

St. Therese's School, Essendon

Concerns and Complaints Policy



Rationale

St. Therese's is committed to promoting and developing positive relationships between members of our school community and, as such, has a responsibility to ensure high standards of conduct are maintained by staff, students and parents/caregivers. To achieve this, it is important that members have a right to raise concerns and complaints they may have and to have them attended to in an appropriate, fair, efficient manner and in accordance with relevant legislation.

St. Therese's system of addressing complaints and concerns is based on a commitment to :

- providing a safe and supportive learning environment
- providing a safe environment for all members of staff
- creating positive relationships between students, staff and parents/caregivers.

This policy and the procedures outlined help ensure that the concerns and complaints of parents and caregivers are handled in a timely and fair manner, with the intention to resolve the issue to the satisfaction of all parties involved.

Procedure

Parents/caregivers should follow the procedure outlined in this policy.

Raising a concern or complaint

A parent / caregiver can raise concerns or complaints about any aspect of the school's operations in the following way:

Issue/Concern	Who To Contact First	How
Classroom activities, class curriculum and learning environment, friendship issues	Your child's classroom teacher/s or applicable specialist teacher	Via telephone or arrange an appointment
Complicated student issues, Student Wellbeing, school curriculum, staff members	Member of school leadership team	Via email, telephone, letter, or arrange an appointment.
School policies or school organisation and management	Principal or Deputy Principal/s	
School fees & payments, general enquiries	Office Staff	Telephone or in person at the office

Please note: When raising a concern, parents should use the above information to determine which staff member to contact with regard to their concern. Under no circumstances should parents make contact with the child or parent they perceive to be related to their concern.

If your concern or complaint is not sufficiently addressed by the first point of contact, please contact a member (or a different member) of the school leadership team.

If the issue under investigation is beyond the capacity or jurisdiction of the school, the matter will be referred to the appropriate authority and the complainant will be informed of the referral.

When voicing your concern/complaint please remember:

- raise your concern in a timely manner in relation to when the issue occurs
- remain respectful, honest and calm
- respect all parties' entitlement to privacy and confidentiality
- be understanding that other parties may have a different point of view
- recognise that a resolution will need to be reached that is acceptable to all involved.

The following behaviour will not be accepted when voicing your concern / complaint:

- shouting at a member of staff, either via telephone or in person
- physically or verbally intimidating a staff member
- using aggressive hand gestures/ body movement
- making or writing rude, defamatory or abusive comments about a staff member
- swearing using offensive language
- using any form of physical violence towards a staff member
- approaching any child and exhibiting any of the above behaviours toward them or in their presence
- approaching any other parent and exhibiting any of the above behaviours toward them or in their presence.

Confidentiality

The school will endeavour to provide clarity as to what information will and will not be treated with confidentiality. In order to maintain a reasonable degree of confidentiality, all parties should only share information about the complaint to those who need to know in order to:

- refer the complaint
- manage the complaint
- provide advice and support in relation to the process
- review and provide a decision as to the outcome of the complaint.

Responding to complaints

The school will make every effort to:

- acknowledge the complaint promptly, whether formally or informally
- establish a clear timeline for investigating and responding to the complaint, where required, and adhere to the timeline
- provide the complainant with the relevant policy and procedures in order to clearly establish expectations at an early stage of the complaints handling process.

Not every issue will require a formal written acknowledgment. Complaints of a less serious nature may be acknowledged verbally and resolved without the need for a formal investigation or a written response.

Recording Complaints

The school will keep a record of complaints and concerns.

The record will contain the following information:

- the contact details of the complainant
- the date of the complaint and the method of communicating it to the school (e.g. in person, phone call, email, letter etc.)
- the nature of the complaint and the requested resolution
- the member of staff handling the issue
- any actions taken, investigations, etc
- a statement of the outcome, including the closure date and the date of advising the complainant of the outcome.

Options for resolving a complaint or concern

There are both formal and informal options for resolving a complaint/concern. It is recommended that informal options are pursued first, prior to formal resolutions being pursued. However, every concern/complaint will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

Informal options:

- Self-resolution: The parties involved may resolve the concerns in an open discussion. This option generally includes clarification as to the circumstances of the complaint. This option involves reflection and respectful conversation.
- Supported self-resolution: the parties may be provided with assistance to resolve the issue with the support of a staff member, member of leadership or school principal.
- Facilitated informal mediation: The parties may be assisted by a facilitator who has experience in mediation, who will assist in identifying issues, exploring options and considering alternative approaches in order to reach a resolution. The facilitator could be an external mediator, a member of the leadership team, the school psychologist or principal.

Formal options:

- Intervention: The school principal or another member of the school leadership team may meet with the parties involved either jointly or separately. If this does not resolve the issue then the principal/member of the leadership team may make a decision for resolution and notify the party/parties of that decision.
- Investigation: A complaint about a person concerning alleged breach of legislation or school policy may require a formal investigation prior to attempting to resolve the issue.

St Therese's will make every effort to attempt to resolve concerns and complaints at the school level. If a matter cannot be resolved at the school level, if the complainant is not satisfied with the school's resolution of the issue or if the complaint is about the principal of the school, complainants may contact Catholic Education Office Melbourne or the Northern Regional Office for support and advice. The complaint will then be handled in accordance with the Catholic Education Office Complaints Policy.

Possible resolutions

Resolution for a complainant may include:

- acknowledging that their concern has been considered seriously
 - acknowledging that the school is now alerted to a possible problem
-

- achieving an outcome which may be different from the one sought, but which resolves the complaint
- receiving a verbal or written apology
- achieving a change to a policy, procedure or practice that would prevent a recurrence of similar complaints.

Resolution for the school may involve:

- reaching an acceptable compromise solution
- dismissing the complaint (if appropriate)
- upholding the complaint and implementing a specific action, such as overturning a decision or providing an apology
- improving processes or procedures or their implementation
- increasing staff training and development
- improving implementation of school policies and procedures
- taking other actions to ensure that the matter is handled appropriately in future.

Communication and training

The school will ensure that information relating to the procedures for addressing concerns and complaints are easily accessible to all parents and caregivers. The school will ensure that all staff members are kept informed in relation to the procedures for resolving complaints. Additionally, the school will provide all staff members with support and training in relation to their responsibilities in addressing complaints and concerns.

Evaluation

This Policy will be reviewed as part of a cyclical process in accordance with the School Improvement Plan (SIP).

Document Control

Version	Author	Purpose/Change	Date
0.1	Various STS L'ship Members	Initial policy drafting	Pre 2018
0.2	STS Leadership Team	Various updates throughout policy	Mid 2018
1.0	STS Leadership Team	Policy reviewed	Mid 2019

