



St Mary's Echuca Complaints Management Policy – School Level



The school offers a broad, comprehensive curriculum imbued with an authentic Catholic understanding of Christ and his teaching, as well as a lived appreciation of membership of the Catholic Church.

The school is committed to ensuring this is a community of faith, hope and love where communication takes place in an environment of transparency, respect, compassion, tolerance and inclusion in the interests of all students.

The Catholic Education Sandhurst Limited (CES Ltd) Complaints Framework provides the key documents and elements of our approach to managing complaints that arise about the operation of Sandhurst Catholic schools. All schools must ensure the Complaints policies and procedures implemented at school level are consistent with this CES Ltd Complaints Framework Policy.

1. Purpose

The school strives to be a community of faith, hope and love where communication takes place in an environment of transparency, respect, compassion, tolerance and inclusion in the interests of all students.

The purpose of this Complaints Management Policy is to:

- outline the process and guiding principles for managing complaints at our school
- ensure that our school meets its obligations to respond to complaints in a fair, equitable and efficient manner
- inform parents/guardians and students of how to lodge a complaint about the school
- outline the school's procedures and escalation process in complaints management
- outline the procedures to be followed by CES Ltd Office when a matter has been referred from a Sandhurst Catholic school for investigation.

The school has established procedures for responding to complaints which reflect the expectations of the CES Ltd Board as described in the CES Ltd

Complaints Management Framework and used to guide their development. The school's Complaints Management Policy and procedures are available on the school's website or by requesting a copy from the school.

2. Scope

This policy applies to complaints that should be able to be resolved at the school level that relate to:

- general issues of student behaviour that are contrary to the school Student Behaviour Policy, including incidents of bullying or harassment
- learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
- communication with parents/guardians
- school enrolment, fees and payments
- general administrative issues.

Any such actions will be in accordance with any legal and reporting obligations.

This policy also applies to the procedures to be followed when:

- complaints cannot be resolved at the school level and are referred to CES Ltd Office from the school community
- the school seeks assistance from CES Limited Office to resolve a complaint from a parent/guardian or student
- a complaint to referred from an external authority.

Procedures for making a complaint are presented in Appendix 1 of this Policy.

This policy does not apply to complaints about critical incidents, matters included in the Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme, emergency management, criminal offences or staff grievances.

If the matter relates to allegations of child abuse, Sandhurst Catholic schools and CES Ltd will follow their procedures for responding to allegations of child abuse under various reporting obligations as outlined in the Child Safety Framework.

3. Principles

Addressing complaints or concerns within a framework of dignity and respect can provide powerful opportunities to model the love of Christ in the reality of our contemporary world and provides a valuable opportunity for reflection and learning.

In receiving and responding to complaints, the following guiding principles will apply.

- Complainants can expect their concern or complaint to be responded to in a respectful and timely manner.
- Schools will be informed of formal complaints that are made about them.
- Complainants and the person(s) against whom the complaint is made have the right to be heard and to expect that the principles of procedural fairness will be observed.
- Confidentiality, protection of privacy, respect, access, dignity and impartiality will form the basis of the complaints resolution process.
- The complaints resolution process will seek to achieve the restoration of good and respectful relationships.

4. Policy Statement

The nature of the complaint will determine who is the most appropriate person or body to manage a complainant's concerns. The school staff will consider the matter raised and determine the most appropriate action that is likely to achieve prompt resolution.

Procedural fairness will apply to the handling of complaints.

Confidentiality will be maintained as far as reasonable.

Complaints received from parents/guardians and students are responded to in a timely manner.

All complaints will be acknowledged within 2-5 business days and complainants will receive an indication of when they can expect to be notified of an outcome for their complaint, this would generally be within four (4) weeks.

Complainants must be kept informed if there is any change to the time frame for dealing with their complaint.

The school endeavours to address and respond to all complaints. The school 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. Anonymous complaints are recorded in the same manner as other complaints.

All complaints are recorded and securely stored with relevant levels of authorised access.

Complainants will be notified of the outcome of a formal complaint in writing.

The school has established procedures for responding to complaints appropriate to their local context, and the expectation is that most complaints are managed initially by the school.

The Complaints Policy and Procedures for the school is published on our website.

5. Complaints not covered in this Policy

This information is provided to assist parents/guardians and students to identify the best avenue for raising their complaint. The following types of complaints are not covered by this policy:

- **Misconduct or serious misconduct other than allegations of child abuse**

All complaints of alleged misconduct or serious misconduct by a 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- www.vit.vic.edu.au), which is the regulator in relation to the registration and investigation of serious misconduct of all teachers in the state of Victoria. The VIT can be contacted by telephone 1300 888 067 or email vit@vit.vic.edu.au.

In some cases, certain actions which involve a sexual offence, physical or emotional misconduct, such as unlawful assault or threats to the person, may constitute a criminal offence. These types of offences should be reported to and investigated by Victoria Police. Initial consultation with the Principal of the school may help to determine the appropriate course of action in these circumstances.

- **Complaints against Principal of a school other than allegations of child abuse**

Complaints involving the Principal of a Sandhurst Catholic school should be made to the CES Ltd Office and directed to the relevant Principal Consultant.

- **Complaints against clergy or other religious persons other than allegations of child abuse**

If a complaint relates to the clergy or other religious person at a school, the complainant should contact and seek advice from CES Ltd Professional Standards representative (CES Assistant to the Executive Director: Pastoral Wellbeing).

If the priest or religious person is a member of a religious order, the complainant should also contact the Provincial Head or Professional Standards representative of that congregation or religious order. CES Ltd will also notify the relevant school governing body of the Religious Institute to ensure that the complaint has been referred and investigated.