Rationale
St Mary’s is a community based on Christian gospel values and it is firmly intended that these are lived values throughout the whole community day to day. We strive to create an atmosphere of belonging and pride in the school where the richness, equality and contribution of all is appreciated and respected. This environment is characterised by social justice, mutual trust, respect, open communication, tolerance and reconciliation.

Aim of the policy
Every member of the St Mary’s Community has the right to raise a grievance and expect that the issue be addressed appropriately and in accordance with the principles of natural justice. The Code of Canon Law requires that justice and reconciliation are at the heart of grievance procedure (Code of Canon Law, 1983 Canon 1733(1)). Effective and timely communication between members of the St Mary’s Community and the school is a critical factor in the prevention and resolution of disputes.

A complaints handling procedure helps build a safe and supportive culture as it:
• Encourages early intervention in issues before they damage sound relationships;
• Ensures that behaviours destructive to positive relationships are identified as being unacceptable and are appropriately managed;
• Ensures that complaints are dealt with consistently;
• Enables the school community to identify patterns of unacceptable conduct, enabling prevention strategies to be developed and implemented;
• Encourages individuals, with support, to resolve issues directly, without third party intervention.

Guiding Principles
• All matters will be addressed in a timely manner.
• All proceedings shall remain confidential to the parties except where the school must by law inform external authorities.
• All parties will be treated with respect and dignity.
• The respondent will be informed of the nature of the claims made against him/her.
• School staff responsible for the application of this policy will treat all parties in a non-judgmental and non-adversarial manner.
• The school will provide support and aim to protect all parties.
• All parties will have a right to a fair hearing.
• All relevant evidence/submissions will be considered when determining the dispute.
• Only matters relevant to the particular complaint will be considered.
• All parties will be given a written record of proceedings where appropriate and will be asked to attest to its authenticity. Where a party feels that they cannot attest to authenticity, that party will be given a chance to record their version of events/facts.
• This process will be recrimination free.
Policy Statement
St Mary’s School respects the right of all members of the community to have access to a process which will give full and fair consideration to any grievance that may arise. The process endeavours to hear in a timely and equitable manner any grievance raised to ensure that the principles of natural justice are followed.

Definitions

Grievance is any written complaint made by:

a) A member of the school community, or;
b) Any member of the public, or;
c) Any legal identity against a member of the school community, or school in respect to any action, policy, process or situation relevant to the operation of the school.

Procedure

Complainant:
1. State as clearly as possible, in writing, the exact nature of the grievance.
2. Submit to the relevant person, principal or parish priest by email or in writing.

School:
1. The receiving or responsible party reviews the grievance
2. The receiving or responsible party either:
   a. Responds to the complainant directly, or;
   b. Seeks further advice or information for clarification prior to responding, or;
   c. Refers the matter immediately to the Principal or Principal’s delegate.
3. If the grievance continues to be unresolved, the matter may be referred to the Principal, Principal’s delegate or Parish Priest according to the next relevant escalation pathway.
4. Further, if the matter continues to be unresolved, the complainant will be referred to Catholic Education Melbourne.

Passed by PEAB: 17 November 2015
Ratified by Principal: E.T. McGinness
Review Date: November 2017