

Complaint Response and Resolution

Procedure



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1 Context

Catholic Education South Australia (**CESA**) works in partnership with staff, students, families and the wider community. We welcome feedback and seek to engage constructively when matters of concern arise.

Concerns and complaints are ideally resolved locally and informally within schools, as this is best practice. This procedure exists to guide matters that have been unable to be resolved locally and for matters of a serious and significant nature.

CESA is committed to safeguarding children and young people in our care. We believe that each child and young person is created in the image of God, and we uphold their dignity and rights by maintaining a child safe culture and environment, in which abuse is not tolerated. Our policies and processes, including this Complaint Response and Resolution Procedure, ensure that we are doing all that we reasonably can to protect our students from undue risks of harm.

2 Purpose

This procedure aims to:

- Encourage and enable early resolution of complaints where all parties are treated with respect and relationships are restored.
- Set out clear and accessible pathways for raising concerns and formalising complaints.
- Ensure that our students, parents and staff feel supported and heard.
- Meet legal and regulatory obligations in relation to complaint management.

3 Scope

This procedure is primarily to support students and their parents to resolve complaints. There may be instances where a member of the broader community seeks to raise a complaint. When this occurs, the Catholic Education Office has discretion over how such a complaint is managed, noting that our priority is supporting our school communities to support the wellbeing of the young people in our care.

In considering how to respond to a complaint, staff will consider whether the individual raising the complaint is directly affected by the alleged act or omission.

This procedure does not apply to the following, as they are managed through other defined processes:

- Complaints about the behaviour of a student. These will be referred to the school to be managed under the relevant behaviour management procedure.
- Complaints in relation to Out of School Hours Care and Early Years, which are covered by site-specific requirements, noting the specific regulatory framework applicable to those activities.
- Matters that are subject to external determination such as through any court, tribunal, commission or statutory authority or to matters that are the subject of civil litigation.
- Complaints in relation to the clergy, which are referred to the relevant diocese's Professional Standards Office.

- Complaints and disclosures of sexual abuse, including reports arising from National Redress Scheme applications.
- Matters where the South Australian Police are involved in investigating a complaint. In these circumstances the South Australian Police will be the lead investigator. Our involvement in the matter will be determined on a case-by-case basis.
- CESA employees in relation to making a complaint against another employee/s, their workplace or their conditions of employment. For these matters, employees should refer to the relevant policy pertaining to the matter of concern, or the Enterprise Agreement Clause 11 (Dispute Resolution) of the South Australian Catholic Schools Enterprise Agreement 2020 (as amended or replaced), as applicable.
- Where a contractor is raising a dispute. This is dealt with under the terms of the contract for service.

4 Definitions

Complaint: an expression of dissatisfaction with the quality of an action taken, decision made, or service provided.

Diocesan schools: A school operated by the Catholic Church Endowment Society or the Catholic Diocese of Port Pirie.

Parent: The parent or legal guardian of an enrolled student. This includes enrolling and non-enrolling parties and is not limited to biological parents.

Senior Consultant: A senior officer in the Catholic Education Office delegated responsibility by the Executive Director.

Separately governed school: A South Australian Catholic school that is operated by a Church Authority other than the Catholic Church Endowment Society or the Catholic Diocese of Port Pirie.

5 Complaint procedure

Neither the South Australian Minister for Education nor the South Australian Department for Education has any authority to directly intervene in any complaints relating to the operations of Catholic schools.

5.1 Raising the complaint with the school

In the day to day activities of a school, students and parents will inevitably have queries, concerns or other matters requiring clarification or resolution. School staff will work collaboratively with students and parents making every effort to achieve an early resolution where practically possible.

Staff in schools are empowered to manage complaints at the school level. Occasionally, when matters are not able to be resolved, students and parents may seek to raise a complaint. This complaint should be raised with the Principal (or their delegate).

Complaints of a serious nature are routinely managed by schools. Each school maintains a complaints process that is consistent with this procedure.

Where appropriate, if resolution at the school level cannot be achieved, the school should notify the complainant of their right to contact the Catholic Education Office in accordance with this procedure.

5.2 Raising the complaint with the Catholic Education Office

The Catholic Education Office maintains an Intake team that receives a diverse range of feedback, queries and complaints.

A person can contact the Intake team using any of the following methods:

Mail: PO Box 179, Torrensville Plaza SA 5031
Telephone: +61 8 8301 6600
Email: intake@cesa.catholic.edu.au
Internet: <https://www.cesa.catholic.edu.au/contact-us>

Where a complaint is raised, the Intake Officer will:

- Acknowledge the complaint in a timely manner.
- Clarify the complaint and the outcome the complainant is seeking.
- Make the complainant aware that the complaint will be managed in accordance with this procedure.
- Assess the complaint and refer the matter accordingly within CESA or to external authorities as appropriate or required. Usually, the complaint will be referred to the school. This gives the school an opportunity to attempt resolution and to explain their decision or action.
- Inform the relevant Senior Consultant of the receipt of the complaint.

In complex matters a Senior Consultant within the Catholic Education Office will support the school to determine the most appropriate course of action to respond to the matter.

Additionally, the Catholic Education Office will manage complaints relating to diocesan schools when we assess that it is not appropriate to manage the complaint at the school level. This includes but is not limited to when the complaint is about the conduct of the Principal, or the Principal has a material conflict of interest and is unable to impartially consider a complaint.

5.3 Separately governed schools

For separately governed schools, the Catholic Education Office may refer the complainant to the school's governing authority.

5.4 Internal review

Where, following the involvement of a Senior Consultant, a complaint remains unresolved and the complainant holds the view that an acceptable resolution has not been reached, they can request an internal review. Where practically possible, the request should be made in writing to intake@cesa.catholic.edu.au.

The request will be considered and where appropriate, the matter will be referred to another Senior Consultant for review. The relevant Senior Consultant should be impartial and should not have been involved in the original decision/action.

In conducting the internal review, the Senior Consultant should determine whether the actions taken by CESA in response to the complaint were reasonable and whether further or alternate action is warranted.

The Senior Consultant will communicate the internal review decision in writing.

An internal review by a Senior Consultant is final. Further internal review is not available, except at the Executive Director's discretion.

6 Communication

6.1 Anonymous Complaints

We accept and respond to anonymous complaints, provided we have received enough information and it is appropriate in all the circumstances to do so. If a complainant wishes to remain anonymous, this may affect the school's ability to respond to the complaint and/or the School, or the Catholic Education Office's ability to investigate the complaint and communicate the outcome. Following the receipt of an anonymous complaint, a Principal may seek advice from a Senior Consultant to determine an appropriate response.

6.2 Accessibility

Where necessary to overcome accessibility barriers (such as where a complainant has a disability or speaks English as an additional language), complaints can be raised with the assistance of a support person/service.

Where appropriate a staff member may wish to advise a complainant of external advocacy services which may be available.

6.3 Expectations of complainants

Complainants are expected to do the following:

- Treat others (including staff, students and parents, both former and current) with respect and courtesy.
- Raise complaints with the appropriate person in the school community, having regard to this procedure, and as soon as possible after the event that has given rise to the complaint has occurred.
- To the best of their ability, provide complete and factual information.
- Ask for assistance or further clarification as needed.
- Act in good faith to achieve a reasonable outcome.
- Be mindful that CESA must sometimes manage the interests of a number of students, staff and other individuals when making decisions and may be privy to confidential information not known to the person raising the complaint.

CESA will support its staff in managing unreasonable complainant conduct. Unreasonable conduct is any behaviour which, because of its nature or frequency, raises substantial health, wellbeing, resource or equity issues for the school, staff, other school community members or the complainant themselves.

Behaviour that is aggressive, threatening, violent, disrespectful or abusive is not tolerated.

External professional support service is available to all staff by phoning the Employee Assistance Program (ACCESS) on (08) 8215 6799.

7 Wellbeing

Where a complainant expresses current thoughts of suicide or other self-harm, staff should contact the South Australian Police by phoning 131 444 and request a welfare check be conducted. In addition, school staff should report the matter to their Principal and CEO staff should report the matter to the Manager, System Safeguarding and Development.

8 Records Management and Privacy

Complaint information is handled in accordance with the SACCS Records Management Policy, SACCS Privacy Policy, privacy laws, and other relevant policies and legislation.

9 References

[Charter for Parents in SA Catholic Schools](#)

[Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum](#)

The following reference documents can be found in the CESAShare folder [Policies and Procedures](#):

Managing allegations of sexual misconduct in SA education and care settings

Protective Practices for staff in their interactions with children and young people Guidelines for staff working or volunteering in education and care settings 2017 (2nd Edition, revised 2019)

Sexual behaviour in children and young people procedure and guideline

SACCS Reporting Harm of Children and Young People Procedure

SACCS Anti-Sexual Harassment Procedure

SACCS Code of Conduct

SACCS Privacy Policy

SACCS Records Management Policy

SACCS Responding to Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace - Procedure

10 Revision Record

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