



St Francis Primary School Nathalia

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St Francis will provide a child safe environment where all children have the right to be treated with respect and will be protected from harm.

COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE

Commitment to child safety

All students enrolled, and any child visiting, have a right to feel safe and be safe all of the time. The wellbeing of children in our care will always be our first priority and we have zero tolerance for child abuse. At St Francis we strive to maintain a child safe and child friendly environment where children feel safe and are free to enjoy life to the full without any concern for their safety. We are committed to continually reviewing our Child Safe policies and practices to ensure that every effort is made for ongoing improvement of our Child Safe environment.

We at St Francis recognise that some groups of children are particularly vulnerable and we are committed to promoting the cultural safety of Aboriginal/linguistically diverse children and also promoting the safety of children with a disability.

Rationale:

At St. Francis Primary School, we are committed to providing a pleasant work environment for all employees and students. We acknowledge, however, that employees and students can sometimes feel distressed about something that is happening at St. Francis Primary School, which appears to be discriminatory or to constitute harassment. An individual can have a complaint about any decision; behaviour, act or omission (whether by the Principal, members of the leadership team or other staff/students) that he/she feels is discriminatory or constitutes harassment.

The purpose of this document is to provide a procedure by which individuals can have such complaints addressed.

If you feel that you are being harassed or discriminated against, this complaints handling procedure is available to you so your concerns can be addressed.

It is inevitable therefore, that times will arise when some parents agree with the school's actions while others disagree and wish to discuss the matter and seek clarification with the school. We welcome such discussions and encourage parents to raise issues so that they can be dealt with speedily and resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned.

Key elements of our complaints handling procedure

The following are the key elements of our complaints handling procedure:

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. The only people who will have access to information about the complaint will be the person making the complaint and the person investigating.

No Victimisation

You can also rest assured that if you make a complaint you will not suffer in any way as a consequence. The St. Francis Primary 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. All complaints should be finalised within one month.

Agreed Complaints Procedure:

The following procedures are to be used to resolve complaints or concerns at St Francis Primary School.

If you feel your rights are not being respected or if you have any complaints or concerns, please:

- 1. Talk to the Teacher/Principal or Deputy Principal either in person or on the phone.*
- 2. Talk to Canonical Administrator or the GV Deanery Catholic Education Support Officer.*
- 3. If you are not satisfied with the outcome of these discussions or felt your rights were not respected please place your complaint in writing and send to any of the above people.*
- 4. If you still do not feel satisfied after following the above steps then contact the Director of Sandhurst Catholic Education Office.*

What to do if you have a complaint

At St. Francis Primary School we are committed to providing a pleasant work environment for all employees and students. We acknowledge, however, that employees and students can sometimes feel aggrieved about something that is happening at St. Francis Primary School, which appears to be discriminatory or to constitute harassment. An employee or student can have a complaint about any decision; behaviour, act or omission (whether by the Principal, members of the leadership team or other staff/students) that he/she feels is discriminatory or constitutes harassment.

The purpose of this document is to provide a procedure by which employees/students can have such complaints addressed.

If you feel that you are being harassed or discriminated against, this complaints handling procedure is available to you so your concerns can be addressed.

What happens next?

The Principal or Deputy Principal will then interview you. During this interview a number of things will be explained to you, such as what will happen if the evidence supports the complaint, or if the evidence does not support it.

You will also be told where you can go for assistance if you are not happy with the way the St. Francis Primary School is dealing with the complaint. The Principal or Deputy Principal will then take a written record of the complaint.

The Principal or Deputy Principal will then talk to the person about whom the complaint is made to hear that side of the story. Any witnesses will also be interviewed. These interviews will be conducted separately and impartially. The importance of confidentiality will be stressed to all parties and they will be warned of the consequences if there is a breach of confidentiality (e.g. possible defamation action, initiation of a complaint for harassment).

The Principal or Deputy Principal will then tell you what the other people said and discuss what should be done to sort out the problem. You should tell the Principal or Deputy Principal what action you would like taken, e.g. a written apology from the person, a written warning, etc.

Possible outcomes

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

- A written apology;
- An official warning;
- Counselling;
- Disciplinary action; or
- Dismissal.

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; or
- Dismissal.

Appeals

If you feel that the complaints procedure has not been followed properly, or that the outcome is unacceptable to you, you may appeal.

The Education Consultant will look at the way the complaint was handled and examine the outcome. If he/she believes it was handled properly and that the outcome was appropriate he/she will take no further action. If he/she thinks that the complaint was not handled properly, or that the outcome was inappropriate, he/she will organise for the complaint to be looked at again.

St. Francis Primary School Complaints Officer/s

The following people are contact officers whom you can speak to about your complaint:

- Principal
- Deputy Principal
- Educational Consultant Goulburn Valley Deanery Catholic Education Office

Helpful Points To Remember:

- Problems are best resolved with a positive attitude.
- Anger is counter productive to solving problems.
- People need time to investigate and resolve many problems; a quick fix is not always possible or desirable.
- Schools are large and complex – very few decisions will suit everybody.
- There are always at least two sides to every story – with students there are often as many stories as there are children.
- Not all disagreements can be resolved – sometimes we simply have to agree to disagree.
- Opinions vary widely – disagreement is a natural part of life.
- Win-Win is always the desired outcome to any issue.
- The school board acts as an advisory board to the school in regard to forward planning in the areas of curriculum, pastoral care, resources and catholic identity, it is not a complaints handling committee.

Most importantly it is everybody's aim to achieve the best possible outcome for all involved in the school community.

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