

St Mary's School Policies



Title:	GRIEVANCE AND COMPLAINTS POLICY
Rationale/Purpose:	<p>St Mary's St Kilda East, 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.</p> <p>Catholic teaching emphasises the primacy of parents as the first teachers of their children. Within the reality of the schooling experience, it is recognised that from time to time misunderstandings and differences of opinion will occur, and that these need to be resolved satisfactorily in partnership with the stakeholders involved. Addressing such matters within a framework of dignity, respect and truth can provide powerful opportunities to model the love of Christ in the reality of our contemporary world.</p>
Policy Statement:	<p>This policy outlines St Mary's St Kilda East complaints resolutions process for external complaints.</p> <p>This policy does not relate to critical incidents, emergency management, criminal offences, conduct of religious clergy or other religious persons.</p>
Aims:	
Action Guidelines:	<p>In receiving and responding to complaints, the following guiding principles will inform and direct the actions of personnel at St Mary's: Complaints of a school based nature are best received and managed at the school level, with the parties involved expected to act in good faith and work together with respect to openness to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties</p> <p>Complainants can expect their concern or complaint to be responded to in a respectful and timely manner</p> <p>School staff members will be informed of formal complaints that are made about them</p> <p>Complainants and the person(s) against whom the complaint is made have the right to be heard and to expect that procedural fairness will be observed</p> <p>Confidentiality, protection of privacy, respect, access, dignity and impartiality will form the basis of the complaints resolution process</p> <p>The complaints resolution process will seek to achieve the restoration of good and respectful relationships</p> <p>The best interests of the school community will generally exceed those of any individual</p> <p>Complaints against teachers and staff</p> <p>The nature of the complaint will determine who is the most appropriate person or body to manage a complainant's concerns.</p>

Misconduct or serious misconduct

All complaints of alleged misconduct or serious misconduct by a teacher or staff member should be reported to the principal of St Mary's. Complaints about teachers can also be reported to the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT), which is the regulator in relation to the registration and investigation of serious misconduct (including conduct which is of a physical or emotional nature) of all teachers in the state of Victoria. If unsure if the complaint constitutes serious misconduct by a teacher, contact the VIT on telephone 1300 888 067 or Email vit@vit.edu.au

In some cases, certain actions which involve physical or emotional misconduct, such as unlawful assault or threats to the person, may constitute a criminal offence. These types of offences should be reported to and investigated by the police. Initial consultation with the principal of the school may help to determine the appropriate course of action in these circumstances.

Child abuse (including sexual offences)

There are legal obligations on all adults to report child abuse to police once a reasonable belief is formed that a sexual offence has been committed against a child. Failure to disclose a sexual offence against a child is a criminal offence under Section 327 of the *Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)* and applies to all adults (18 years and over) in Victoria.

Complaints involving communication with children under 16 years by teachers, staff or any other person to prepare or 'groom' a child for future sexual activity is a criminal offence under section 49B (2) of the *Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.)* and must be reported to the police. The offence of grooming applies to any person under aged 18 years or over and does not apply to communication between people who are both under 18 years of age.

For further information, refer to the following St Mary's policies:

Child Safety

Child Protection

St Mary's Code of Conduct

Student Safety with External Providers

Working with Children's Policy

Complaints against the Principal of the school

In the case of complaints involving the Principal of St Mary's, the Parish Priest of St Mary's (employer) should be informed immediately.

Anonymous Complaints

The personnel of St Mary's endeavour to address and respond to all complaints. In some situations, they may not be able to fully address complaints that are made anonymously or without sufficient detail being provided to enable an investigation or resolution of the matter. To ensure procedural fairness, respondents have a right to know the particulars of the allegations being made against them, and be given an opportunity to respond to them.

Procedures for complaints about issues arising at St Mary's

St Mary's aims to develop and maintain a fair, effective and efficient complaint-handling process so that complaints about events or decisions at the school can be addressed. The following steps can guide the process in making a complaint about issues arising at the school.

Clarify the issue

Be clear about the topic or issue to be discussed.

Be mindful of the need too ascertain all the facts relating to the circumstances of the topic or issue.

Think about what would be an acceptable outcome.

Check and observe the school's complaints policy or guidelines

Follow the school complaints policy or guidelines which may include

Write an appropriate note or email to the relevant person (e.g. classroom teacher) outlining concerns.

Make an appointment to speak on the phone or in person with the relevant person(s).

Consider speaking with the school's student wellbeing leader if appropriate.

Arrange meeting times or phone calls through the school office.

Ensure the relevant person(s) is given a reasonable amount of time to take the steps required to resolve or address the concerns.

Contact the principal or deputy principal

If the issue remains unresolved after discussion with the relevant person(s) at the school, discuss the concern with the principal or deputy principal.

Request an appointment with the principal or deputy principal through the school office.

Note that the principal may ask another senior staff member to represent him/her. Also, if the relevant staff member is going to be present at the meeting, the meeting time is more likely to occur outside classroom hours.

Complaint escalation

If the matter cannot be resolved at the school level, or if the complaint is about the principal of the school, complainants may contact the parish priest or Catholic Education Melbourne (southern region).

Raising a concern or complaint

A parent/guardian can raise concerns or complaints about school operations.

About what/issue	Who to contact	How
Classroom activities, class curriculum, friendships issues	Your child's Class Teacher or appropriate Specialist Teacher	Telephone, email Arrange an appointment
Complex student issues, Student welfare,	Deputy Principal	In writing by hand, email or mail.
School Policy, School Management, School Curriculum, Staff Members	Principal	Telephone to arrange an appointment.
School Fees & payments General enquiries	Office staff	Telephone, in person

	<p>PLEASE ... Raise your concern as soon as you can after the issue occurs Put it in writing, providing detailed factual information Maintain and respect everyone's privacy and confidentiality Be calm, courteous, honest and sincere</p> <p>PLEASE ALSO ... Recognise everyone has rights and responsibilities that must be balanced Respect and understand each other's point of view; value difference rather than judge and blame Realise we need to achieve an outcome acceptable to everyone involved</p> <p>ADDRESSING COMPLAINTS ... Our response will be prompt, courteous, efficient and fair. We will follow the process outlined below: Acknowledge your complaint by telephone, email or mail and let you know how long it will take to investigate (if appropriate) record details in the school's register of complaints Give you a copy of the Complaints Policy Investigate and provide a response as soon as possible Make every effort to resolve your complaint within 20 school days</p> <p>SOLUTION... When a complaint is justified, the school will work with you to find an appropriate solution such as An explanation or further information Mediation, counselling or other support An apology, expression of regret or admission of fault Change a decision Change policies, procedures or practices Cancel a debt Refund a fee</p> <p>The school will implement the remedy as soon as it can. If the remedy is ongoing, the school will try and keep you up to date with progress.</p>
Monitoring, reporting and review:	This policy will be reviewed in 2021.
Definitions:	A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with an action taken, decision made, service provided or handling of an issue at St Mary's within the Archdiocese of Melbourne.
References:	