



# COMPLAINTS RESOLUTION POLICY

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

St Joseph's has both a desire and a responsibility to ensure that high standards of conduct are maintained by staff and students at all times, and that complaints are managed and resolved fairly, efficiently, promptly and in accordance with relevant legislation.

## 2.0 PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish a harmonious, positive and productive school environment; and an environment where all complaints will be treated seriously, addressed professionally, competently and in a timely manner applying principles of natural justice and confidentiality.

This policy does not relate to:

- critical incidents
- emergency management
- criminal offences
- conduct of religious clergy or other religious persons.

This policy applies to all parents, guardians, carers of students for managing disputes and handling grievances regarding St Joseph's.

## 3.0 DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this policy the following terms are defined as follows:

- a 'PARENT' includes:
  - a person who has parental responsibility for 'major long term issues' as defined in the Family Law Act 1975 (Commonwealth)
  - a person appointed as 'guardian' pursuant to the Children Youth and Families Act 2005 (Victoria)
  - an informal carer with whom the child normally or regularly resides, and who has day-to-day care and control of the child
  - a mature minor student
  - an adult student
- a 'COMPLAINT' is an expression of dissatisfaction with an action taken, decision made or service provided, or the failure to provide a service, take action or make a decision at a school.
- a complaint is considered to be 'RESOLVED' when the complainant and School or CEO agree on an appropriate response or remedy
- a complaint is considered to be 'UNRESOLVED' when agreement cannot be reached on a course of action and/or a remedy, or if the remedy cannot be implemented.

## 4.0 PRINCIPLES

Our complaint-handling processes reflect the following guiding principles:

**Subsidiarity:** According to the principle of subsidiarity, decisions should be made at the lowest level possible and the highest level necessary.

**Visibility:** Information about how and where to make a complaint, as well as how a complaint will be handled, should be regularly publicised within the school community.

- Accessibility:** The actions taken to respond to a complaint should be well documented and include the reasons underpinning any decisions made.  
Information about how to make a complaint and the school's procedures when responding to a complaint should be easily accessible. The complaint-handling process should be flexible and include the ability to make a complaint in person, by telephone and in writing. Support should also be given to parents with special needs, including translations, interpreters and enabling a complainant to seek the services of an advocate.
- Responsiveness:** Receipt of written complaints should be acknowledged by communicating with parents/guardians as soon as possible. Complaints should be addressed promptly and the parents/guardians kept informed of the progress of their complaint when the matter is complex and will take time to bring to resolution.
- Objectivity:** Each complaint must be treated in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner.
- Cost:** There should be no cost to the complainant for access to the complaint-handling process at the school or CEOSale.
- Protection of Privacy:** Personally identifiable information concerning the complainant should be actively protected from disclosure except where needed in relation to the complaint. This means that the complaint should only be discussed with those directly involved in the complaint-handling process.
- Student Focused:** The school should be open to feedback including complaints and should show a commitment to resolving complaints with the educational wellbeing of students as the first priority.
- Accountability:** Schools are required to have a fair, effective and efficient complaint-handling process. Schools are accountable, both internally and externally, for their decision making and complaint-handling performance. Schools need to be able to provide explanations and reasons for their decisions.
- Continual Improvement:** Complainant complaint-handling procedures should be regularly reviewed for improvement. Complaint data and feedback should be used to identify recurrent themes and to implement improvement measures where a need is identified.
- 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:** You can feel secure that if you do make a complaint under this policy, it will remain confidential to only those who need to be informed or involved. Normally, the only people who will have access to information about the complaint will be the person making the complaint, the person investigating and the person against whom the complaint has been made.
- No Victimisation:** You can also rest assured that if you make a complaint you will not suffer in any way as a consequence. The school authorities will ensure that 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.
- Subsidiarity:** According to the principle of subsidiarity, decisions should be made at the lowest level possible and the highest level necessary.

## 5.0 PROCEDURES

Parents/Guardians of students attending St Joseph's who have a complaint should, in the first instance, make the complaint to the school, except when the complaint is about the principal of the school. Complaints about school principals should be referred to the school's Education Consultant at the CEOSale who will assist in finding an appropriate solution. They can be contacted on 5622 6600. **Please refer to St Joseph's Complaint Form.**

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The principal at St Joseph's is responsible for the efficient and effective organisation, management and administration of the school including the school's complaint-handling processes.

Each complaint will be acknowledged, verbally or in writing, upon receipt of the complaint. Complaints of a less serious nature will be acknowledged verbally and resolved without the need for formal investigation or a written response. The complaint will be finalised within as short a period as possible.

**Please Refer to St Joseph's Complaints Acknowledgment template.**

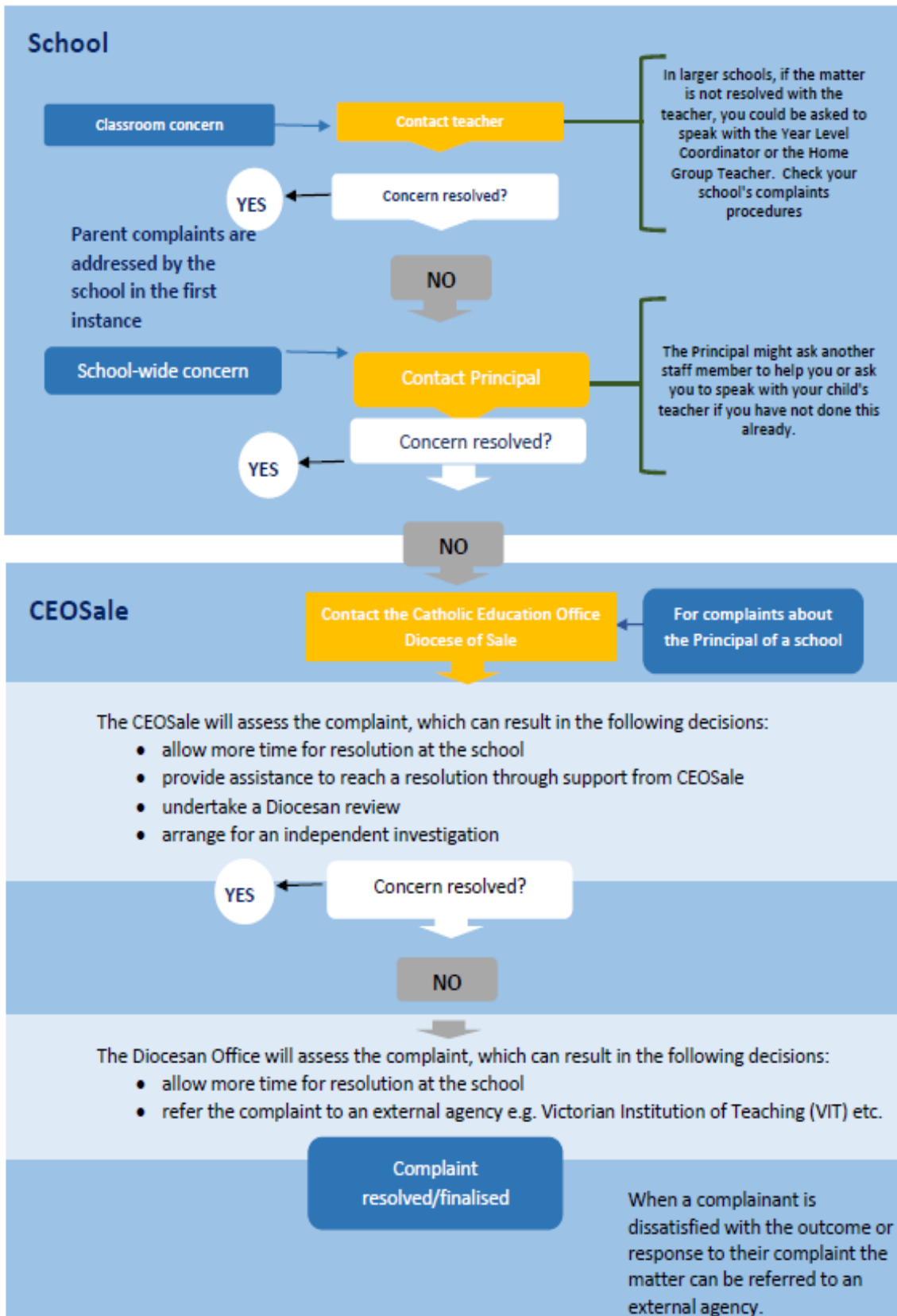
When addressing a complaint, it is expected that parents/guardians and school personnel will:

- show respect and understanding of each other's point of view
- operate within applicable legislation
- acknowledge that their goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
- act in good faith and in a calm and courteous manner
- recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced.

**Please refer to the following Complaints Management Flowchart which identifies the key steps and contacts in St Joseph's complaints management process.**

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Complaints Management Flow chart



## 5.1 Informal resolution process

The principal, or those persons authorised by the principal to deal with complaints, may choose to respond to a complaint through an informal process in cases where the complaint is minor, the complainant wishes the matter to be dealt with informally, or where the complaint has arisen from lack of or unclear communication.

Formal processes will be used when informal processes haven't been successful, a complainant seeks a formal process, or where the complaint warrants formal investigation.

## 5.2 Formal resolution process

Investigating the complaint including formal interviews, written statements, conveying the details of the complaint to the respondent in writing and providing the opportunity for a written response.

Dismissing or accepting the complaint.

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

- a written apology;
- an official warning;
- counselling;
- disciplinary action

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

- relevant training for all staff; and/or
- monitoring of behaviour of employees.

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

## 5.3 Natural justice and procedural fairness

When addressing a complaint it is expected that parents/guardians and school personnel will apply the following principles of natural justice and procedural fairness:

- the rights of both sides to be heard and treated fairly
- the equal treatment of all parties to the issue
- adequate communication and notice be given to the parties outlining the process
- the person about whom the complaint is made is given the opportunity to respond to any allegations
- investigations are conducted impartially, facts of the case substantiated and decisions are made without bias
- the school appropriately communicate and outline the reason for any decision and any action it intends to take
- privacy and other legal obligations are met
- records of complaints are maintained
- complaints are responded to promptly and thoroughly.

## 5.4 Misconduct or serious misconduct

All complaints of alleged misconduct or serious misconduct by a teacher or staff member should be reported to the principal of the school. Complaints about teachers can also be reported to the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT), which is the regulator in relation to the registration and investigation of serious misconduct (including conduct which is of a physical or emotional nature) of all teachers in the State of Victoria. If unsure if the complaint constitutes serious misconduct by a teacher, contact the VIT on telephone 1300 888 067 or email [vit@vit.vic.edu.au](mailto:vit@vit.vic.edu.au).

## 5.5 Complaints against principal of a school

In the case of complaints involving the principal of a Catholic primary school which forms part of a parish, the Parish Priest ('the employer') and the Education Consultant who oversees that school should be informed immediately.

## 5.6 Complaints regarding school Compliance

Where a complaint concerns the school's compliance with the VRQA minimum standards for school registration, the formal processes will involve the Principal notifying the Catholic Education Office Sale of the complaint and cooperating with the Office with regard to investigating the complaint and acting on the outcome.

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## 5.7 Students with a disability

Students with disabilities have rights under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth), the Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Commonwealth) and the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Victoria) to access their education on the same basis as their peers, including the right to reasonable adjustments. As with all complaints to which this policy applies, parents/guardians should raise any concerns or complaints regarding the treatment of a student with a disability with the school in the first instance.

## 5.8 Anonymous complaints

St Joseph's endeavours to address and respond to all complaints. In some situations, St Joseph's may not be able to fully address complaints that are made anonymously or without sufficient detail being provided to enable an investigation or resolution of the matter. To ensure procedural fairness, respondents have a right to know the particulars of the allegations being made against them, and be given an opportunity to respond to them.

## 5.9 Complaint escalation

When a parent/guardian is not satisfied with the manner in which their complaint has been treated by the school, or their complaint is about the principal of the school, the complainant can contact CEOSale and the complaint will be handled in accordance with the CEOSale Complaints and Grievances Management Policy.

It may not always be possible to resolve all complaints to the parent's/guardian's satisfaction. This could happen when the nature of the issues raised in the complaint is governed by CEOSale's policies or guidelines or if the complainant has unrealistic expectations about the outcome of their complaint.

## 6.0 OUTCOMES

When the matter is resolved the Principal will make sure that the outcome is actioned and will assess the effectiveness of the process, as required.

All complaints, ensuing procedures and outcomes will be fully documented.

If a complainant believes that the complaints procedure has not been followed properly, or that the outcome is unacceptable, he/she may call the Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Sale.

## 7.0 RESOURCES

CEOSale - Resolving Parent/Guardian Issues and Concerns - Management of Complaints and Grievances

CEOSale - Practical Advice about Concerns and Complaints

St Joseph's Complaint Form

St Joseph's Complaint Acknowledgement letter

## 8.0 EXPECTED OUTCOME

- harmonious, positive and productive school environment;
- an environment where complaints are resolved fairly, efficiently, promptly and in accordance with relevant legislation.

## 9.0 REVIEW

Draft Review: April 2020

Implementation Date: April 2020

Review Date: April 2024

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# St Joseph's Korumburra

## Complaint Form

1. YOUR DETAILS	
Family name	Given name(s)
Address	
Contact number	
Email	

2. YOU ARE: (PLEASE TICK)
Student <input type="checkbox"/>
Parent/caregiver <input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify) <input type="checkbox"/>

3. THE COMPLAINT IS ABOUT: (PLEASE TICK AND GIVE DETAILS)
School <input type="checkbox"/>
Staff member <input type="checkbox"/>
Policy/Procedure <input type="checkbox"/>
Specify location and address: <input type="checkbox"/>

4. DETAILS OF THE COMPLAINT

(please attach additional pages or documentation if required)

5. DETAILS OF THE OUTCOME YOU ARE SEEKING

(please attach additional pages if required)

**6. HAVE YOU PREVIOUSLY RAISED THIS CONCERN WITH A STAFF MEMBER?**

No  | Yes

If yes, when:

Who dealt with the matter?

What was the result?

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Office use**

**For matters which are resolved at intake:**

Advice/Action:

Options:  Self-resolution  Supported resolution  Facilitated mediation  Intervention  Investigation

Systems improvement

Outcome:

Date matter is

finalised:.....

Name of staff member .....

Signature: .....

**For matters which need further action:**

Referred to: Name:

Referred by: Name: ..... Signature:

Date: .....





*St Joseph's School*

1-3 Bridge Street  
Korumburra 3950

Phone: 5655 2040

E-mail: [principal@sjkorumburra.catholic.edu.au](mailto:principal@sjkorumburra.catholic.edu.au)

[DATE]

Dear [NAME]

I refer to information provided by you/your son/your daughter, [child's name], to [name], [position], regarding the attached complaint.

The matter has been referred to me and I propose to deal with it by (state the process and timeframes). Please let me know if you have any comments or requests about progressing the complaint to resolution.

You will be contacted at various stages of the process regarding progress of the complaint. If you require any information, please contact me on 5655 2040.

Yours sincerely

[NAME]

[POSITION]