



# Catholic Schools Office Diocese of Armidale

## A GUIDE TO MAKING A COMPLAINT

### INTRODUCTION

Our schools are committed to providing an harmonious and safe environment for all students, parents and staff. We understand that parents/ caregivers can sometimes feel concerned about something that is taking place at the school. It is important that these concerns are raised and responded to in a timely and respectful way. We value complaints and are committed to ensuring that every complaint is handled fairly, effectively and efficiently. This brochure summarises our approach to complaints handling. For more detailed information see our Complaints Handling Policy.

### WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made about a school. Complaints may be spoken or set out in an email or letter. If the matter is serious, a written complaint is best.

### HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT?

If you have a problem or concern which you wish to raise you should first talk to the person with whom you have the issue.

If you feel that you cannot approach the person directly or you are not happy with their response or the complaint is very serious, you should make an appointment to meet with the principal.

Any complaint received by a school that relates to the principal will be referred to the school's consultant at the Catholic Schools Office.

### WHAT KIND OF COMPLAINTS ARE NOT DEALT WITH UNDER THE COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY?

- Child protection issues
- Employment Relations
- Workplace Bullying
- Harassment

The principal or Catholic Schools Office can advise you about specific procedures for making complaints of these types.

### OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

We will:

- deal with your complaint professionally, efficiently and impartially
- keep you informed of our progress
- give you reasons for our decisions treat you with courtesy and respect



### YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

To help us do the best job we can, we ask that you:

- clearly identify the matters you are complaining about and the outcome you hope for
- give us all the information you have, or are aware of, in support of your complaint, at the beginning
- provide us with your name and contact details
- tell us new facts or let us know if you no longer want our help
- cooperate with us
- treat us with courtesy and respect

# **HOW WILL WE ADDRESS YOUR COMPLAINT?**

We aim to ensure that more minor or straightforward matters are resolved simply and quickly, by discussion between the appropriate people. When we receive your complaint we will:

- give you the opportunity to explain both your concerns and the outcome you are looking for
- offer reasonable assistance to help you to make your complaint and for you to understand the procedures we will follow to handle your complaint and maintain confidentiality as far as practicable. If the complaint is about the behaviour of another person, that person has a right to know the basis of the complaint and to respond.
- resolve the complaint as quickly as possible and advise you and any person whose behaviour was the subject of the complaint of the outcome and the reasons for it.
- assess the facts and circumstances of the situation objectively and resolve the complaint fairly.
- ensure there are no adverse consequences for you or your child as result of you making a complaint.

## **WHAT MIGHT BE THE OUTCOME?**

*If the complaint is upheld, some possible outcomes might be:*

- an agreement on how to resolve the complaint
- a verbal or written apology
- an explanation
- the review of a policy or procedure
- where a staff member is the subject of the complaint, disciplinary action
- where a student is the subject of the complaint, a range of sanctions as set out in the school's discipline policy
- relevant training for staff or students
- monitoring of behaviour of staff, students or parents
- counselling for the parties involved

*Privacy considerations may mean that we are unable to give you any specific information about outcomes for any student or staff member who you are complaining about.*

## **WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU ARE NOT SATISFIED WITH THE OUTCOME?**

Where a complaint has been dealt with at the school but you are not satisfied with the outcome or the complaint directly concerns the principal, you should contact the Office of the Director at the Catholic Schools Office (6772 7388). You will be asked to explain your problem or issue and your call will be directed to the appropriate person.

## **HOW WILL RECORDS OF THE COMPLAINT BE MAINTAINED?**

Records of complaints, interviews and other documentation relating to a complaint will be kept in a restricted access file.

## **ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS**

You can choose to remain anonymous but it may not be possible to act upon your complaint unless you provide your name, address and the name of the school that the complaint relates to.