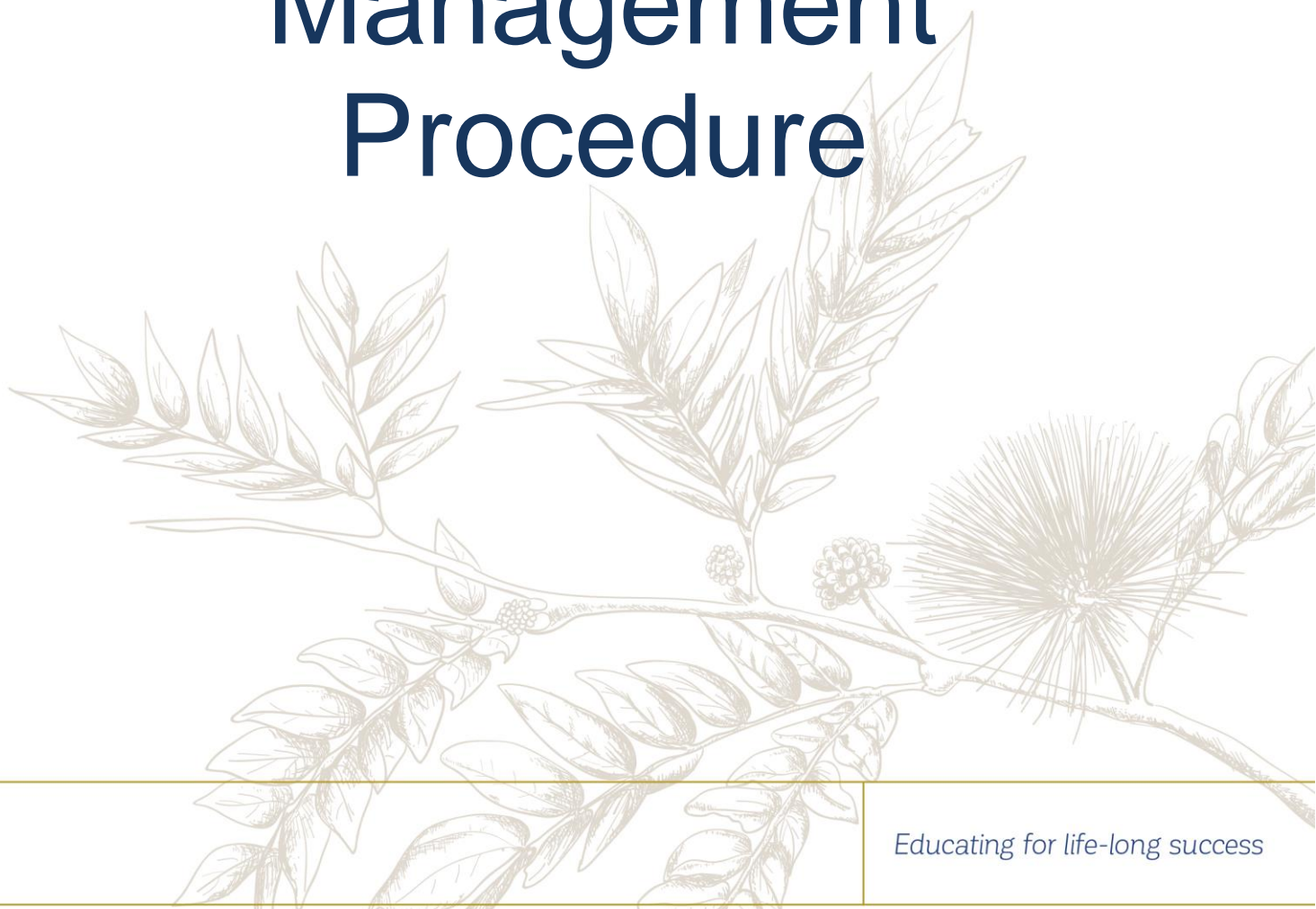




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**The Cathedral School**  
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T O W N S V I L L E

# Complaint Management Procedure





# Complaint Management Governance

## 1. PURPOSE

This document outlines the procedures undertaken at the school to manage complaints from staff, parents, students, caregivers and the community. The school views complaints as part of an important feedback and accountability process.

## 2. SCOPE

Complaint management applies to complaints about the school and related services provided to students through the school. This may include complaints about:

- The school, its employees or students having done something wrong
- The school, its employee's or students having failed to do something they should have done
- Issues relating to learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
- Issues relating to communication with students or parents
- Issues relating to school fees and payment
- General administration issues

Student complaints may be brought by students or by parents on behalf of their children, as appropriate in the circumstances.

The following matters are outside the scope of this document and should be managed as followed:

- Child protection concerns or risks of harm to children should be dealt with in accordance with the law and the school's *Student Protection Manual*.
- Student bullying complaints should be dealt with under the relevant *Behaviour Management Manual*.
- Privacy Complaints are to be managed under the *School's Privacy Protection Manual*.

This procedure does not apply to complaints made by employees concerning other employees, these are to be dealt with under the *Grievance Resolution Procedure*.



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## 3. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Position / Title	Area of Responsibility
Approved Provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Notify the Regulatory Authority of any notifiable complaints for the ELC &amp; OSHC.</li></ul>
Nominated Supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Actively respond to informal and formal complaints and conduct investigations and identify any appropriate actions in accordance with this procedure.</li><li>• Maintain a record of complaints.</li></ul>
Principal / Heads of School / Business Manager / Supervisor's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inform students, parents, staff, teachers and the broader community of the process for managing complaints.</li><li>• Deal with all school complaints at the appropriate level in the first instance.</li><li>• Make an accurate record of all complaints.</li><li>• Respond to complaints in a timely manner.</li><li>• Monitor and report on the type of complaints received.</li><li>• Widely promote the complaints management process with stakeholder feedback being accepted willingly.</li><li>• Uphold fairness towards both complainants and employees throughout the complaint management process.</li><li>• Implement local processes to support effective complaint handling.</li><li>• Integrate complaints information into organisational improvement activities.</li></ul>
Complainants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide complete and factual information in a timely manner.</li><li>• Do not include false or misleading information.</li><li>• Deliver the complaint in a non-threatening manner.</li><li>• Do not make frivolous or vexatious complaints.</li></ul>
All employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All staff have the responsibility to ensure complaints are responded to as a matter of priority.</li></ul>



# Complaint Management Governance

## 4. PROCEDURE

### 4.1 Complaint Handling Principles

- Complaints are responded to as a matter of priority and will be used as a mechanism for improving services to all students, parents and members of the public.
- Parties should attempt to resolve complaints at the point where the problem or issue arose.
- If a complaint is made about a person, that person has the right to know the details of the complaint and be given the opportunity to make a statement of reply.
- All people involved in the complaint process have the right to be supported by an appropriate third party.
- The complaint management process will be unbiased, objective and impartial. It will be implemented in a flexible way that is culturally appropriate and responsive to any special needs of all people involved.
- Complainants, respondents and people associated with them will not be victimized as a result of lodging a complaint.
- The school insurer is to be notified if a complaint could be connected to an insured risk.
- Anonymous complaints will be accepted. There are generally two types of anonymous complaints:
  - The first is where the complainant refuses to supply their own name.
  - The second type of anonymous complaint is one where other identifying information is not supplied.

In either case, complainants are to be informed, where possible, that refusal to supply certain relevant information may be a significant barrier to either the ability to adequately investigate or resolve a complaint.

### 4.1 Documentation

Complaints are recorded and reported to the relevant Head of School / Manager as soon as practicable after receiving the complaint. Early Learning Centre complaints are to be reported to the Early Learning Coordinator. OSHC Complaints are to be reported to the OSHC Coordinator.

Complaints can be reported using various means – online complaint form, letter, email, or verbally.

The record of the complaint is to:

- Use objective language clearly stating the facts.
- Contain information in chronological order as practically possible.
- Use quotation marks, where appropriate and necessary.
- Be written in clear unambiguous language.



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- Include signature, designation of the author, and time and date of the incident/complaint.

Documents related to the complaint are to be kept in accordance with [Section 7 – Record Keeping](#).

## 4.2 Complaints Management Phases

There are four key phases in handling a complaint, with the option of a fifth phase for review of a complaint outcome:

Phase 1. Receiving and clarifying the complaint

Phase 2. Deciding how to handle the complaint

Phase 3. Finding out about the complaint

Phase 4. Making a decision about the complaint

Phase 5. Review

### Phase 1. Receiving and clarifying the complaint

Phase  
I

Any member of staff can receive a complaint. All complaints are received in the following manner:

- Being respectful and helpful.
- Giving the person your undivided attention.
- Not being defensive, apportioning blame.
- Remaining positive.
- Not perceiving anger as a personal attack.

When a staff member receives a verbal complaint they are to:

- Listen carefully to the issues being raised.
- Summarise the issues to clarify and check that they understand what the complainant is telling you.
- Empathise and acknowledge the complainant's feelings.
- Find out what the complainant wants to happen as a result of the complaint.



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- Tell the complainant that they may use the support of a third party in progressing the complaint, if they feel this is needed.
- Resolve the complaint if possible, or assure the complainant that an appropriate staff member will address their complaint.
- Advise the complainant what will happen with their complaint.
- Thank them for their complaint.

Many complaints are resolved at the first point of contact with information and/or an explanation, together with an apology and recognition of the effect the situation has had on the person. Some complainants may also want an undertaking that action will be taken to prevent the problem recurring.

When the complaint is not resolved immediately, the complaint is to be referred to the relevant Head of School or Supervisor/Manager as soon as is practicable. A member of staff who receives a verbal complaint that is not resolved is to inform the complainant of the further option of lodging a formal complaint using the school's online complaint form or putting the complaint in writing.

In general, if the complainant agrees to put the complaint in writing the member of staff takes no further action until a formal complaint is received.

If the complaint relates to a report about harm (whether physical/emotional/sexual) of a student under 18 years old, refer to the school's *Student Protection Manual*.

If the complainant indicates that they would like to register a formal complaint verbally, the member of staff is to document the issues concerned.

## **Receiving a written complaint**

When a written complaint is received it is forwarded to the Head of School.

## **Receiving an online complaint form**

The online complaint is automatically emailed to the Principal and Deputy Principal.



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## Receiving an anonymous complaint

When an anonymous complaint is received, the complainant is told of the possible limitations associated with making an anonymous complaint.



### Complaint Form

eCat – Staff Information – Human Resources / School Website

## Phase 2 - Deciding how to handle the complaint

Phase  
2

When a staff member receives a complaint, they:

- Begin the process of making an assessment about a complaint from the moment the complaint is received.
- Refer the complainant or the complaint to the Head of School for addressing. Serious complaints due to misconduct are to be referred to the Principal.

## Acknowledgment of formal complaint

- Complaints formally received are to be acknowledged within 5 working days.

Once the complaint is received, the Head of School decides whether to:

- Take no further action.
- Attempt to resolve the complaint through resolution strategies such as mediation.
- Referred to another staff member in the school for action (for example, the Deputy Principal, ELC/OSHC Coordinator or nominated staff member).
- Refer the complaint to the relevant external agency if required.
- Initiate an investigation of the complaint, within the school, if further information is required.



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## Phase 3 - Finding out about the complaint

Phase  
3

The delegated person is to gather all the necessary facts about the complaint while keeping in mind the principles of natural justice of all parties concerned.

The investigation person is to investigate the complaint by:

- Collecting and analysing information relevant to the matter.
- Working collaboratively with all people involved.
- Finding the facts relating to the matter.
- Identifying any contributing factors to the matter.
- Documenting the investigation report or outcome.

Confidentially and privacy must be maintained as much as possible.

## Phase 4 - Making a decision about the complaint

Phase  
4

Based on the facts gathered in Phase 3 about the complaint, the delegated person makes a decision on the complaint.

### **Notifying the complainant of the decision**

Within 28 days of the receipt of the complaint, the delegated person is to provide the complainant with either:

- A written response, including reasons for the decision, or
- A written notification that their complaint has been referred to an internal or external agency.

## Phase 5 Review Phase

Phase  
5

If the complainant is not satisfied with this response, they are encouraged to discuss it further with the school Principal or School Board of Directors in the first instance. Contact details for the Principal and School Board are located on the School's website.

Further review of the decision may be available by an external agency including the Queensland Ombudsman, Crime and Misconduct Commission, Education & Care Services Regulatory Authority or Queensland Police Services, depending on the nature of the complaint.





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## 5.0 Monitoring and following up

- Actions identified in the complaint must be carried out. Outcomes are to be monitored and followed up by the delegated person.
- Documents, procedures and policies may require updating.
- Staff training and consultation may be required.
- Feedback in the complaint handling process is to be sought from families, educators and staff.

## 5.0 Early Learning Centre & OSHC

Formal complaints, investigations and outcomes for the ELC & OSHC are to be communicated to the School Board of Directors (Approved Provider).

### 5.1 Notification to the Regulatory Authority

The regulatory authority must be notified within **24 hours** of any complaint alleging that a serious incident has occurred while the child is educated and cared for or complaints alleging that the Law has been contravened.

## 6.0 Record Keeping

For matters resolved immediately (e.g. a parental concern regarding an assessment perceived as unfair), a diary note is to be made. For issues of a serious nature (e.g. an employee complaint) a formal record is to be maintained using the online complaint form located on eCat.

The following information is to be recorded on the Complaint Form:

- The name and contact details of the complainant.
- The date the dispute was lodged.
- A brief description of the dispute, including the names of any other parties involved.
- The name and role of the school employee to whom the dispute was lodged.
- The actions taken / any outcome or remedy.

Records of communications with relevant parties and of any actions taken as the dispute resolution process is undertaken are to be documented. The *Complaint Management – Case Notes* form has been developed to assist with the documentation of notes.

Records of a complaint and any referral of a complaint are to be maintained for 7 years after the last action.



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ELC & OSHC are to maintain records in accordance with their *Record Management Procedure*.

All school records will be maintained in a secure system/file with restricted access to ensure confidentiality of information in accordance with the school's *Privacy Policy*. Personal information collected as part of the complaints process will not be released publicly.

## 7. DEFINITIONS

**Complaint** - Complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a departmental service where the complainant requires a formal way of having a complaint heard and resolved. A complaint may be made verbally or in writing.

**Complainant** - A person who lodges a complaint with The Cathedral School of St Anne or St James. A complainant may be a student, parent/carer or a member of the community who is aggrieved about a matter.

## 5.0 REFERENCED & ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTATION

<b>Procedures &amp; Polices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Student Wellbeing Framework – Junior School</li><li>• Behaviour Management Manual – Middle/Senior School</li><li>• Discrimination &amp; Harassment Procedure</li><li>• Staff Grievance Procedure</li><li>• Student Protection Manual</li><li>• Workplace Bullying Policy</li></ul>
<b>Legislative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act 2017 (Qld)</li><li>• Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2017(Qld)</li><li>• Education and Care Services Act 2013</li><li>• Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)</li><li>• Work Health and Safety Act 2011</li><li>• Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)</li><li>• Anti-Discrimination Act 1991</li><li>• Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)</li><li>• Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)</li><li>• Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth)</li><li>• Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)</li><li>• Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)</li></ul>



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## Further Resources

- Fair Work Ombudsman - <http://www.fairwork.gov.au/>
- Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority - <http://www.acecqa.gov.au/>