



Sources of Authority

CECWA	Community
Executive Directives	Dispute and Complaint Resolution

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1. Aim

St Marcellin Catholic College aims to serve as a model for all within Western Australia who seek to create genuine communities. Such communities are founded upon a shared commitment to the common good (Mandate, 6).

At times, disagreements with decisions may arise, resulting in disputes or complaints. The interactions and protocols of St Marcellin Catholic College emphasise the sacredness of human life, the dignity of the individual, and the paramount importance of student wellbeing and safety.

The College is committed to ensuring that all disputes and complaints are managed fairly, objectively and in a timely manner, reflecting the principles of participation, co-responsibility and subsidiarity, and consistent with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

The College provides a considered, respectful, and culturally safe response to any informal or formal dispute or complaint between parties, or concerning any action, directly associated with the College.

2. Scope

This procedure applies to all members of the College community, including:

- Students (children and young people)
- Parents and carers
- Staff
- Volunteers
- Contractors
- Visitors and members of the wider community

3. Definitions

3.1 Complaint

An expression of dissatisfaction with Catholic Education policies, procedures, decisions, omissions, quality of service, or staff or student behaviour.

3.2 Dispute

A conflict regarding a right, claim or demand met by contrary claims or allegations.



3.3 Procedural Fairness

A process in which decisions are made fairly and without bias, ensuring:

- A hearing appropriate to the circumstances
- Decisions supported by evidence
- Inquiry into matters in dispute
- The paramount importance of student wellbeing and safety

3.4 Students

Defined as children and young people enrolled at St Marcellin Catholic College.

4. Guiding Principles

All complaints management at St Marcellin Catholic College is guided by the following:

All decisions must reflect the paramount importance of the student(s).

- The safety, wellbeing and best interests of students are paramount
- Complaints are welcomed as an opportunity for accountability and improvement
- Processes are accessible, child-focused and culturally safe
- All complaints are treated seriously, respectfully and confidentially
- Legal, regulatory and reporting obligations are met
- Procedural fairness applies to all parties
- No person will be disadvantaged or subject to reprisal for raising a complaint or concern in good faith, or for participating in a complaints process.

5. Procedures

Making a Complaint

- Any person may make a complaint orally or in writing about any matter arising from the operations of the College.
- Complaints may be made by or on behalf of children and young people, including through a trusted adult or support person.
- Information about the complaints process is made available via the College website and communicated in accessible ways.
- Complainants are personally responsible and liable for the content of their complaint
- It is preferable that complaints are identifiable and verifiable. However, where a complaint or information is anonymous or from an unverifiable source, it will be assessed. Where such information raises concern for



student safety or wellbeing, the Principal will determine the appropriate course of action.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 All staff and volunteers must:

- Take complaints seriously
- Act promptly
- Report concerns in accordance with College policy and child safety obligations

6.2 The Principal is responsible for:

- Managing and resolving complaints referred to them
- Ensuring procedural fairness
- Determining mandatory or statutory reporting obligations
- Maintaining appropriate records
- Ensuring that decisions and reviews are based on procedural fairness.
- Managing the wider impacts on the school community or workplace
- The Principal may seek external assistance or expertise, including mediation, and may engage the Catholic Education WA Employment and Community Relations Team where appropriate to assist in the resolution of a complaint or dispute.

6.3 The Executive Director of Catholic Education WA manages complaints that cannot be resolved at the school level, or where the complaint concerns the Principal.

Breaches of College policy, including the Code of Conduct, create an obligation to act and report, including to external authorities where required.

7. Managing Complaints – Subsidiarity and Resolution

Disputes and complaints are managed according to the Principle of Subsidiarity. Where appropriate, immediate parties attempt resolution in the first instance. Parties may involve a support person. If unresolved, or due to the nature of the complaint, the matter may be referred to the Principal. Where a CECWA policy provides a specific mechanism, that mechanism must be followed. Where there is a binding legislative or regulatory mechanism relevant to the matter raised, including an Enterprise Bargaining Agreement, that mechanism must be followed.



All complaints are:

- Acknowledged within three (3) days
- Responded to promptly, thoroughly and respectfully
- Managed with awareness of wider impacts on the school community
- Additional supports will be provided to children and young people, and to complainants who may be experiencing vulnerability, to ensure the complaints process is accessible, safe and understood.

8. Complaints Involving the Principal

Where a complaint concerns the Principal and cannot reasonably be resolved directly, the matter is referred to the Executive Director of Catholic Education WA.

9. Reporting to Authorities and Cooperation with Law Enforcement

Where a complaint involves:

- Allegations of child abuse
- Risk of significant harm
- Criminal behaviour
- Mandatory reporting obligations

The College ensures:

- Timely reporting to relevant authorities
- Compliance with all statutory requirements
- Full cooperation with law enforcement and regulatory bodies
- Internal processes do not override external reporting obligations.

10. Review, Appeals and External Processes

Parties may request a review of the Principal's decision or once a decision has been made at any formal stage, in writing to the Executive Director of Catholic Education WA. The Executive Director ensures a formal examination of the complaint.

Parties are notified of findings and the basis for those findings.



An individual has the right to appeal to the Minister for Education under the *School Education Act 1999*. Appeals are limited to matters of process.

A complaint may be made to an external body or tribunal at any time. The Principal or CEWA may decide to pause internal handling when an external body or tribunal is involved.

Information about complaint outcomes will be communicated to the extent permitted by privacy, confidentiality, and employment or industrial law obligations.

11. Role of the Director General

The Director General of the Department of Education is responsible for ensuring that Catholic Education WA (CEWA) and its schools comply with the Registration Standards for Non-Government Schools in Western Australia, including Standards 9.1 and 9.2 relating to complaints management.

Any student, parent, or community member is entitled to contact the Director General with concerns about how the College or CEWA has handled a complaint. Information about raising concerns with the Department of Education is available on the Department's website:

<https://www.education.wa.edu.au/non-government-school-concerns>

The Director General has authority under the *School Education Act 1999* to monitor compliance, request information, and investigate potential breaches of the Registration Standards.

While the Director General may consider whether CEWA or the College has breached the Registration Standards, the Director General does not have the power to intervene in the resolution of individual complaints or to override decisions made by CEWA or the College.

Information about the role of the Director General and relevant external complaint pathways is made available to the school community through College publications and the College website.

Where a complaint relates to a school with a governing body, or to a school that is independently registered, the complaint must be forwarded to the relevant non-diocesan governing body, in accordance with Registration Standards requirements.



12. Record Keeping, Privacy and Legal Compliance

Records relating to disputes and complaints are retained and disposed of in accordance with legislative requirements, CEWA guidelines, and approved records management and retention schedules.

The Principal and CEWA maintain accurate, secure records of:

- Complaints received
- Evidence considered
- Actions taken
- Decisions and outcomes

All information is handled in accordance with:

- Privacy legislation
- Employment and industrial law
- Confidentiality and natural justice requirements
- Complaint information is shared only with those who need to know for investigation and resolution.

13. Records relating to child safety matters

- Complaints, allegations and findings related to child abuse or grooming (whether involving current or former staff, students or other persons) are recorded in a secure and restricted-access system, separate from general community complaints where appropriate.
- Such records are clearly identifiable, securely stored, and accessible only to authorised personnel (normally the Principal and CEWA). Reasonable steps are taken to protect these records from misuse, unauthorised access, modification or disclosure.
- Records that may be required for investigations, inquiries or legal proceedings are preserved in full and are not disposed of except in accordance with legislative requirements, CEWA directions and approved records retention schedules.



14. Continuous Improvement - Review and Evaluation

Complaints are monitored to identify trends, recurring concerns, response timeframes and any indicators of systemic risk.

Complaints data is reviewed by College leadership to evaluate:

- Consistency and fairness of decision-making
- Timeliness and effectiveness of responses
- Opportunities for early resolution and improved communication

The review process includes reflection on significant or complex matters to assess whether procedures were followed appropriately and whether improvements are required.

Outcomes of reviews inform targeted actions such as policy refinement, updates to complaints procedures, staff training, supervision or communication strategies.

The complaints handling framework is formally reviewed at least annually, or more frequently if required by emerging issues, legislative changes or CEWA directives. Review findings and improvement actions are documented to support transparency, accountability and continuous improvement across the College.

15. Analysis of Complaints and Incidents

Complaints, concerns and safety incidents are:

- Analysed to identify trends
- Used to detect systemic risks or failures
- Incorporated into planning and improvement processes
- Information from complaints is used to strengthen systems and reduce the risk of similar incidents occurring again.

16. Reporting to the School Community

De-identified information and outcomes from reviews are reported to the school community through:

- Annual reporting
- Child safety communications
- Leadership and governance processes



17. COMMITMENT TO PROCEDURAL FAIRNESS AND CULTURAL SAFETY

All complaints are managed in a manner that upholds:

- A hearing appropriate to the circumstances
- Impartial and unbiased decision-making
- Decisions supported by evidence
- Inquiry into matters in dispute
- Respect for cultural safety, dignity and diversity

18. REVIEW & TRAINING

Staff and relevant volunteers receive regular training in complaints handling, child safety obligations, and mandatory reporting requirements.

This Complaints Handling Procedure is to be reviewed:

- Annually

Authorised by	Anita Da Silva	Signature	<i>Anita Da Silva</i>
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