



St. Peter's

PRIMARY SCHOOL

Life to the Full

COMPLAINTS HANDLING AND GRIEVANCES POLICY

At St Peter's Catholic Primary School we believe:

That all members of the school community feel welcomed, supported, respected and safe because relationships have been developed and are valued.

Introduction

At St. Peter's, North Bendigo, we are committed to providing a pleasant work environment for all employees. We acknowledge, however, that employees can sometimes feel aggrieved about something happening at the school, which appears to be discriminatory or to constitute harassment. An employee can make a complaint about any decision; behaviour, act or omission (whether by the Principal, members of the leadership team or other staff/students) he/she feels is discriminatory or constitutes harassment or bullying.

The purpose of this document is to provide a procedure by which employees can have such complaints addressed.

If a member of our community feels they are being bullied, harassed or discriminated against, this complaints handling procedure is available for these concerns to be addressed.

Commitment to Child Safety

All students enrolled, and any child visiting, have the right to feel safe and be safe in all school environments and outside of school hours. The wellbeing of children in our care will always be our first priority and we have zero tolerance to child abuse. We aim to create a child safe and child friendly environment where children feel safe and are free to enjoy life to the full without any concern for their safety.

Key elements of our complaints handling procedure

The following are the key elements of our complaints handling procedure:

Impartiality

If you make a complaint, it will be investigated in a fair and impartial manner. No judgments or assumptions will be made, and no action will be taken until the investigation is complete. If a complaint is made against you, your rights will be protected and you will be given an opportunity to tell your side of the story.

Confidentiality

Any complaint made will remain confidential. The only people who will have access to information about the complaint will be the person making the complaint, any witnesses to the alleged inappropriate behaviour and the person or people investigating.

No victimisation

St. Peter's, North Bendigo, will do all it can to ensure a person who makes a complaint is not victimised in any way.

Timeliness

Each complaint will be finalised within as short a period as possible. All complaints should be finalised as soon as possible.

What to do if you have a complaint

1. Approach the person involved

In many situations, the most appropriate thing to do first is to tell the person who is the cause of the complaint how you feel. If the complaint is about their behaviour, tell them it is offensive/hurtful/not acceptable. If it is about a work decision, tell them why you think it is discriminatory or harassment. Telling the person will give them a chance to stop or change what they are doing.

2. Go to your designated leader

If you don't feel as if you can approach the person directly, then go and explain the problem to your designated leader or either of our Co-Principals. These people have experience as the first point of contact for people with complaints. Nothing will be done in relation to the complaint without your agreement.

You may also prefer to ask a colleague or another person to assist you as an advocate in this process. You may wish to discuss this option with your designated leader.

What happens next?

Once you have made the complaint, the designated leader will then consider whether there are any reasons why he/she should not be involved with the complaint. For example, the person you complained about may be a personal friend of theirs. If there is such a reason where it is inappropriate for the designated leader to deal with your complaint, it will, with your consent, be referred to another appropriate person.

The designated leader or agreed person will then interview you. During this interview, a number of things will be explained to you, such as what will happen if the complaint is found to be supported by the evidence, or if it is found to be not supported by the evidence. You will also be told where you can go for assistance if you are not happy with the way the school is dealing with the complaint. The interviewing staff member will take a written record of the complaint.

The interviewing staff member will then talk to the person about whom the complaint is made to hear that side of the story. Any witnesses will also be interviewed. These interviews will be conducted separately and impartially. The importance of confidentiality will be stressed to all parties and they will be warned of the consequences if there is a breach of confidentiality (e.g. possible defamation action, initiation of a complaint for harassment).

The interviewing staff member will then tell you what the other people said and discuss what should be done to sort out the problem.

Review

If the complaint remains unresolved it will be reviewed by the Co-Principals who will make a final decision as to the outcome of the complaint.

Possible Outcomes

If the complaint is proved, the following are possible outcomes:

- A written apology
- An official warning
- Counselling
- Disciplinary action or
- Dismissal

If the complaint is unproved (not enough evidence), possible outcomes are:

- Relevant training for all staff; and/or
- Monitoring of behaviour of staff

If the complaint is proved not to have happened at all, the following are possible outcomes:

- Counselling for the person who made the complaint
- A written apology
- An official warning
- Disciplinary action
- Dismissal

The Co-Principals and/or interviewing staff member will make sure that whatever outcome is decided upon occurs. He/she will also assess the effectiveness of the outcome.

Appeals

If you feel the complaints procedure has not been followed properly, or the outcome is unacceptable to you, you may appeal to the Co-Principals.

The Co-Principals will look at the way the complaint was handled and examine the outcome. If he/she believes it was handled properly and the outcome was appropriate he/she will take no further action. If he/she thinks the complaint was not handled properly, or the outcome was inappropriate, he/she will organize for the complaint to be looked at again.

The appeal will be dealt with by someone other than the person who first handled the complaint.

Go to an external agency.

If you are not happy with the way your complaint has been dealt with by the school, you may wish to go to an external agency for further advice and assistance. You may take your complaint to an external agency at any stage in the procedure if you are unhappy with progress in dealing with your complaint.

Review of Procedures and Policy

This Complaints Handling & Grievance Procedure will be reviewed every three years, or as required.