, it should be referred to the school principal, who may choose to delegate resolution of the complaint to a member of their leadership team.
8. Where a complaint cannot be resolved at the local school level, or the complaint is regarding a principal, the complainant should contact the CSBB Community Engagement Team in central office, who will assess the matter to determine if it requires intervention, mediation, or formal review. Any complaints regarding staff conduct towards students received by the CSBB Community Engagement Team will be directed to the CSBB Safeguarding office.
Note: If the complaint is about the conduct of a staff member towards a student/s, the matter will be addressed in accordance with the CSBB Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy and should not be raised according to this policy. Additionally, any concern about a student wellbeing or safety may be reported to the appropriate authorities as governed by State and Commonwealth Law.
9. Individual schools and CSBB adopt a restorative practice to the resolution of complaints, unless deemed inappropriate in the circumstances.
10. Anonymous complaints will be considered by the Principal or Community Engagement Team according to the nature and seriousness of the complaint; whether there is sufficient information for the matter to be addressed; or whether there is a statutory requirement for investigation.

Further detail on the Complaint Resolution procedures can be found [here](#).

Audience

This policy applies to all CSBB entities i.e., school-based and Central Office staff receiving and managing complaints about an aspect of service operations, staff, students, or people associated with any CSBB entity or using CSBB facilities.

Applicability

This document applies to all CSBB schools and offices in handling complaints made in respect of services provided by CSBB, its schools or against people employed or engaged by CSBB. However, it excludes receipt or handling of allegations about CSBB workers, which are to be dealt with under Safeguarding and/or Capability and Enablement Frameworks. The policy excludes staff grievances which should be raised under the relevant processes.

This policy also excludes complaints in respect of Diocesan matters and employees which are dealt with under the Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay Complaint Handling Policy.

This document and the associated procedures are not applicable to complaints

related to ongoing legal proceedings, industrial agreement, or under the jurisdiction of other organisations/statutory bodies, including, but not limited to, the Department of Communities and Justice, the Police, or the Office of the Children's Guardian.

Schools have local arrangements to allow students to raise matters of concern and contribute their views.

Key Responsibilities

Director of Schools

- Foster a workplace that is respectful and productive and promote a culture that values complaint feedback and demonstrates commitment to effective resolution.
- Make final determinations about complaints, if review by the Office of the Director is warranted.

Senior Workstream Lead, Governance, Legal and Risk

- Ensure there is an effective, timely, impartial, and clear process for dealing with complaints.
- Review trends arising from complaints and supporting recommendations for systemic improvements.

Community Engagement Team

- Oversee the operation of the complaints resolution system, policy, and associated procedures.
- Manage and respond to complaints when a parent believes that the school has not responded to their complaint in a fair, effective, and timely manner or the response by the school is unsatisfactory.
- Support staff to handle complaints promptly and responsively, including identifying and delivering on training needs.
- Identify and investigate systemic issues arising from complaints and recommend organisational improvements.
- Provide regular reports to the Senior Workstream Lead, Governance and Director of Schools.

School Principals

- Respond to and address complaints raised by members of the school community.
- Ensure a record of all complaints and their resolution is maintained at the school.
- Identify and support school-based staff to manage complaints in accordance with this policy and associated procedure, encouraging staff to resolve concerns directly wherever possible.

All CSBB Staff (School based and Central Office based)

- Provide all relevant information/documents to assist in the investigation and/or resolution of the matter.
- Engage openly and in good faith in the complaint management process, including participating in discussion with other parties to resolve the concerns.
- Respond to requests for information within a reasonable time.
- Respect the rights of those individuals involved in the complaint management and resolution processes.
- Ensure student voice is heard and understood throughout the process and that the interests of students are paramount.

Complainants

- Provide a clear and honest account of concerns and expectations, including relevant information to assist in the investigation and/or resolution of the matter, including desired outcome.
- Engage openly and in good faith, including following the complaint management process and limiting discussion with other parties who are not involved in resolving the concerns.
- Respond to requests for information within a reasonable time.
- Respect the rights of those individuals involved in the complaint management and resolution processes.

Related Resources

CSBB Catholic Charter, CSBB Code of Conduct

Related Processes/Procedures

Complaint Management and Resolution Process (2023)
Complaint Resolution & Feedback Form (2023)

Related Policies

Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay Complaint Handling Policy
Managing Workplace Complaints Policy
Conflict of Interest Policy
Related Parties Policy
Privacy Policy

Review

The Complaint Management and Resolution Policy and related Procedures/Processes will be reviewed every three (3) years unless there is a legislative or regulatory requirement to do so earlier.

Approval Date/Revision Schedule

Approved by: Danny Casey – Director of Schools
Date Approved: May 2023
Date of next review: May 2026

GLOSSARY

Complaint

A complaint involves an expression of dissatisfaction, or a concern made about a school, including process, policy, curriculum or community concerns. Complaints are an opportunity to identify issues and take action to improve the situation or relationship and drive a culture of continuous improvement.

Complainant

Complainant is a person, organisation or advocate making a complaint.

Feedback

Feedback includes opinions, comments and expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, to or about schools or the CSBB complaint handling process, where a response is not explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.

Good faith

Good faith is a sincere intention to deal fairly with others without malice or the desire to harm others.

Restorative practice

Restorative practice is an approach that puts the reparation of harm done to relationships and people over and above the need for assigning blame and dispensing punishment where someone has caused offence. It is not appropriate in every case.

Resolution

Resolution is when issue or complaint raised has been dealt with in line with CSBB's Complaints Management Policy and Process. The resolution may or may not be to the complainant's satisfaction.