



**CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE**  
**DIOCESE OF SALE**



# Resolving Parent/Guardian Issues and Concerns

**Management of Complaints and Grievances**

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# 1. Preamble

The Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Sale (CEOSale) recognises that it is in the best interest of students for there to be a trusting and cooperative relationship between parent/guardian and school. Complaints are an important way for the school community to provide information and feedback to a school. CEOSale considers that every complaint provides a valuable opportunity for reflection and learning.

CEOSale recognises a parent's/guardian's right to make a complaint and its responsibility to provide a framework within which efforts can be made to resolve complaints.

It is CEOSale's belief that parent/guardian complaints are best handled at the school level in an environment where individuals feel able to speak up about issues concerning the education of their children.

An effective complaint-handling system has a clear process for resolving complaints, treats people fairly, is timely and provides those people involved in a complaint with a fair opportunity to respond to issues and to present their views.

The role of CEOSale is to provide support, resources and advice to Catholic schools. CEOSale is not a regulatory body and all schools are empowered to manage grievances and complaints at the school level.

## 2. General information about handling complaints

All schools are required to develop, maintain and publicise a fair, effective and efficient complaint-handling process, so that complaints about events or decisions at the school can be addressed.

Parents/Guardians of students attending a Catholic school in the Diocese of Sale who have a complaint should, in the first instance, make the complaint to the school that their child attends, except when the complaint is about the principal of the school. Complaints about school principals should be referred to the school's Education Consultant at the CEOSale who will assist in finding an appropriate solution. They can be contacted on 5622 6600.

The principal is responsible for the efficient and effective organisation, management and administration of the school including the school's complaint-handling processes.

When addressing a complaint, it is expected that parents/guardians and school personnel will:

- show respect and understanding of each other's point of view
- operate within applicable legislation
- acknowledge that their goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
- act in good faith and in a calm and courteous manner
- recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced.

## **Misconduct or serious misconduct**

All complaints of alleged misconduct or serious misconduct by a teacher or staff member should be reported to the principal of the school. Complaints about teachers can also be reported to the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT), which is the regulator in relation to the registration and investigation of serious misconduct (including conduct which is of a physical or emotional nature) of all teachers in the state of Victoria. If unsure if the complaint constitutes serious misconduct by a teacher, contact the VIT on telephone 1300 888 067 or email [vit@vit.vic.edu.au](mailto:vit@vit.vic.edu.au).

## **Complaints against principal of a school**

In the case of complaints involving the principal of a Catholic primary school which forms part of a parish, the Parish Priest ('the employer') and the Education Consultant who oversees that school should be informed immediately.

Complaints against the principal of a Catholic secondary school should be referred to the Canonical Administrator and the Education Consultant of that school.

## **Anonymous complaints**

CEOSale endeavours to address and respond to all complaints. In some situations, CEOSale may not be able to fully address complaints that are made anonymously or without sufficient detail being provided to enable an investigation or resolution of the matter. To ensure procedural fairness, respondents have a right to know the particulars of the allegations being made against them, and be given an opportunity to respond to them.

## **Complaint escalation**

When a parent/guardian is not satisfied with the manner in which their complaint has been treated by the school, or their complaint is about the principal of the school, the parent/guardian can contact CEOSale.

When a complaint remains unresolved after referral to CEOSale, parents/guardians are able to request a review of process through the Director of Catholic Education Diocese of Sale.

It may not always be possible to resolve all complaints to the parent's/guardians satisfaction. This could happen when the nature of the issues raised in the complaint is governed by CEOSale's policies or guidelines or if the parent/guardian has unrealistic expectations about the outcome of their complaint.

Where a parent/guardian has real and substantial concerns that, as a result of raising a complaint, they may suffer a detriment and the allegations relate to corrupt conduct they should be made aware that they are able to take their complaint to an external agency such as the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Victorian Equal Opportunity Commission, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission or the Victorian Registration & Qualifications Authority.

If a parent/guardian is dissatisfied with the outcome or response from CEOSale, or if they feel their complaint is not being handled properly or in a timely manner they are able to take their complaint to an external agency such as the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Victorian Equal Opportunity Commission, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission or the Victorian Registration & Qualifications Authority.

[Please see chart on page 7.](#)

### 3. Role of the school

All schools handle parent/guardian complaints on a range of matters. Parent/guardian complaints are best addressed in an environment where parents/guardians feel able to speak up about issues concerning the education and welfare of their children. This is reflected in:

- open, two-way communication within the school;
- clear roles and responsibilities for all members of the school community;
- realistic expectations about what can be achieved by the school; and
- an effective, published complaints handling procedure.

Schools should treat parent/guardian concerns seriously and reflect on the issues raised through complaints to change its practice and improve the learning opportunities for its students.

#### **Possible outcomes of a parent/guardian raising a complaint with the Diocese**

1. The complaint is justified and advice is provided to the school for action.
2. The complaint is not justified – the decision of the school is confirmed.
3. In some circumstances arriving at a resolution is not possible.

It is not the role of CEOSale to ‘sanction’ a school and this is not a possible outcome of a complaint.

Due to CEOSale’s obligations under privacy laws, it is not appropriate for CEOSale to disclose details of disciplinary proceedings relating to its employees. For this reason, it may not be lawfully possible for CEOSale to inform a complainant of any specific action that has been taken in relation to individuals about whom parents/guardians have raised complaints.

### 4. Related legislation

All concerns and complaints must be addressed in line with CEOSale’s legislative and regulatory framework which includes:

- *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*
- *Education and Training Reform Regulations 2007*
- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
- *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*
- *Wrongs Act 1958*

## 5. References

<http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/social-teaching>

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/complaints/Pages/default.aspx>

## 6. Contact

*To contact an Education Consultant at the Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Sale please call 03 5622 6600.*

# 7. CEOSale Complaint Management Flowchart

