



Our Lady of Mercy Catholic College Burraneer

Resolution of Complaints Policy

Last Update July 2017

Rationale

Our Lady of Mercy Catholic College Burraneer is a community of faith, hope and love, where communication takes place in an environment of openness, mutual respect, and in the interests of all students. We commit to being an authentic Catholic school, which is “founded on the person of Jesus Christ and enlivened by the Gospel” [Vision for Catholic Schools (2009)]. Catholic teaching emphasises the important place of the Catholic school in the life of the Church, and we believe in the primacy of parents as the first teachers of their children and understand that “we are called to work in partnership with and support parents as the primary educators of their children” [Archbishop’s Charter for Catholic Schools (2011)]

Children are entrusted into the care of our school community in the belief that they will be formed and educated according to the Catholic tradition. Within the reality of the schooling experience, it is recognised that, from time to time, misunderstandings and differences of opinion will occur, and that these need to be resolved satisfactorily. Addressing such matters within a framework of dignity, respect and truth can provide powerful opportunities to model the love of Christ in the reality of our contemporary world.

The OLMC College Resolution of Complaints Policy has been developed in accordance with the Sydney Catholic Schools (SCS) Resolution of Complaints Policy (Dec 2016) and (available from the OLMC website and the SCS public website) and meets the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) requirements to provide a school policy for complaints or grievances, with specific reference to processes for raising and responding to matters of concern identified by students and/or parents.

The school will resolve the majority of these issues, but occasionally some may require specialist assistance from representatives of the SCS.

Note: This policy applies to parent, student and community member complaints.

Guiding Principles

- Confidentiality, access, dignity and impartiality form the basis of the complaints resolution process.
- Stakeholders must work together with respect and openness to achieve fair and reasonable decisions.
- Complaints resolution is most effective at the school level.
- Each parent/caregiver has the right to be heard and to expect that ongoing relationships will continue respectfully.
- Complaints will be resolved as quickly as possible.
- The input of all stakeholders is valued and respected.
- Restoration of ‘right relationships’ is most often best achieved through ‘restorative practice’



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- The communal needs of the school community generally exceed the needs of any individual.
- Staff members have a right to be informed of formal complaints that are made relating to them.
- The availability of a review is an integral component of the complaints resolution process.

Policy and Procedure

At OLMC College we foster right relationships between parents, students and staff. The Resolution of Complaints flowchart, which appears at the end of this policy, provides the protocol to address and manage concerns. Complaints are usually resolved more effectively and expediently if the matter is handled by the person who is most likely to be able to address and manage the concern. This person is usually the Homeroom Teacher or Subject Teacher. The **left hand side of the flowchart** shows the path for resolving complaints regarding **wellbeing and behaviour** and the **right hand side of the flowchart** shows the path for resolving complaints regarding the **teaching and learning**.)

General enquiries and complaints should be made through the OLMC College Office, via email at info@olmcburraneer.catholic.edu.au or telephone on 9544 19966. The College Office staff will assist you to contact the appropriate staff member. All complaints will be handled with confidentiality and in a procedurally fair manner. All parties involved in the complaint will be given the opportunity to be heard.

Issues such as those pertaining to child protection or of a serious nature regarding school personnel may be referred directly to the Principal (or delegate). Where a matter cannot be resolved through the school, then it should be referred to the Southern Regional Office of SCS Sydney (02 9772 7000).

Explanatory Notes and Definitions

Complaint

For the purposes of this policy a 'complaint' is defined as an expression of discontent. This differs from an 'inquiry' where someone is simply seeking information (although an inquiry could become a complaint). A complaint to the school or to SCS can be either verbal or written. Where a complaint is received anonymously, it must be considered and acted upon. However, as clearly no interaction is possible with the complainant, then the ability of the school to act upon the complaint may be limited.

Confidentiality

Information obtained during the course of investigation of complaints will be treated as confidential. Other staff members will only be given information where their advice or counsel is required, or where there are implications for future practice or safety. Principals may exercise their discretion as to how information is shared and with whom.

Procedural Fairness

Under the principle of procedural fairness, the process is clear, free from structural bias and ambiguity, allowing each party to present their case fairly.



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Restorative Practice

This approach puts the reparation of harm done to relationships and people over and above the need for assigning blame and dispensing punishment where someone has caused offence. It is not appropriate in every case.

Right Relationships

This concept emphasises the importance of relationships that are in balance and harmony, where issues can be worked through in a context of mutual respect, while recognising that the parties may not agree on every outcome.

Support Person

A support person is someone, such as a parent/caregiver, sibling, colleague, parish priest, interpreter or teacher, who supports either of the parties at a formal meeting. The role of the support person is to provide emotional comfort, explain events to the complainant if required, and provide witness to the events of the meeting. The support person does not actively participate in proceedings. A support person will not be permitted to further participate in the complaint investigation process in any other role, as this may create a conflict of interest.

A lawyer is by definition an advocate, and therefore not a support person, as their participation is active. Meetings with lawyers must be arranged at mutually convenient times and venues, and SCS will provide the services of a Regional Consultant and specialist counsel and advice, at the request of the Principal. This will be activated through the Regional Consultant.

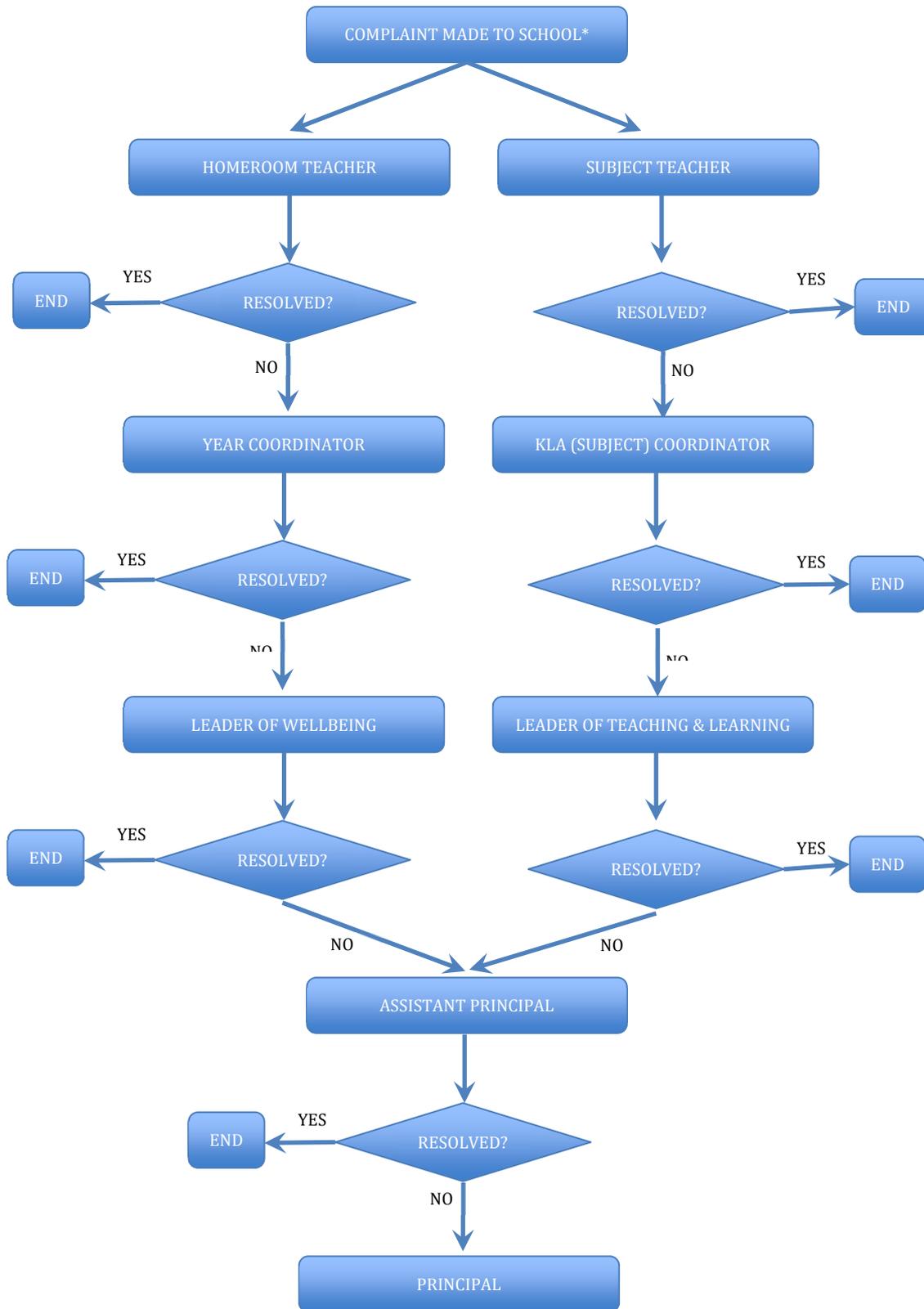
Supporting Documents

- SCS Resolution of Complaints Policy (Dec 2016)
- SCS Working Together: Resolution of Complaints Parent Brochure
- SCS Student Management: Suspension, Transfer and Exclusion Policy (Dec 2016)
- Enrolment Policy for Sydney Catholic Systemic Schools (May 2017)
- Positive Workplace Relationships: Policy on the Prevention of Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace (Dec 2015)
- Information on Restorative Practice can be found at:
http://www.restorativejustice.com.au/research_schools



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Resolution of Complaints Flowchart



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Please note: Staff contact names can be found on the OLMC College Website under About Us / Staff Directory