



DISPUTE AND COMPLAINT RESOLUTION PROCEDURE

Rationale

Our Lady of Mercy College (the College) is committed to handling complaints effectively and efficiently in line with the:

- CEWA Dispute and Complaint Resolution Executive Directive and <https://policy.cewa.edu.au/executive-directive/dispute-and-complaint-resolution/>
- Principles 6 and 9 of the *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations*
- The Director General of the Department of Education is responsible for ensuring that Catholic Education WA (CEWA) observes the Registration Standards, including the standard about its complaints handling system. You are entitled to contact the Director General with concerns about how CEWA has dealt with a complaint. While the Director General may consider whether CEWA has breached the registration standards, she does not have power to intervene in a complaint or override CEWA's decision. <https://www.education.wa.edu.au/non-government-school-concerns>.

The College supports the rights of parents and caregivers, student and staff to have their complaints taken seriously, and responded to promptly and thoroughly.

Our complaints management system allows us to effectively capture, manage and report on complaints. We commit to regular review of complaints received and the implementation of any actions to rectify any issues identified. We commit to making our complaints management procedures accessible and transparent and we will ensure our community is aware of the school's process for dealing with disputes and complaints.

Our Lady of Mercy College welcomes suggestions and comments from parents and takes all concerns, disputes and complaints seriously.

Definitions

Complaint means an expression of dissatisfaction with 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.

The rules of procedural fairness require:

- a) a hearing appropriate to the circumstances.
- b) lack of bias.
- c) evidence to support a decision; and
- d) inquiry into matters in dispute.
- e) to provide all parties involved to respond to any issues and to provide information

Resolution 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.





Roles and Responsibilities of Staff in Resolving Complaints and Disputes

All staff are responsible for recording complaints, while the College Executive are responsible for investigating and resolving complaints and analysing them to identify causes and inform continuous improvement.

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| Teachers | All teachers should refer all matters to their relevant Head of Learning Area or Head of Year. |
| Heads of Year Heads of Learning Area | All middle leaders are authorised to deal with informal complaints. They are to record the resolution of informal matters in SEQTA. Where a person makes a formal complaint, staff must refer them to the College Executive. |
| Principal, Vice Principal and Deputy Principals | The College Executive are authorised to record, investigate and manage complaints. They are required to maintain accurate records in the complaints register and liaise with parties to a dispute or complaint. |
| Principal | <p>The principal is accountable for ensuring that appropriate and relevant procedures are developed, implemented and reviewed on a regular basis and relevant reporting is completed.</p> <p>The principal is also responsible for ensuring all staff are educated about the school's complaints management procedures and maintaining accurate records in the school's complaints register.</p> |

Informal Complaints

Most issues causing concern can be handled quickly and in an informal manner. In these specific cases, the approach to address the issue can be resolved through informal discussions with the appropriate staff member. We encourage all members of our community to first treat their issue as a concern when approaching the College and then lodge a formal complaint if this is not handled to their satisfaction.

A parent concern can be raised with their child's teacher and if further support is required, this will be assisted by the relevant Head of Year or Head of Learning Area. If there is no resolution to the raised concern, the parent is requested to contact the Deputy Principal, relevant to their child's year group.

Formal Complaints

Where a matter involves an immediate risk to the health, safety or the wellbeing of a student or the issue was not addressed to your satisfaction the matter should be referred directly to the principal via the formal process by any of the following means:

1. Complete the following complaint form.[create a form]
2. Telephoning the school administration (08 9720 3300) and request to speak with the Executive Assistant to the Principal.

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 via CEWA's complaints page at <https://www.cewa.edu.au/contact/make-a-complaint/>.





Step 1 – Receiving and recording the complaint

All formal complaints are logged by the College Executive.

Step 2 – Acknowledge the complaint

All complaints will be acknowledged a member of the College Executive at the time of receipt or as soon as possible afterwards. The principal will allocate complaints a status, priority and target resolution date.

Step 3 – Assess the complaint and address immediate risks

The Vice Principal will investigate the issues raised, following the principles of procedural fairness, and make a determination.

Where there is an appropriate:

- CEWA Ltd policy or directive that provides a specific mechanism for addressing the dispute or complaint: or
- binding legislative or regulator mechanism (including an Enterprise Bargaining Agreement) that addresses the issue raised in the dispute or complaint, that will be followed.

Parties may involve a support person(s) to assist them in resolving the dispute or complaint.

Step 4 – Resolving complaints

Following the determination, if appropriate, the Principal will formulate a resolution and provide a written response to the complainant. The matter will be closed if this response is accepted.

Step 5 – Further investigation

If the proposed outcome is not accepted, the matter will be reviewed internally by the principal or the principal's delegate, who may seek additional information or submissions from the relevant parties. The principal or their delegate seeks to resolve all disputes within 14 days from the date that the review process is initiated.

The principal may request external assistance and expertise (including mediation), including the involvement of the CEWA Ltd Employment and Community Relations Team to assist in the resolution of a dispute or complaint.

The matter will be closed if the response of the principal, or their delegate, is accepted.

Step 6 – Continuous improvement

All complaints received will be entered into the school's complaints register and, where appropriate, a corrective action request will be made to address any underlying processes which the complaints investigation revealed may require improvement.

Step 7 – External resolution

If the matter remains unresolved, the parties may seek external resolution alternatives – see Reviews and Appeals.





Reviews and Appeals

Should a complainant be dissatisfied with the outcome of an informal complaint with the involvement of the immediate parties, the matter can be referred to the next level by the complainant.

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 CEWA Ltd. The Executive Director will investigate the complaint in accordance with the rules of procedural fairness.

The 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 of 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, the Director General does not have the power to intervene in a complaint or override the school's decision.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality applies with respect to both information relating to the person making the complaint, and if relevant, to a person against whom a complaint is made. Our Lady of Mercy College is committed to maintaining the confidentiality of information throughout the complaints process.

Child-Friendly Complaints

Students are encouraged to report complaints by:

Talking to someone in the school they feel comfortable with, whether it is a teacher or a member of the support staff.

Students can make a complaint via:

- Speaking to a teacher
- In writing via SEQTA Direct messaging to a trusted staff member.

Complaints should be acknowledged at the time of receipt or as soon as possible afterwards. Children and young people are often wary about making a complaint and want to be assured they are being listened to straight away.

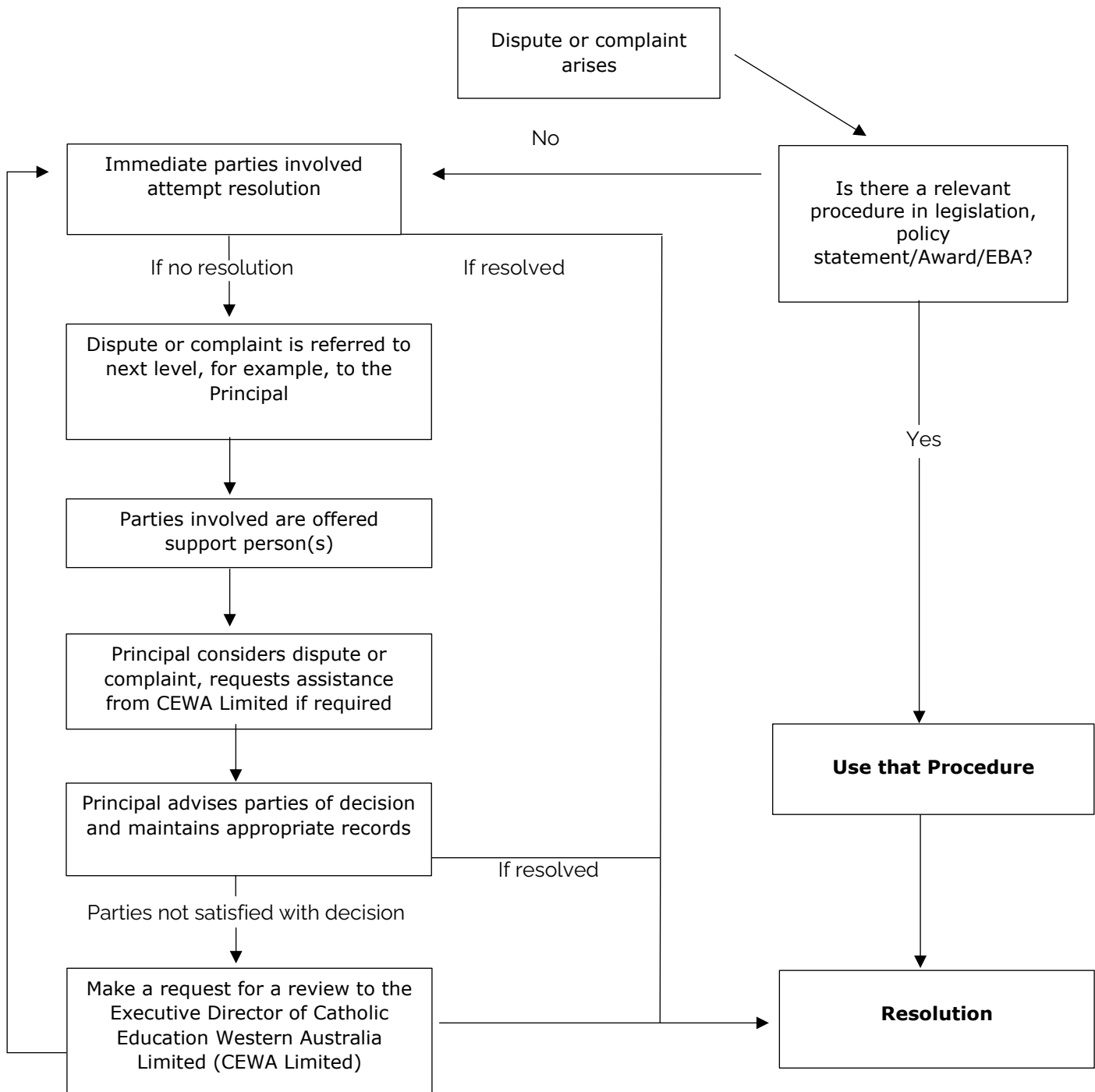
In circumstances involving an allegation or complaint in relation to grooming, child abuse and breaches of the Code of Conduct the school will follow the CEWA Child Protection Procedures (Mandatory Reporting), and the matter is reported promptly to the responsible government authorities.

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| CEWA Policy | Community Pillar |
| Executive Directive | Dispute and Complaint Resolution |
| Effective Date | March 2026 |
| Review Date | March 2028 |





Appendix 1: FLOWCHART FOR DEALING WITH DISPUTES AND COMPLAINTS



Note: An individual has the right to make an appeal to the Minister for Education about a dispute or complaint (School Education Act 1999). An appeal will only be heard on a breach in process and will not be a re-examination of the merits of the case.

Anyone may withdraw a complaint or dispute at any stage of the resolution process. If a complaint is withdrawn, the matter will be deemed to be closed, unless we, at our discretion and in all the circumstances, wish to continue to address a matter raised.

