

ST EUPHEMIA COLLEGE

K-12



COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURES

2014

Complaints Handling Procedures

Introduction

These Procedures should be read in conjunction with the Complaints Handling Policy.

Procedures

A complaint can be about any aspect of the service provided, or not provided, at St Euphemia College, the behaviour or decisions of staff, or practices, policies or procedures. It could incorporate; discrimination, harassment, bullying, formal staff warnings and/or unfair dismissal. These matters are discussed in the relevant St Euphemia College's policies and procedures documents.

Any person can make a complaint, including a student, parent, caregiver, a community member who uses the services at St Euphemia College, any employee, contractor or volunteer in a location where the College services are provided.

An employee who receives a complaint will need to determine whether it is a matter that can be resolved or whether it should be referred to the Year Coordinator, Faculty Coordinator, Stage Coordinator, School Counsellor, Primary Director, High School Administration Coordinator, or Principal. Depending on the nature of the complaint, the complainant can attempt resolution via the following procedures:

Student Complaint:

Students are encouraged, wherever possible, to resolve concerns or difficulties directly with the person(s) concerned. If the complainant is not resolved, the students can approach the Stage Coordinators and School Counsellor who are available to assist students to resolve their issues at this level. Further resolution can be sought using Appendix 1 in the Complaints Policy.

Staff Complaints

In the first instance, complaints should be resolved informally if possible and without delay. If a problem or concern arises within the School, resolution should firstly be attempted by discussing the problem or concern directly with the person/s involved. In such cases, complainants are encouraged to initially raise issues or concerns with the relevant person at the time of the issue arising. Discussing the issue or concern immediately and face-to-face, may clarify the situation and resolve any misunderstandings satisfactorily. The complainant is to approach the respondent and explain his/her grievance in a non threatening manner using effective communication.

Where the complainant feels as though he/she cannot approach the person directly or is not happy with their response or reaction, then the complainant can explain the problem to the appropriate person at the School (see relevant flowchart in Policy Appendix).

All complaints that cannot be resolved initially will be recorded by the staff member handling the complaint as per the Policy Appendix. Details should include the nature of the complaint, dates and names of parties concerned, staff members involved in handling the complaint, action taken and outcome of the procedure. Further resolution can be sought using Appendix 2 in the Complaints Policy.

Parents, Caregivers and Community Members

At times, an inquiry at the School Office may be the first point of contact for people with complaints. They will be advised as to the person designated to deal with the nature of their complaint. This person may be a Year Coordinator, Faculty Coordinator, Stage Coordinator, School Counsellor, Primary Director, High School Administration Coordinator or Principal. The designated person will advise what options are available and what will happen if a formal complaint is made. Further resolution can be sought using Appendix 3 and 4 in the Complaints Policy. All complaints should be put in writing and addressed to the Principal or the Primary Directory, if the matter involves the Primary School.

Person investigating the complaint will:

- collect and analyse information relevant to the matter
- work collaboratively with all people involved
- find the facts relating to the matter
- identify any contributing factors to the matter
- consult the relevant policy on issues that relate to the complaint
- document the investigation report or outcome

Positive resolution of a complaint should aim to:

- seek resolution at the level at which the complaint is made
- gain agreement of the parties
- consider all relevant information and views of all parties
- consider the School's policies
- reassure the complainant will not lead to discrimination.

Management of complaints resolution needs to reflect the following:

- complainants should be told the process for complaint resolution and how long it will take to deal with a complaint
- complainants should be kept informed of progress on resolving the complaint.

Complaint Relating to Principal:

If a written complaint is made against the Principal, the Principal should be given the opportunity to meet with the complainant to attempt to resolve the issue. If a satisfaction resolution is not reached, the complainant will be informed by the Principal of his/her right to appeal to the School Board.

Possible Outcomes:

If the complaint is upheld or sustained, the following are possible outcomes depending on the nature of the complaint:

- an agreement between the parties
- a verbal apology
- a written apology
- where staff members are the subject of a complaint, action taken may be as stated in the Code of Conduct
- where students are the subject of a complaint, action taken may be as stated in the relevant policies relating to student welfare

If a complaint is not upheld or not substantiated (eg. there is insufficient evidence) but some issues arise from the investigation that are required to be addressed, possible outcomes include:

- relevant training for employees and/or students
- monitoring of the behaviour of employees and/or students
- counselling for the aggrieved person/s
- mediation at the appropriate level.

If the incident relating to the complaint is proved not to have happened at all, or if there is evidence that the complaint was made with the main purpose or intent of causing distress to the other named as the source of the grievance, the following are possible outcomes:

- counselling for the person who made the complaint
- a written apology from the person who made the complaint
- an official warning to the person who made the complaint
- disciplinary action for students and staff.

Confidentiality and Privacy

To protect confidentiality and privacy, staff involved in handling complaints resolution must ensure that information is restricted only to those who genuinely need to know in order to deal with the complaint. Some information about the specific complaint may need to be disclosed to others during its resolution. The complainant should be made aware that this might occur.

Appeals

If the complainant feels that the complaints procedure has not been followed properly, or that the outcome is unacceptable to them, they may appeal to the Principal.

The Principal/Delegated Authority will evaluate the way the complaint was handled and examine the outcome. If he/she believes it was handled properly and 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, by someone other than the person who first handled the complaint.

If the complainant is not happy with the way their complaint has been dealt with by the School, he/she may wish to go to an external agency for further advice and assistance such as the Independent Education Union (IEU) or Fair Work Australia. He/She may take their complaint to an external agency at any stage in the procedure if they are unhappy with progress in dealing with the complaint.