



## Queen of Apostles School

# DISPUTE AND COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

### 1. Aim

To address and resolve disputes and complaints in a timely and fair manner in the best interests of Catholic Education Western Australia and informing continuous improvement.

<b>Sources of Authority</b> Registration Standards for Non-Government Schools in WA AS/NZS 10002:2018 Quality Management – Customer Satisfaction – Guidelines for Complaint Handling in Organisations	
CECWA Policy	Community
Executive Directive	Dispute and Complaint Resolution

Queen of Apostles School is committed to handling complaints effectively and efficiently. To manage complaints effectively, we have established a Complaints Procedure in line with:

- CEWA Dispute and Complaint Resolution Executive Directive
  - <https://policy.cewa.edu.au/executive-directive/dispute-and-complaint-resolution/>
- 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 Complaint Handling in Organisations)

### 2. Definitions

**Complaint** means an expression of dissatisfaction with Catholic Education policies, procedures, decisions, omissions, quality of service, staff or student behaviour.

**Dispute** means a conflict regarding a right, claim, or demand on one side, met by contrary claims or allegations on the other.

**Procedural fairness** means that a matter has been resolved to the satisfaction of Catholic Education in Western Australia with respect to the paramount importance of the student(s).

**Students** are defined as children and young people enrolled in schools and early learning and care services.

### 3. Principles

All decisions are to reflect the paramount importance of the student(s).

Any person may complain orally or in writing about any matter arising from the operations of Catholic Education.

Complainants are personally responsible and liable for the content of their complaints.

A dispute or complaint made in accordance with this procedure is a dispute or complaint about Catholic Education, notwithstanding the naming of any staff member in a dispute or complaint.

It is preferable that the complaint is verifiable, however, if a complaint or any other information of unknown origin (ie. anonymous) provides information that would cause a Principal concern, it should be considered by the Principal so that they can determine the appropriate course of action

Disputes and complaints will be managed in accordance with the Principle of Subsidiarity, which requires that nothing should be done by a higher authority, agency or level that could be done as well or better by a lower one.

Disputes and complaints, and the resolution of such, contribute to continuous learning and improvement so that the potential and opportunity for incidents to be repeated are minimised.

Any review of a dispute or complaint will be based on procedural fairness.

Information in a complaint should only be disclosed to those parties who have a need to know in order to investigate and resolve the complaint.

Once a decision has been made, parties may request a review of the decision in accordance with Procedures, including escalating the dispute to the Executive Director of Catholic Education in Western Australia.

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, she does not have the power to intervene in a complaint or override the school's decision.

### 3. Procedure

#### **Step 1 – Receiving and recording the complaint**

All formal complaints are logged by the school leadership.

#### **Step 2 – Acknowledge the complaint**

All complaints will be acknowledged by the school leadership at the time of receipt or as soon as possible afterwards. The Principal will allocate complaints a status, priority and target resolution date.

### **Step 3 – Assess the complaint and address immediate risks**

The school leadership 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
- 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 Principal will formulate a resolution and provide a written response to the complainant. 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's delegate, who may seek additional information or submissions from the relevant parties. The principal or their delegate seeks to resolve all disputes within 14 days from the date that the review process is initiated.

The principal may request external assistance and expertise (including mediation), including the involvement of the CEWA Ltd Employment and Community Relations Team 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.**

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 of 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 the power to intervene in a complaint or override the school's decision.

#### **Child friendly complaints**

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.

Students are encouraged to report complaints by talking to someone in the school they feel comfortable with, whether it is a mentor, classroom teacher, a member of the support staff (social worker, counsellor, psychologist, etc), the Principal or their delegate.

Students can make a complaint in different ways:

- Face to face
- By telephone (provide contact number)
- In writing (letter, email, or school website) (provide contacts)

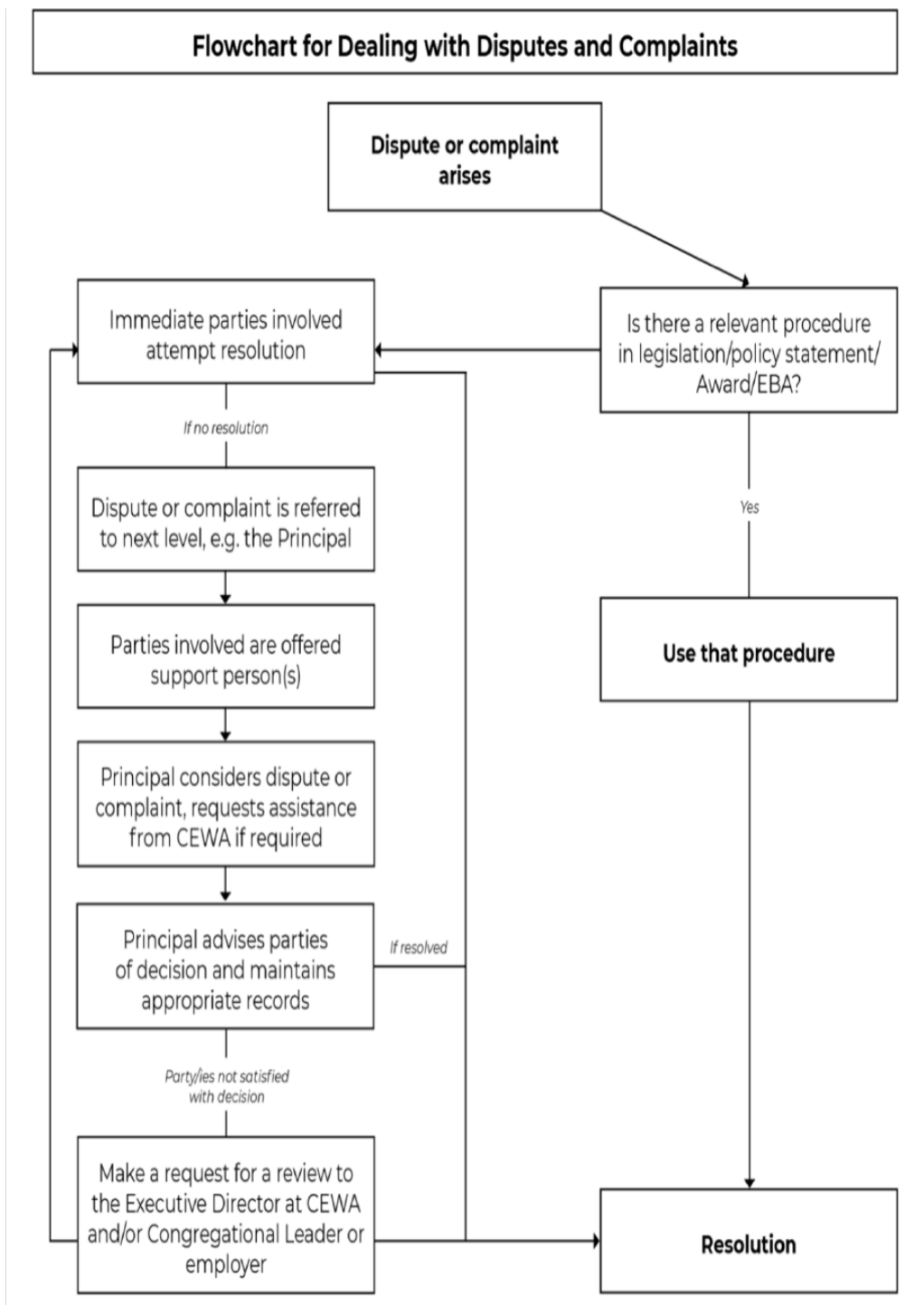
Complaints should be acknowledged at the time of receipt or as soon as possible afterwards. Children and young people are often wary about making a complaint and want to be assured they are being listened to straight away.

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.

## **4. Records**

The Principal shall maintain appropriate records of the relevant particulars used to make a decision in response to any formal dispute or complaint. All formal records of the complaint will be kept indefinitely.



Authorised by	Mark Ryan	Signature:	
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