



# Suggestions, Complaints and Grievances Policy

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## **Rationale:**

Saint Mary MacKillop Colleges is committed to the Christian values of Charity and Justice. We have the desire and the responsibility to ensure that the highest possible moral and professional standards are maintained by the staff and students in their conduct within the school.

## **Aims:**

- To provide structures for a truly harmonious climate of cooperation between the various parties involved in the process of educating young Catholics. These structures should accord with the principles laid down in our education policy and the general moral teachings of the Catholic Church on which it is based.
- To resolve effectively any complaints arising from a breakdown in this process.

## **Student, Parent and Staff Grievance Procedure:**

Points to Note:

1. Any parent, student, staff member or community member may make a complaint about any decision, behaviour, policy, act or omission on the part of the principal, a member or members of the staff or student/s that they consider to be discriminatory, damaging or unreasonable.
2. They may also make suggestions as to the better functioning of the school or of some area of school life.
3. An aggrieved person should first make his/her complaint directly to the person involved in the issue.
4. If no resolution is possible, the matter should be referred to the Principal.
5. Some complaints because of the seriousness and urgency of their nature, are referred immediately to the Principal.
6. The Principal should attend to the complaint and investigate the matter with due seriousness, conferring with relevant persons and/ or members of the executive in arriving at suitable procedures for resolving the issue.
7. The person/persons against whom a complaint is lodged must be informed early about the complaint and given every opportunity to defend themselves and protect their rights.
8. Complaints should not be aired in the public forum before the relevant person/persons have been apprised of them. Parents should not approach other students or their families with a school related complaint.
9. A complaint should be made in writing. If this is not possible, a true written record must be made of any oral representation/discussion of the complaint.

## **Key Elements in Our Complaints-Handling Procedures:**

When a complaint is made, it is investigated in a fair and impartial manner. No judgements or assumptions are made and no action taken until the investigation is complete.

## **Confidentiality:**

The only people who will have access to information about the complaint will be the person making the complaint and the person to whom the complaint is made, the person/s investigating and the Principal and/or the School Executive who may become involved.

The person/s about whom the complaint has been made has a right to be informed.

**No Victimisation:**

The authorities of the school ensure that a person who makes a complaint and members of that person's family are not victimised in any way.

**Vexatious or Malicious Complaints and Unsustained Accusations:**

While there is an underlying assumption that complaints are made in good faith, the school is committed to the protection of all members of its community and will act to prevent, or require compensation for, any accusations or complaints that are found to be malicious in purpose or deliberately false.

**Repetitious or Unduly Frequent Complaints:**

The school aims to rectify situations which are the matter of valid complaints provided the solution is reasonable, just and within the school's capacity.

If, in spite of this, a student or parent makes repetitious or unduly frequent complaints which the school is unable to process, the school will require the student's parents to remove him/ her from the school, in justice to the student as well as to the school.

**Timeliness:**

Complaints, grievances or suggestions will be processed as soon as possible. The person making the complaint will receive acknowledgement of receipt of the complaint within seven days. The finalisation of the complaint process will normally be done within a month. If this cannot be done, the complainant will be notified, giving reasons for the extension.

**Procedural Fairness:**

All individuals dealing with authorities have a right to:

- Be heard
- Receive an unbiased hearing and decision.

**Process to be Followed in Making a Complaint:**

- Approach the person against whom the complaint is to be made.
- Where you feel you can't approach the person who is the subject of the complaint, or you are not happy with their response, then you should approach an appropriate person at the school who may be a Subject Coordinator, Pastoral Care/Discipline Coordinator or the Principal. (An inquiry at the office will direct you to the person to be approached).
- You will be informed by this person as to what further procedures are open to you.
- If the matter is very serious and/or you have good reason not to raise the issue with the school personnel, or are not satisfied with the school's attempt to resolve the issue, you are free to direct your complaint to the Directors of the School.
- The persons whom you contact have the right to decide whether or not they have reason not to proceed to deal with the complaint (eg: if personal interests are at stake). In this case the matter will be referred to another appropriate person/s.

**What Happens Next:**

- You will be interviewed and the conversation accurately recorded in writing.
- It will be explained to you what is possible in the way of answering your complaint. Where feasible, reasons will be given.
- It will be explained to you what your options are and what will happen if the complaint is found to be unsustainable.

- Interviews will be conducted with the person/persons against whom the complaint is made. Witnesses may be required.
- Written reports may be required. Confidentiality must be insisted on and warnings given in relation to any breach of this.
- You will be told of the outcome of the investigation and of the solutions offered by the school to the problem.

**Outcomes:**

The outcome of this process should be effected in a Christian spirit of charity and justice. It should normally include:

- Agreement on the solution by various parties involved – including the school.
- Apologies and retractions where relevant.
- Possible review of school procedures and policies in the light of the complaint.

**Records:**

Records must be retained in the school of all formal complaints. A formal complaint must be made in writing – either by the person making it or as a transcript of his/her oral delivery of the complaint. People making complaints should be asked to distinguish between a casual, minor complaint and a formal or more substantial one.