



ST. BERNADETTE'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

Parent/Guardian Grievance Policy

Rationale

At St Bernadette's we believe that positive, clear and effective procedures for responding to and resolving grievances between the school and the community members, assist in the building of trusting and cooperative relationships and ultimately provide students with an enhanced learning environment.

Grievances occur when a parent feels that an action or decision taken (or not taken) by the school is unfair, discriminatory or unjustified. This Grievance Policy does not apply to complaints alleging criminal or unlawful behaviour, which should be referred to the appropriate authorities.

Aim

To provide clear, positive and fair processes that allow grievances to be aired and resolved in a timely, effective and respectful manner, with realistic expectations about what can be achieved by the school. St Bernadette's School recognises that it is in the best interest of our students for there to be trusting and cooperative relationships between the school and parents/guardians.

Preamble

Our school prides itself on clear, consultative and open communication. While we accept our responsibility to consult and to communicate both clearly and effectively with the community, community members also have an obligation to read notices and newsletters, to attend briefings and to seek clarification when required.

There may, however, still be times when members of the community disagree with or are unclear about the school's programs, policies or decisions. A resolution to a grievance from a parent should be sought through informal discussions with the appropriate person in order to come to a mutually acceptable resolution. If this informal process is unsuccessful, a formal Grievance Procedure can be followed. Effective processes for resolving complaints, as outlined below, help to ensure that people involved in a complaint are treated fairly and have the opportunity to respond to issues and to present their views.

Implementation

- If the matter involves your child or an issue of everyday class operation, make an appointment to see the class teacher, detailing the reasons for the appointment. An appointment enables the teacher to focus on the issue and ensure time is available to thoroughly discuss and resolve the matter.
- An appointment should be made with the Principal to discuss issues involving school policy, operations beyond the classroom, concerns about staff or grievances that may be viewed as less easily resolved.
- The Principal will follow this '*Grievances Policy*' unless the matter is easily and satisfactorily resolved.
- The School Education Advisory Board is not a conduit for complaints and will not be involved in grievance procedures.
- All grievances are to be confidential.



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- All formal discussions and processes will be documented.
- The Principal will provide community members with appropriate Catholic Education Melbourne contact names and numbers if grievances are not resolved.
- All members involved in the grievance process will behave in a non- threatening and respectful manner.

Procedures

1. Make an appointment with the class teacher or specialist teacher concerned with your issue. Simple matters can usually be sorted out at this level.
2. If you are unable to find a satisfactory solution to your problem make an appointment to see the Principal to discuss the matter further.
3. If the situation is still unresolved, make an appointment to see the Parish Priest, who is the overall manager of St Bernadette's School.
4. At any point of the complaint process, parents/guardians can be supported by an advocate/support person. The role of the advocate/support person in this process is a supportive and enabling one. A complainant's advocate/ support person may be a member of the family, a friend, a community member or a person provided through an appropriate support/advocacy agency. The advocate/support person in the parent/guardian complaint process does not receive a fee for the service. The complainant shall inform the Principal prior to any meetings that they want to include an advocate/support person in the complaint process and provide the name of the advocate, contact details and the relationship to the complainant. An advocate/support person's role may include:
 - assistance for the complainant to clarify the issues in the complaint
 - discussion of difficulties being experienced by the complainant
 - assistance in the development of a co-operative and collaborative working relationship between the complainant and the school community
 - assistance for the complainant to understand CEM/school policy and guidelines and the resolution being proposed for the complaint.
5. The Principal may contact the relevant Catholic Education Consultant and request intervention to help resolve a complaint. The Principal will do this after they have exhausted the school's parent/guardian complaint handling procedures and be of the belief that the complaint would not be able to be resolved at the school level. The parent/guardian may be advised that their complaint will be handled by personnel from Catholic Education Melbourne, Eastern Region Office.
6. If a parent/guardian is not satisfied that their complaint has been resolved by the school, or if their complaint is about the Principal of the school, they may refer their complaint to the Parish Priest or Catholic Education Melbourne who will provide advice.
7. Professional Reputation of Staff:
 - The school has a responsibility to maintain a safe workplace for all employees, including protecting teachers from personal attack and abuse.
 - The professional reputation of teachers is directly linked to their livelihood and ongoing employment opportunities. Whilst teachers are responsible for



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maintaining professional standards they are also subject to the same rights as any citizen in respect of a personal attack on their professional reputation, such attacks constitute defamation.

- Where a teacher's professional standards are the subject of serious concern, the matter will be referred to the Victorian Institute of Teaching. Within its charter, this body investigates and makes findings on instances of serious misconduct to protect the integrity of the profession.
- Where there is evidence of defamatory statements made against any members of St Bernadette's school staff, the school will refer the matter to be fully investigated by the Legal Officer of the Catholic Education Office of the Archdiocese of Melbourne. Individual staff also have the option to seek legal advice and action through the Independent Education Union Vic/Tas and/or a private solicitor.

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