



ST COLUMBA'S PRIMARY SCHOOL BERRIGAN COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

These procedures are to be read in conjunction with CEDWW Complaints Handling Policy and [Procedures](#).

We acknowledge that employees, students and parents can sometimes feel aggrieved about something that is happening at the school/college which appears to be discriminatory, constitutes harassment or causes concern. An employee, student, parent or community member can have a complaint or suggestion about any decision, behaviour, policy, act or omission (whether by the Principal, members of the leadership team or other staff/students) that they feel is discriminatory or unreasonable.

The Principal is responsible for investigating both formal and informal complaints at St Columba's, Berrigan and the key elements of CEDWW's Complaints Handling Procedure are followed in all cases.

In many situations, the most appropriate action is to tell the person who is the cause of the complaint how you feel. If the complaint is about their behaviour, tell them that you find it offensive/hurtful/not acceptable. If it is about a work decision, tell the person why you think it is discriminatory or harassing or unreasonable. Telling the person will give them a chance to stop or change what they are doing or explain what they had decided and why.

If a problem or concern that arises within a school cannot be resolved with the person involved with the issue, then it would normally be raised as an informal complaint with an appropriate staff member with a view to discussing the issue and seeking resolution of any problems or concerns. Complaints may be initiated through a meeting situation, by phone or by email with a classroom teacher or the Principal. Initial records are kept in Compass Chronicle (as of 2020) or, if brought up in a School Council forum, then records will be documented in the minutes of the meeting.

If the informal process of raising the concern, obtaining the facts, and obtaining resolution has not produced a satisfactory outcome, the CEDWW process for making a formal complaint can be followed. The purpose of this procedure is to offer a process by which employees/students/parents/community members can have complaints addressed.

If the complaint is upheld or sustained, the following are possible outcomes depending on the nature of the complaint:

- An agreement between the parties
- A verbal apology
- A written apology
- Disciplinary action
- Review of policy or procedures

If a complaint is not upheld or not substantiated (e.g. there is insufficient evidence) but some issues come out of the investigation that are required to be addressed then, possible outcomes include:

- Relevant training for employees and/or students; and/or
- Monitoring of the behaviour of employees and/or students
- Counselling for the aggrieving person
- Mediation at the local level.

There is an underlying assumption that complaints are made in good faith (and with good will) and with an intention for resolution as opposed to retribution. If the complaint is proved not to have happened

at all, or if there is evidence that the complaint was made with the main purpose or intent of causing distress to the other named as the source of the grievance, the following are possible outcomes:

- Counselling for the person who made the complaint
- A written apology from the person who made the complaint
- An official warning
- Referral for disciplinary action for students and staff

The relevant designated staff member, will make sure that whatever outcome is decided upon actually happens. The Principal (unless they are the object of the complaint or grievance) will also assess the effectiveness of the outcome from time to time.

Procedural Fairness:

Procedural fairness is a basic right of all individuals dealing with authorities. Procedural fairness is generally recognized as having two essential elements:

The right to be heard which includes:

- the right to know why the action is happening
- the right to know the way in which the issues will be determined
- the right to know the allegations in the matter and any other information which will be taken into account
- the right of the person against whom the allegations have been made to respond to the allegations.

The right of a person to an unbiased decision which includes:

- the right to impartiality in the investigation and decision making phases
- the right to an absence of bias by the decision maker.

The availability of a line of appeal adds to the fairness of the process and offers a check, in case there is a perception of conflict of interest.

See also CEDWW Managing Workplace Complaints (Human Resources) ([Link not available](#))

Reviewed August 2020.