



Our Lady of the Way Primary School

17 Troy Street, Emu Plains NSW 2750

Phone: (02) 4777 7200

Email: OLOW@parra.catholic.edu.au

Web: <http://www.ollowemuplains.catholic.edu.au>



Complaints & Grievances Procedure

Updated 2023

At *Our Lady of The Way*, we follow the CSPD Managing Complaints Policy ([Link Here](#)) and the CSPD Procedural Fairness Guidelines ([Link Here](#)) and the following procedures have been adapted specifically to our school environment.

Introduction And Purpose

At *Our Lady of The Way*, we are committed to developing an educational and organisational culture based on mutual trust and respect. The dignity of each individual is valued and the rights and beliefs of all members of the community are respected. We acknowledge that employees, students and parents may at times have a complaint about a decision, behaviour, act or omission that they feel is unacceptable. Whilst most issues can be resolved through direct discussion with the parties, there may be instances in which this is not possible.

What Is A Complaint?

A complaint at *Our Lady of The Way* is a statement raising a concern related to the school. Complaints may be raised by parents/guardians, students, visitors, volunteers, community members and contractors expressing dissatisfaction with a service provided by the school, the behaviour and decisions of staff members or about school practices, policies and procedures. Complaints may be raised by staff members about issues arising in the workplace (workplace complaints), including interpersonal conflict, perceived breach of policy, the allocation of work or developmental opportunities or perceived unfairness in the workplace.

Informal Complaints

Wherever possible, complaints should be raised directly with the person concerned (unless this person is a child, in which case, it is more appropriate to contact the relevant teacher or member of the School Executive team). Approaching the person who may be the cause of the complaint and letting them know the impact of their actions may be the most appropriate action. This provides the person with an opportunity to stop or change what they are doing and/or explain their actions.

Informal complaints may be received in a number of ways, including face-to-face contact, email, letter or phone (these should all be retained and/or recorded on Compass as a Chronicle). Any letters or emails can now be attached to a Chronicle on Compass.

Completion of the Complaint Form is optional for informal complaints although all complaints should be recorded. (These can be obtained from the school office).

Formal Complaints

A formal complaint may be made when:

- A complaint cannot be resolved informally.
- Where you cannot approach the person directly or remain dissatisfied with their response.
- The seriousness of the issue warrants a higher level of formality.

Underlying Principles

The following principles guide stakeholders so that complaints are addressed appropriately:

- Complaints will be investigated in a fair and impartial manner. Confidentiality will be observed.
- A person facing a complaint is entitled to know detailed information about the substance of a complaint and to have the opportunity to respond.
- The complaints management process will be conducted in a manner that is respectful of all parties. Persons making a complaint will not be victimised
- It is expected complaints are made in good faith and are not vexatious or malicious.
- Complaints will be addressed in a timely manner and complainants will be advised if the matter cannot be finalised within one month.

Natural Justice And Procedural Fairness

The principle of natural justice requires that a person be given the opportunity to respond to concerns, complaints or allegations which may negatively impact that person. At *SOOur Lady of The Way* we are committed to natural justice and therefore we follow procedural fairness in situations when decisions may be taken which could have a detrimental effect on the rights, interests or legitimate expectations of a person.

Procedural fairness requires that the:

1. respondent is heard
2. decision is not biased
3. decision is based on relevant and reliable evidence
4. complaint is dealt with in a timely manner

* Where an anonymous complaint is lodged, no action will be taken unless the allegation is reportable conduct and action must be taken in accordance with the NSW Ombudsman's Act.

Confidentiality

To maintain confidentiality in so far as that is reasonable all participants in the process, particularly the person investigating the complaint, should restrict the information about the complaint to those who need to know. All participants in the process also need to be informed of the importance of confidentiality and also that unfair repercussions or victimisation in any form is unacceptable and if evident could result in disciplinary action.

Access To Support

The person who made the complaint and the respondent may access support. If meetings with the parties are held, the parties may have a support person present.

Students under the age of 18 who make a complaint are to be offered the support of an adult support person. This may be a parent, guardian, teacher or other significant person. Guidelines for dealing with complaints may be adapted according to such considerations as the age of students, English competency and disability (for example, assistance may be given completing the Complaint Form).

All employees participating in the complaints process may access a confidential counselling service which is made available by contacting the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), Converge 24/7 hotline on 1300 687 327 (1300 OUR EAP).

Record Keeping

Complaint handlers will keep written records of all the complaint resolution process and outcomes. Records of complaints will be filed and stored in the school office or on Compass.

Resolving Complaints

When investigating a complaint or grievance, a thorough investigation will take place. All persons involved will be interviewed and listened to by the person investigating the complaint/grievance. Appropriate action will be implemented at the conclusion of the investigation.

Parents:

Complaints or grievances pertaining to classroom issues or that relate to other children are to be dealt with by school personnel.

It is not appropriate for parents to approach other parents or their children with the intention of resolving the issue.

Parents are reminded that there are two sides to every story and whilst it is important to listen to their children, it is also important not to draw conclusions or make accusations until all the facts are known.

The recommended procedures for parents are:

1. The first point of contact is the child's class teacher.
2. If parents are not satisfied with the solutions offered or believe that they have not been given a fair hearing by the class teacher, they are encouraged to make an appointment with the appropriate Instruction Leader (Infants or Primary) to discuss the issue further.
3. If parents remain unsatisfied with the solutions offered or believe that they have not been given a fair hearing by the class teacher or the Instructional Leader, they are encouraged to make an appointment with the Assistant Principal.
4. Following these steps, if parents remain unsatisfied with the process or the solutions offered, they are encouraged to make an appointment with the school Principal.
5. If parents are not satisfied with the response from the school or they have other legitimate reasons, they can contact the Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese directly. The CSPD has a community liaison line for taking general inquiries or concerns. The CSPD Officer will take the complaint and refer it to the relevant CSPD personnel. In some instances the CSPD Officer may advise that the

complaint is more appropriately dealt with at the school level. In general, the CSPD Officer will refer the complaint to the Director of System Performance responsible for the school. CSPD can be contacted on (02) 9840 5600.

6. For matters concerning CSPD staff (teachers and CSPD professionals), in the first instance the complaint would be taken to the person's immediate supervisor (The School Principal). If the complainant is not satisfied, they may address their concern to the Director of System Performance.

Parents are to make an appointment with the member of staff member via the school office.

STUDENTS:

The recommended procedures for students are:

1. Children encountering problems on the playground and have used the 'school's processes' of empowering themselves to enact strategies that deal with problems, but without the desired result, are asked to firstly talk to the staff member on duty at the time of the incident. If their concerns have not been addressed they are asked to discuss the matter with their class teacher. If they feel they have not be heard, each child is encouraged to speak with the appropriate Instructional Leader (Infants or Primary, Assistant Principal and/or the Principal of their concerns.
2. If and when issues arise in the classroom, students are encouraged to speak to their class teacher in order to seek assistance in finding a resolution. If they feel they have not be heard, each child is encouraged to speak with the appropriate Instructional Leader (Infants or Primary, Assistant Principal and/or the Principal of their concerns.

EMPLOYEES:

The recommended procedures for employees are:

1. Employees encountering a problem with another employee are asked to firstly speak directly to the person so that their concerns can be addressed.
2. If the concern of the employee continues they are asked to speak to a member of Leadership (teachers) or the office manager (ancillary) whichever is relevant.
3. When an employee is not satisfied with the response from the member of Leadership or the Office Manager, they should speak to the Principal or the Assistant Principal.
4. Where an employee is not satisfied with the response from the Principal or if they have a complaint against the Principal, they should contact a CSPD Director.

Intake Process

At *Our Lady of The Way*, any person handling a complaint (Including the class teacher, Leader of Learning, Assistant Principal or Principal) will complete a Chronicle on Compass recording all correspondence. They will:

1. Record the complaint/enquiry in a Chronicle entry, including the following information:
 - Contact details of the complainant/communication
 - Nature of the matter including the details of the complaint (what is the matter, who is involved, when it happened, where it happened, any contextual information) and the resolution that is sought.
 - Type of communication
 - Any advice provided.
 - Any action taken including the referral of the complaint.
 - Follow-up action notes (if required)
2. Assess how the complaint will be managed:
 - If the class teacher completes a Chronicle form and the matter is not resolved they will redirect an alert to the Principal or their delegate.
 - Follow-up action notes actioned in a timely manner
 - If the Principal/Assistant Principal is completing the Chronicle entry, the complaint will be managed according to procedure.
3. Maintain accurate and confidential records:
 - All Chronicle entries are time stamped and accessible to relevant CSPD and school personnel to monitor and track communication.
 - For complaints/communications handled by the classroom teacher, the teacher will maintain and attach notes of all correspondence in a Chronicle entry.

Addressing Complaints

No further action will be taken when the complainant is satisfied with the explanation given at the time of making the complaint or enquiry except when the complaint refers to matters that must be investigated under Child Protection legislation.

Complaints assessed as relevant to a particular CSPD procedure/policy will be handled in accordance with the relevant procedure and/or policy. This includes Student Management Procedures, Suspension, Negotiated Transfer and Exclusion Policy, Child Protection Procedures, Maintaining Right Relations Procedures, Discipline Policy for Employees, Employee Disciplinary Procedures, Addressing Unsatisfactory Performance Policy, Job Share Policy and Maintaining Home and School Policy.

Appeal

A person who is not satisfied the matter has been resolved appropriately may appeal to the Principal when the Principal has not been involved in investigating or examining the complaint, or is not the person named as the source of the grievance. Alternatively an appeal may be made to the Director System of Performance of the relevant school who may be contacted at CSPD, phone 9840 5600. For CSPD matters an appeal may be made to the Director of the relevant department. In the final instance an appeal may be made to the Executive Director of Schools.

EVALUATION

The Principal, with delegated responsibility to the Leadership Team will be responsible for the planning, implementation and review of this policy.

Our Lady of The Way

Complaints and Grievances Handling Process

