



St Francis' Nathalia

CES Limited Procedures for Responding to Complaints



Catholic Education Sandhurst Limited (CES Limited) is responsible for the overall management of the complaints process in Sandhurst Catholic Schools. This Procedure forms part of the Complaints Management Framework which is available at www.sfnathalia.catholic.edu.au.

CES Limited office endeavours to address and respond to all complaints received from the parents/guardians and students; however CES Limited will refer complaints back to the school:

- if they have not been addressed at the school first
- If the school is still working to address the complaint
- If the issues raised are the responsibility of the school (e.g. school uniform, tuck shop duty, school parking)
- the issues raised should be able to be resolved at the school level.

CES Limited Office will respond to complaints from parents/guardians and students when:

- a complainant is not satisfied that a matter has been addressed in accordance with the school's complaint-handling processes
- a complainant is not satisfied that an acceptable resolution has been reached
- a school requests assistance to resolve a complaint
- the complaint is an allegation of serious or criminal misconduct.

1. Lodging a Complaint with CES Limited Office

Clarify the issue:

- be clear about the topic or issue to be discussed, and to whom the complaint relates
- be mindful of the need to ascertain all the facts relating to the circumstances of the topic or issue
- consider what would be an acceptable outcome
- read the CES Limited Complaints Management Policy.

Complaints can be lodged with the CES Limited Office by:

- email complaints@ceosand.catholic.edu.au
- post PO Box 477, Bendigo 3552
- Telephone 03 5443 2377

Complaints will be acknowledged within 2-5 business days of being received. CES Limited Office may need to contact the complainant for more information to help assess the issues or allegations.

The relevant Principal Consultant (or the relevant member of the Executive Leadership Team) will determine the appropriate process to be followed either informal or formal. If appropriate, the complaint will be referred to another agency such as the *Commission for Children and Young People, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, Department of Health, or Victoria Police*.

2. Actions to be taken by CES Limited Office following receipt of a complaint

Following receipt of a complaint, CES Limited Office will:

- acknowledge receipt of a complaint as soon as possible, ensuring the complainant is aware of the CES Limited Procedures for responding to complaints
- document the complaint in the agreed data management system to ensure the complaint can be tracked
- advise the complainant that a record of their complaint is being maintained
- contact the complainant for more information to help assess the issues or allegations
- inform the Principal of the receipt of the complaint and provide an opportunity for the Principal to respond to the issues raised
- assess the complaint, which may result in undertaking one or more of the following processes to help resolve it:
 - allow more time for resolution at the school
 - provide assistance to reach a resolution through support from the CES Limited Office
 - arrange for an independent investigation
- where necessary, seek advice from other CES Limited Office staff and/or external agencies to determine how a complaint may be reviewed and whether other avenues of appeal/redress already exist
- advise and/or seek permission from the complainant if any sensitive or medical information provided will need to be shared with others in CES Limited Office staff in order to resolve the matter

- advise the complainant of any delays that may occur in the ability to respond within a set timeframe
- where it is considered appropriate, provide the complainant with an opportunity to respond to the principal's response to the matters raised prior to making a decision about the complaint
- where necessary, actively support the complainant with special needs through the complaints process
- provide the complainant and the principal of the school with the outcome of the CES Limited Office's assessment of the complaint
- notify the complainant of the outcome of the complaint enquiry
- record the outcome of the complaint in the agreed system database.

3. Formal investigation

If a formal investigation is required, details will be recorded and an investigation will be conducted. The person conducting the investigation is known as the investigator. The person appointed to this role may vary depending on the nature of the complaint and the identity of the person against whom the complaint has been made. Where appropriate, the investigator will be external to CES Limited. The investigator will deal with the complaint on the facts presented and will contact the complainant if additional information is required.

If an investigation is conducted, it will determine the substance of the complaint and whether consequential action is necessary. The investigation may involve interviewing relevant witnesses and examining relevant documents. The person against whom the complaint has been made will be provided with details of the complaint and will have the opportunity to respond to any allegations which have been raised against them.

Based on the available information the investigator may:

- request a face-to-face meeting with the relevant parties and attempt to achieve resolution through discussion.
- suggest alternative method of dispute resolution such as conciliation and/or mediation
- reject the complaint and provide reasons for this rejection, or
- accept the grievance and may suggest an appropriate remedy
- refer the complainant to appropriate external agencies to explore the matter further if the applicant is still dissatisfied with the outcome of the findings of the complaint investigation.

The findings of the investigation will be communicated back to the person who made the complaint as well as the person against whom the complaint was made. Details of any

consequential actions may not be communicated with the person who made the complaint, particularly where it may be a breach of rights to privacy or contractual responsibilities.

CES Limited will use the following timeline as a guide to ensure complaints are responded to within an appropriate timeframe:

- letter of acknowledgement of complaint to complainant within **2-5 business days**
- if appropriate, referral to relevant agencies within **2-5 days** of receiving complaint
- investigation to be commenced within **two weeks**
- investigation finalised within **four weeks**
- reasons for the findings provided to complainant within one week of finalisation of the investigation

4. Appeal

If the complaint is unable to be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, the complainant has the right to seek alternative independent or other advice, or contact other entities such as the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) or the courts.