



St Brigid's College Dispute and Complaints Resolution

1.0 Introduction

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*.

St Brigid's College is committed to ensuring that disputes and complaints are dealt with fairly, objectively and in a timely manner, and that the processes reflect the principles of participation, co-responsibility and subsidiarity.

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 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." (Registration Standards and Other Requirements for Non-Government Schools in Western Australia).

2.0 Definitions

Complaint means an expression of dissatisfaction with St Brigid's College 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.

3.0 Scope

The policy statement applies to all St Brigid's College community members.

4.0 Principles

4.1 All decisions will reflect the paramount importance of the student(s).

- 4.2 The aim is to resolve all disputes and complaints informally at the lowest possible level.
- 4.3 Complainants are personally responsible and liable for the content of their complaints.
- 4.4 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.
- 4.5 Natural justice requires that both/all parties will have the opportunity to put their case/be heard. Any person may complain orally or in writing about any matter arising from the operations of St Brigid's College.
- 4.6 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.
- 4.5 It is preferable that the complaint is verifiable, however, if a complaint or any other information of unknown origin (i.e. Anonymous) provides information that would cause the Principal concern, it will be considered by the Principal so that they can determine the appropriate course of action.
- 4.6 Procedural fairness will be followed in all aspects of the complaint handling process.
- 4.7 Information in a complaint will only be disclosed to those parties who have a need to know in order to investigate and resolve the complaint.
- 4.8 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 Catholic Education in Western Australia and/or Chief Executive Officer of Mercy Education Ltd.

5.0 Procedures

- 5.1 This Policy and Procedure will be made readily available to parents, students and staff. This will be via a range of media; it will be available on the school website and the parent, and staff handbook.
- 5.2 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. Depending on the nature and level of the complaint, it should be made in writing. 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.
- 5.3 When a dispute or complaint arises, the immediate parties involved should attempt to resolve the issue in the first instance. For example, the homeroom or class teacher. The teacher will investigate the concern and provide feedback to the complainant.
- 5.4 Parties may involve a support person(s) to assist them in resolving the dispute or complaint.
- 5.5 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.)
- 5.6 Where there is an appropriate Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia (CECWA) policy statement that provides a specific mechanism for addressing the dispute or complaint, that policy statement will be followed.

- 5.7 Where there is a binding legislative or regulatory mechanism (including an Enterprise Bargaining Agreement) that addresses the issues raised in the dispute or complaint, that legislative or regulatory mechanism shall be followed.
- 5.8 Should the complainant be dissatisfied with the resolution as a result of involvement of the immediate parties, or if there are unique circumstances, the matter can be referred to the next level by the complainant, for example, Year Team Leader or Head of School/Deputy Principal or Principal.
- 5.9 The Principal will be responsible for the resolution of disputes and complaints within the school referred to them by the immediate parties, in accordance with procedural fairness.
- 5.10 Where a dispute or complaint is about the Principal and there is no likelihood that it can be resolved directly with the Principal, the immediate parties may refer the dispute or complaint to the Executive Director of Catholic Education and/or the Chief Executive Officer of Mercy Education Ltd.
- 5.11 The Principal may request external assistance and expertise (including mediation), including the involvement of the CEWA Employment and Community Relations Team to assist in the resolution of a dispute or complaint.
- 5.12 The Principal will inform the complainant (unless anonymous) and relevant parties of the outcome of their decision.
- 5.13 Appropriate records will be maintained.
- 5.14 Any party may request a review of the Principal's decision, in writing, to the Executive Director of Catholic Education and/or the Chief Executive Officer of Mercy Education Ltd.

Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia – Dispute and Complaint Resolution Policy
<https://www.cewa.edu.au/policy/dispute-and-complaint-resolution/>

Mercy Education Ltd – Complaints Management Policy
<https://www.mercy.edu.au/resources/policies>

International Students

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

<https://sbcl.wa.edu.au/enrol/international-students/>

6.0 Related documents

CECWA Dispute and Complaint Resolution Policy
MEL Complaints Management Policy
SBC International Students Dispute and Complaints Policy
CECWA Justice Education policy
SBC Harassment, Unlawful Discrimination, Victimisation and Bullying policy
CECWA Unsatisfactory Performance or Misconduct policy
CECWA Child Protection policy
SBC Student Enrolment policy
SBC Bullying, Harassment, Aggression and Violence (Students) policy
CECWA Exclusion of Students for Disciplinary Reasons policy

SBC Code of Conduct
MEL Code of Conduct
CECWA Code of Ethical Conduct
School Education Act

Version Control

Version	Date Released	Next Review	Author	Approved
1.0	2013	2016		
2.0	2016	2018	K Evans	SLT
3.0	2021	2023	K Evans	SLT
4.0				
5.0				
6.0				
7.0				
8.0				
9.0				

COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE

