Dispute and Complaint Resolution Procedures

1. Purpose

Our Lady of Fatima School is committed to handling complaints effectively and efficiently. To manage complaints effectively, we have established a Complaints Management System in line with:

- Principles 6 and 9 of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations;
- The International Complaints Handling Standard (ISO 10002:2018 *Quality Management – Customer Satisfaction – Guidelines for Complaints Handling in Organisations*); and
- The Australian/New Zealand Complaints Handling Standard (AS/NZS 10002:2014 *Guidelines for Complaint Management in Organisations*).

Our school supports the rights of parents/guardians, students and staff to have their complaints taken seriously, and responded to promptly and thoroughly. Our complaints management system allows us to effectively capture, manage and report on complaints. We commit to regular analysis of complaints received and the implementation of any actions to rectify any deficiencies identified.

We commit to making our complaints management procedures accessible and transparent. We will ensure our school community are aware of the school's process for dealing with disputes and complaints. Our Lady of Fatima School is committed to the accessibility of complaints handling processes and will provide culturally appropriate supports to complainants as required.

SOURCES OF AUTHORITY	
CECWA Policy	Community Policy
Executive Directive	Dispute and Complaint Resolution

2. Scope

These procedures apply to all students, staff, parents, carers and members of the school community.

3. Definitions

- *Complaint* means an expression of dissatisfaction with our school services, decisions, actions or those of its staff, or about the complaint management process itself.
- *Dispute* means a conflict regarding a right, claim, or demand on one side, met by contrary claims or allegations on the other.
- The rules of *procedural fairness* require:
    - a hearing appropriate to the circumstances;
    - lack of bias;
    - evidence to support a decision; and

- inquiry into matters in dispute
- *Students* are defined as children and young people enrolled in Our Lady of Fatima School.

4. Procedures

- Principals must comply with the Privacy Executive Directive and Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) in their collection, storage, use, disclosure and access to personal information.
- These procedures are available on the school website for all parents/carers and community members.

Informal Complaints Resolution:

- The majority of issues causing concern can be handled quickly and in an informal manner. In most cases these issues can be resolved through informal discussions with appropriate staff members.
- Our school welcomes suggestions and comments from parents and takes all concerns, disputes and complaints seriously. A concern will be treated as a less serious matter that may be resolved with a more informal approach.
- A dispute or complaint will be treated as something that requires the formal process detailed below to be followed.
- We encourage all members of our school community to first treat their issue as a concern when approaching the school and then lodge a formal complaint if this is not handled to their satisfaction. However, in unique circumstances or where a matter involves an immediate risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of a student, the matter should be referred directly to the Principal.

Roles and Responsibilities of Staff in Resolving Complaints and Disputes:

- School staff and the school leadership are responsible for recording, investigating and resolving complaints and analysing them to identify causes and inform continuous improvement.

• Principal	• The Principal is accountable for ensuring that appropriate and relevant procedures are developed, implemented and reviewed on a regular basis and relevant reporting is completed. • He/she is also responsible for ensuring all staff are educated about the school's complaints management procedures and maintaining accurate records in the school's complaints register. • The Principal must acknowledge receipt of a complaint within three school days. • The Principal should communicate with the complainant with the steps taken to resolve the complaint, or an update as to when this will occur, within ten school days of receipt.

	• A Principal must refer a complaint whose resolution lies outside their authority to the Deputy Executive Director to address. • The Principal must refer a person dissatisfied with the resolution of their complaint to the process in the Executive Directive on their option for review of the Principal's decision by the Executive Director.
• Complaints Officer	• The Principal or his/her delegate are authorised to record, investigate and manage complaints. They are required to maintain accurate records in the complaints register and liaise with parties to a dispute or complaint.
• Staff members	• All staff are authorised to deal with informal complaints or concerns. They are to record the resolution of informal matters in SEQTA. Where a person makes a formal complaint, staff must refer them to the complaints officer.

How to Make a Formal Complaint:

- We ask that, where appropriate, you first raise the matter directly with the relevant staff member. If that is not appropriate or the issue was not addressed to your satisfaction, or you simply wish to make a formal complaint you can do so by any of the following means:
    - Lodging a complaint via the school's website: https://olof.wa.edu.au or https://forms.office.com/r/D65GU0M8Kh.
    - Telephoning the school administration on (08) 9333 7900 and requesting to speak to the Complaints Officer (Alison Romagnolo).
    - Emailing the Complaints Officer: feedback@olof.wa.edu.au.
    - Write a letter to the Principal: principal@olof.wa.edu.au/ 3 Harris Street, Palmyra WA 6157.
- Where a dispute or complaint is about the Principal and there is no likelihood that it can be resolved directly with the Principal, the immediate parties may refer the dispute or complaint to the Executive Director of Catholic Education Western Australia Limited (CEWA Ltd).

Anonymous Complaints:

- It is preferable that the complaint is verifiable; however, if a complaint or any other information of unknown origin (i.e., anonymous) provides information that would cause the Principal concern, it should be considered by the Principal so that they can determine the appropriate course of action.
- The dispute or complaint shall be promptly acknowledged in writing, unless the complainant is anonymous and cannot be identified.
- The parties to the dispute or complaint shall be notified of the finding(s) of the dispute or complaint, including the basis of the finding(s). There is no duty to notify an anonymous complainant.

Withdrawal of a Complaint:

- Anyone may withdraw a complaint or dispute at any stage of the resolution process. If a complaint is withdrawn, the matter will be deemed to be closed, unless we, at our discretion and in all the circumstances, wish to continue to address a matter raised.

Internal Formal Resolution Procedure:

- Step 1 – Receiving and recording the complaint
    - All formal complaints are logged through SEQTA by the Complaints Officer or Principal. The Principal must acknowledge receipt of a complaint within three school days.
- Step 2 – Acknowledge the complaint
    - All complaints will be acknowledged in writing by the Complaints Officer/ Principal at the time of receipt or no longer than three days after receiving it. The Complaints Officer/ Principal will allocate complaints a status, priority and target resolution date.
- Step 3 – Assess the complaint and address immediate risks
    - The Complaints Officer/ Principal will conduct an investigation into the issues raised, following the principles of procedural fairness, and make a determination.
    - Where there is an appropriate:
        - CEWA Ltd policy or directive that provides a specific mechanism for addressing the dispute or complaint; or
        - Binding legislative or regulator mechanism (including an Enterprise Bargaining Agreement) that addresses the issue raised in the dispute or complaint,

      that will be followed.
    - Parties may involve a support person(s) to assist them in resolving the dispute or complaint.
- Step 4 – Resolving complaints
    - Following the determination, if appropriate, the Complaints Officer/ Principal will formulate a resolution and provide a written response to the complainant. The Principal should communicate with the complainant with the steps taken to resolve the complaint, or an update as to when this will occur, within ten school days of receipt. The matter will be closed if this response is accepted
- Step 5 – Further investigation
    - If the proposed outcome is not accepted, the matter will be reviewed internally by the Principal, who may seek additional information or submissions from the relevant parties.
    - The Principal may request external assistance and expertise (including mediation), to assist in the resolution of a dispute or complaint.

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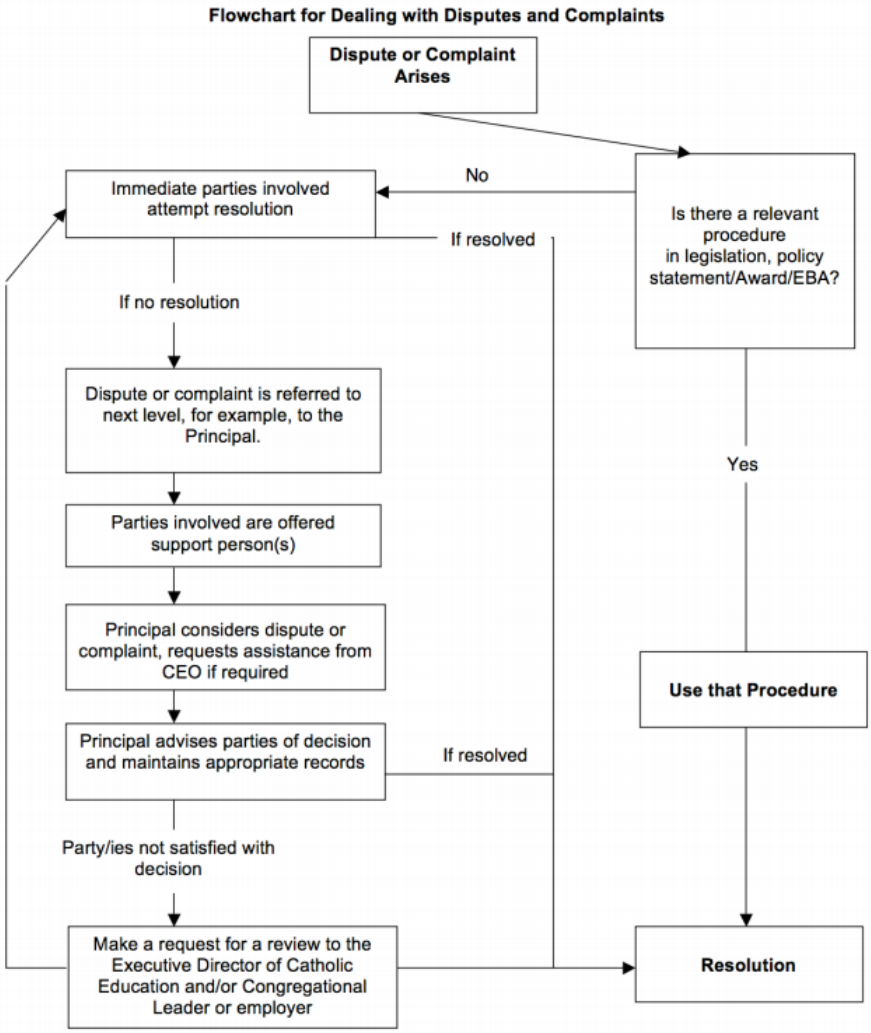
- The matter will be closed if the response of the Principal, or their delegate, is accepted.

- Step 6 – Continuous improvement
  - All complaints received will be entered into the school's complaints register and, where appropriate, a corrective action request will be made to address any underlying processes which the complaints investigation revealed may require improvement.
- Step 7 – External resolution
  - If the matter remains unresolved, the parties may seek external resolution alternatives – see Reviews and appeals.



Note: An individual has the right to make appeal to the Minister for Education with regard to a dispute or complaint (School Education Act 1999). An appeal will only be heard on a breach in process and will not be a reexamination of the merits of the case.

Reviews and Appeals:

- Should a complainant be dissatisfied with the outcome of an informal complaint with the involvement of the immediate parties, or if there are unique circumstances, the matter can be referred to the next level by the complainant.
- Once a decision has been made, parties may request a review of the decision in accordance with procedures, including escalating the dispute or complaint to the Executive Director of CEWA Ltd. The Executive Director will investigate the complaint and/or areas of disputation in accordance with the rules of procedural fairness.

The Role of the Director General

- The Director General of the Department of Education is responsible for ensuring that the school observes the registration standards, including the standard about its complaints handling system. Any student, parent or community member is entitled to contact the Director General with concerns about how the school has dealt with a complaint. Information is available on the Department of Education website. While the Director General may consider whether the school has breached the registration standards, the Director General does not have power to intervene in a complaint or override the school's decision.

Confidentiality

- Confidentiality applies with respect to both information relating to the person making the complaint, and if relevant, to a person against whom a complaint is made. Our school is committed to maintaining the confidentiality of information throughout the complaints process.
- Personally identifiable information about a complainant will only be made available for the purpose of addressing the complaint and (unless the complainant consents) will be actively protected from disclosure.
- Children and young people have the same right to privacy, anonymity and confidentiality as adults. Children and young people may waive their right to privacy and confidentiality if they decide to involve somebody else in the complaints process, e.g., to access support.
- If a complainant chooses to make a complaint without disclosing their identity, this will limit the options for proper and thorough investigation and resolution. It also raises issues in relation of procedural fairness for those who have a complaint made against them as they have the right to know of the particulars of the complaint and to respond. The school therefore cannot guarantee that anonymous complaints can or will be dealt with as effectively. Complainants are always encouraged to identify themselves.
- As far as possible and appropriate, due discretion will be respected and maintained by all parties throughout the resolution process, save where persons are required to be informed on a 'need to know' basis or where investigative, statutory or legal requirements stipulate those matters be disclosed, reported or discussed. Therefore, there can be no overriding legal obligation or right with respect to confidentiality.

- Where complaints are made in circumstances where an alleged crime may have been committed or the matter falls under the *CEWA Child Protection Procedures*, the WA Police and CEWA Ltd will be contacted and formally advised.

Record Keeping:

- The Principal shall maintain appropriate records of the relevant particulars used to make a decision in response to any formal dispute or complaint. Where applicable this will include any statements made by the parties involved.

Child Friendly Complaints:

- Our Lady of Fatima School is committed to the CEWA vision: *Catholic Education Western Australia is a Christ-centred and child-focused community of engaged learning environments, inspiring all to actively live the Gospel.*
- The principles that apply to complaints also are applied to complaints and concerns raised by students.
- Our school is committed to improving the visibility, accessibility and responsiveness of the complaints process for our students. Posters are available around the school describing how students can make a complaint or share a concern (appendix 1) and these processes are promoted by Year 6 leaders to all students.
- Students are encouraged to report complaints by talking to someone in the school they feel comfortable with, whether it is a classroom teacher, a member of the staff, the Assistant Principal or Principal.
- Students can make a complaint in different ways:
    - Face to face
    - In writing via the suggestion box, this link https://forms.office.com/r/D65GU0M8Kh or by emailing feedback@olof.wa.edu.au
- Complaints should be acknowledged at the time of receipt or as soon as possible afterwards. Children and young people are often wary about making a complaint and want to be assured they are being listened to straight away.
- Complaints that appear trivial still need to be handled seriously. Young people may test the complaints procedures on relatively minor issues before finding the confidence to raise something painful such as bullying.
- If the issue is a painful one, or if exploration of it is taking time, a student may need support from another student or from an adult. Our students are encouraged to choose a person with whom they feel comfortable to provide support.
- In circumstances involving an allegation or complaint in relation to grooming, child abuse and breaches of the Code of Conduct the school will follow the CEWA Child Protection Procedures (Mandatory Reporting), and the matter is reported promptly to the responsible government authorities.

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Culturally Safe Complaints:

- Our Lady of Fatima School will provide appropriate means for First Nations students, parents/carers or community members to make complaints.
- All staff will ensure that all complainants are listened to, enabled and supported throughout a complaints process.
- All complaints will be managed and assessed by staff members who are aware of and sensitive to the culture and cultural attitudes of First Nations people, including historical traumas and mistrust of institutions.
- The school will make available access to culturally appropriate therapeutic supports to complainants as required.
- The school will make available access to interpreters and support people for complainants as required.

Authorised by	Jacinta Petersen	Signature	
		Date	1 July 2022
Effective Date	26 October 2025	Next Review	October 2028

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APPENDIX 1

OUR LADY OF FATIMA SCHOOL
Do you have a concern, complaint or suggestion?
HERE ARE SOME WAYS TO SHARE
Scan this QR code
Speak to your teacher or another staff member
Email: feedback@olof.wa.edu.au
Use the Suggestion Box to share your ideas
ALL COMPLAINTS ARE TAKEN SERIOUSLY