



St Brigid's College

Dispute and Complaints Resolution

Issue Date: 2013

Reviewed: 2016

Date for review: 2018

RATIONALE

Dignity, safety and wellbeing of people are central to the Church's teaching. Mercy Education Ltd is committed to justice, respect for others, and all who are associated with Mercy Education act with compassion and courage.

St Brigid's College is committed to ensuring that members of the college community are provided an effective and acceptable means to bring disputes and complaints concerning education to the attention of the College in accordance with the *School Education Act (WA) 1999*.

For that reason, an appropriate model of conflict resolution by which disputes and complaints are resolved has been established to ensure that disputes and complaints are dealt with fairly, objectively and in a timely manner.

DEFINITION

A complaint or dispute relates to any circumstance pertaining to the education or well-being of a student that a parent considers to be unjust or unfair, or thinks should be brought to the attention of the senior staff of the College.

The complainant is the person raising the concern.

The subject of the complaint is the person, persons or organisation against which a complaint is made.

PRINCIPLES

1. People are entitled to raise disputes and complaints.
2. The aim is to resolve all disputes and complaints informally at the lowest possible level.
3. All decisions will reflect the paramount importance of the student(s).
4. Complaints and disputes will be responded to in a prompt, impartial and just manner. They will be handled confidentially, in a non-threatening, respectful manner and in a safe environment.
5. Natural justice requires that both/all parties will have the opportunity to put their case/be heard.

6. Processes will be guided by compassion in seeking reconciliation. The aim is to reach an acceptable outcome that minimizes any potential detriment to ongoing relationships.
7. All parties to the complaints and disputes shall have access to additional support or advocacy, as necessary (eg interpreters, counselling).
8. Procedural fairness will be followed in all aspects of the complaint handling process.
9. Complaints and their resolution will be fully documented.
10. Complaints will be handled in a manner which is consistent with current Australian legislation and practice and relevant industrial agreements.
11. Once a decision has been made, parties may request a review of the decision in accordance with the Procedures, including escalating the dispute or complaint to Mercy Education Limited.

PROCEDURES

1. A dispute or complaint can be made by any person regarding the provision of education or related matter to the person most able to investigate or resolve the dispute or complaint. This is usually the homeroom or class teacher. Depending on the nature of the complaint, it should be made in writing. The teacher will investigate the concern and provide feedback to the complainant.

Where an immediate party cannot be identified, such as if it is anonymous or from an unverifiable source, the information will be assessed and duly considered.

2. If the complainant does not feel comfortable submitting the dispute or complaint to the homeroom or class teacher, they may submit the concern directly to the Year Team Leader or Head of School/Deputy Principal. For Junior School submit the complaint to the Junior School Team Leader, if not comfortable, submit to the Head of Junior School.
3. **The matter should be referred to the Head of School/Deputy Principal:**
 - 3.1. If the complainant is not satisfied that the matter has been resolved;
 - 3.2. the staff member considers that the problem needs response from a more senior member of staff
4. The Head of School/Deputy Principal will follow the dispute or complaint through to a final resolution.
5. The matter will be referred to the Principal for final arbitration, if necessary.

6. If any steps have been omitted in the resolution process, then the complaint is referred back to the appropriate step in the process as outlined in the procedure flowchart for the management of complaints.
7. Where individuals are confronted by inappropriate behaviour, they are entitled to discontinue the conversation and remove themselves from the situation. (Inappropriate behaviour occurs when anyone feels threatened or intimidated, or when insulting or abusive language is used.)

OTHER DOCUMENTS AND RESOURCES THAT MAY BE RELEVANT

- Mercy Education Limited 1.06 Policy – Complaints Management (<http://www.mercy.edu.au/resources/dsp-default.cfm?loadref=112>)
- Catholic Education Office of Western Australia Policy 2-D1 Dispute and Complaint Resolution (<http://internet.ceo.wa.edu.au/AboutUs/Governance/Policies/Documents/Community/Policy%20D1%20Dispute%20and%20Complaint%20Resolution.pdf>)
- Occupational Health and Safety Act (2004)
- Mercy Education Limited Code of Conduct

International Students

Please refer to the St Brigid's College International Students Complaints and Grievances Policy which can be found on the college website:

<http://www.stbrigids.wa.edu.au/enrolments/Attachments/2014%20-%20Complaints%20and%20Grievances%20Policy%20Int'l%20Students%20%202014.pdf>

COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE

