

Communication Policy

Rationale:

At St. Mary's Primary School, we are committed to providing a safe, inclusive and supportive environment which promotes open communication, respect, fairness and positive relationships. We believe that the relationship between home and school is a very important part of ensuring that children are happy, secure and open to learning. As a school community we are committed to working together to meet the various needs of our school community. Central to achieving this is trust and open, effective communication between all members of the school community. As a Catholic school the Gospel values form the basis for a proactive approach to communication and problem solving.

Aims:

To ensure:

- That effective communication between all school community members takes place
- That all parties communicate respectfully
- That processes are in place which allow for open and honest communication amongst all school community members
- That confidential information is managed in a manner consistent with community expectations, professional standards and legal obligations
- That clear, positive and fair processes and guidelines are provided which allow issues or concerns to be aired and resolved in a timely, effective and respectful manner
- That a positive, productive and harmonious school environment is maintained
- That where a complaint is evident, clear procedures are in place to respond.

Implementation:

Procedure for contacting a classroom or specialist teacher:

When a parent wishes to contact a member of staff to discuss matters relating to their child, the procedure is to contact the teacher involved, giving a brief outline of the issue. Contact should be made using one of the following approaches:

1. Contact the school, either by phone or coming to the office personally, and ask a school administration officer to arrange for the teacher to contact you to arrange a suitable meeting time. Teachers are not available to answer phone calls or come to the office during teaching time, whilst on yard duty or at meetings. If a message is left at the office for teachers to contact a parent, they will attempt to return the call as soon as possible.
2. Contact the appropriate teacher by email, asking them to organise a suitable meeting time. Please allow up to 48 hours for a response. Teachers do not necessarily check their work emails over the weekends or after hours. If an email is sent on Friday night you may not get a response until Monday. If the matter needs immediate attention it is best to ring the office and let us know.
3. Speak briefly with the appropriate teacher, either before or after school hours (not at a time when they are teaching or on yard duty), and ask them to arrange a suitable meeting time.

Procedure for contacting other school personnel:

When a parent has a concern or wishes to discuss an issue regarding a situation which they consider affects the whole school, their child's wellbeing or relates to a school policy or matter, the procedure is to contact the Principal, using one of the three approaches outlined above.

When parents have a concern or wish to discuss an issue relating to a member of staff or of a sensitive nature, they should make an appointment with the Principal by contacting the school office, either by phone, email or coming to the office personally, and asking the Office Manager or an administration officer to arrange a suitable meeting time.

In all cases if the matter is urgent and/or relates to the possible risk or harm to a student, a member of staff or another member of the school community, the Principal should be informed immediately and the urgency of the matter conveyed. The Principal will determine who is the most appropriate person to deal with the issue and the process to work towards a resolution, as well as ensuring that contact is made as soon as possible.

Procedure when responding to an issue of complaint:**Definition:**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived issue where a response or resolution is expected.

The dissatisfaction will usually arise from a perception that the school has:

- Done something wrong
- Failed to do something it should have
- Acted unfairly or inappropriately.

At St. Mary's we respect our community's diversity. It is inevitable that times will arise when some parents agree with the school's actions while others disagree and wish to discuss the matter with the school. We welcome discussions and encourage parents to raise issues so that they may be responded to and resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned.

St. Mary's will respond and deal with all complaints and issues sensitively, promptly and confidentially. Matters will be investigated and dealt with in a timely and respectful manner. In working through any issues, a resolution which treats all parties with dignity and respect will be sought. Issues and matters which have been raised will be kept in the strictest of confidence and not discussed with any other persons, excepting those directly involved. Members of the school community can expect that their concerns will be taken seriously.

Resolving matters of concern are best achieved through face-to-face contact with the appropriate person. Emails and letters should be brief, alerting the person to the issue; they should not be used as a forum for in-depth discussion. All complaints will be acknowledged verbally or in writing. All complaints are recorded and formal meetings will be minuted and all persons involved will receive a copy of the minutes. Any correspondence received by the school will be kept in a secure and confidential file.

Options for resolving a complaint:

1. Less Serious grievances and complaints are resolved informally with consideration for:
 - Self –resolution
 - Supported self-resolution
 - Facilitated mediation.
2. Serious grievances or complaints are resolved formally. Complainants may contact the office for a complaint form. Consideration will be given for:
 - Intervention

- Investigation.

The appropriate response will be initiated by the Principal, the Deputy Principal or a School Leader. For any matter which cannot be resolved by informal resolution, formal options will apply. If a matter cannot be resolved at the school level or if the complaint is about the Principal, the complainant may be referred to the Catholic Education Melbourne office or the Regional Office. See Flowchart for Handling Complaints (*Appendix 1*).

Resolution for a complainant may include:

- Feeling that their concern has been considered
- Knowing that the school has been alerted to a possible problem
- Receiving a verbal or written apology
- Achieving a change to a procedure or practice that would prevent a recurrence of similar complaints.

Resolution for the school may include:

- Reaching a compromise solution
- Dismissing the complaint
- Receiving a written apology
- Improving processes
- Increased staff Professional Development
- Improved implementation of school policies.

Anonymous Complaints:

St. Mary's may be unable to respond to anonymous complaints if there is insufficient detail for investigation or resolution of the matter. St. Mary's will keep a record of anonymous complaints.

Issues arising between students and families:

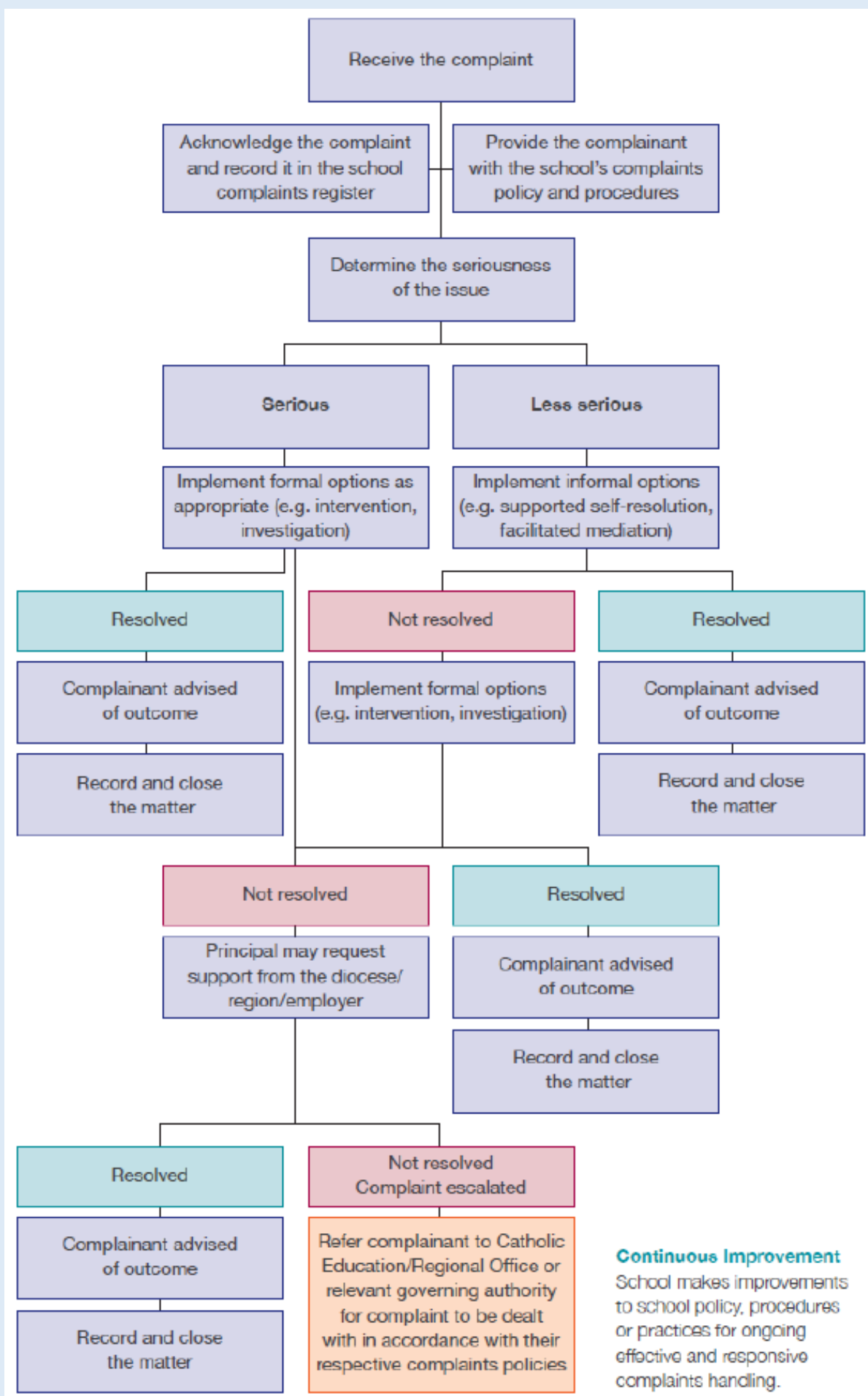
Parents should avoid approaching children or parents of other families with a school related or non-school related issue on the school grounds. Such matters must be addressed to the Principal or Deputy Principal and not discussed with others.

Ratification date: August 2020

Review date: Annually

Flowchart for Handling Complaints (Appendix 1)

Appendix 1



Reference: Complaints Management, A Practical Guide for Schools CECV 2017