



ST JEROME'S

PRIMARY SCHOOL

DISPUTES AND COMPLAINTS RESOLUTION PROCEDURE

2025

Sources of Authority	
CECWA Policy	Community
Executive Directive	Dispute and Complaints Resolution Executive Directive

Aim

Catholic schools can serve as models for all within Western Australia who seek to create genuine communities. Such communities are always founded upon shared commitment to the common good (Mandate, para 6). Bishops of Western Australia, 2009, para.6). On occasions in a Catholic school, there may be a disagreement with a decision or complaint may arise.

On occasions there may be a disagreement with a decision and a dispute or complaint may arise within the school.

The interactions and protocols of Catholic schools emphasise the sacredness of human life and the dignity of the individual.

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

Any breach of these procedures, including violations of the Code of Conduct, imposes an obligation on all staff and community members to take appropriate action and report the matter promptly through the designated channels.

Scope

Every member of the St Jerome's community deserves to be treated with respect and dignity.

Definitions

Complaint means an expression of dissatisfaction with St Jerome's 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 refers to the procedures used by a decision-maker, rather than the actual outcome reached. It requires a fair and proper procedure be used when making a decision.

Resolution means that a matter has been resolved to the satisfaction of St Jerome's and/or CEWA Ltd 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.

Principles

St Jerome's will adhere to the following principles:

- All decisions are to reflect the paramount importance of the student(s).
- Any person may complain orally or in writing about any matter arising from the operations of St Jerome's.
- Complainants are personally responsible and liable for the content of their complaints.
- A dispute or complaint made in accordance with this policy is a dispute or complaint about St Jerome's, notwithstanding the naming of any staff member in a dispute or complaint.
- It is preferable that the complainant 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 should be considered by the Principal so that he/she can determine the appropriate course of action.
- Disputes and complaints will be managed in accordance with the Principle of Subsidiarity, which requires nothing should be done by a higher authority, agency or level that could be done as well or better by a lower one.
- Disputes and complaints, and the resolution of such, contribute to continuous learning and improvement so that the potential and opportunity for incidents to be repeated are minimised.
- Any review of a dispute or complaint will be based on procedural fairness.
- Information in a complaint should only be disclosed to those parties who have a need to know in order to investigate and resolve the complaint.
- Once a decision has been made, parties may request a review of the decision in accordance with the Procedures, including escalating the dispute or complaint to the Executive Director of CEWA Ltd .

Procedures and Practices

St Jerome's has developed a Complaints and Dispute Resolution Process. (Appendix 1)

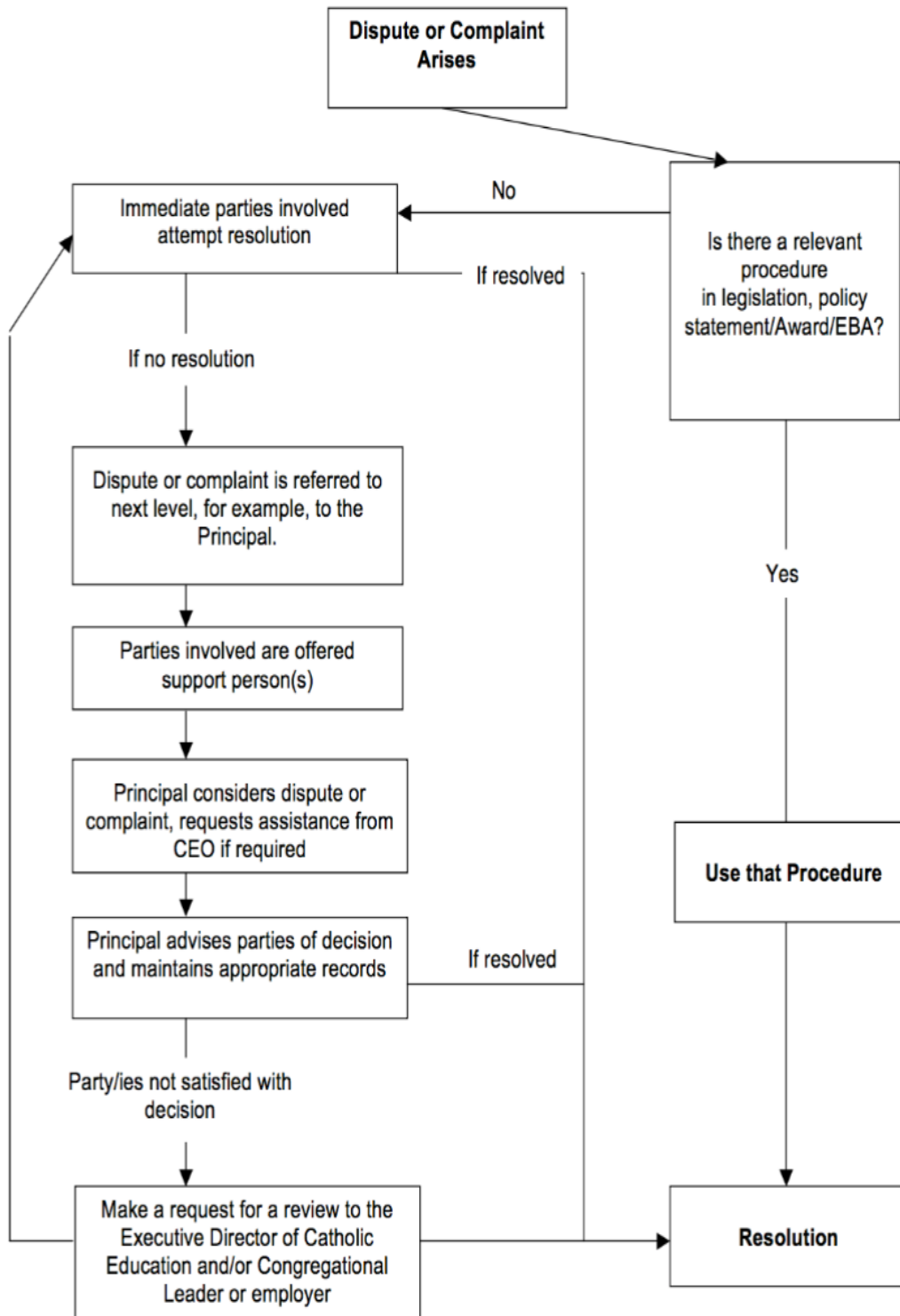
The following procedures and practices are evident at St Jerome's:

- Information about the process for dealing with disputes and complaints must be made readily available to parents, students and staff. The school email address and phone number to make a complaint should be publicly accessible on the school's website. This can be via a range of media; it will be available on the school app, school website and included in the Parent and Staff Handbook.
- It is important that complaints are handled promptly, objectively, fairly and confidentiality and resolutions are provided. The school will document all complaints and the resolution on a Complaints Register. The complaints will be reviewed at Leadership Meetings which occur weekly to review and discuss the complaints to enable the detection of any patterns emerging over time. The review of the complaints will be documented on the minutes of the meetings.

- Complaints from former students and or their parents are accepted and dealt with accordingly despite enrolment of the student having ceased.
- A dispute or complaint can be made by any person regarding the provision of education or related matter. 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 should be assessed and duly considered.
- Where there is an appropriate CEWA Ltd policy statement that provides a specific mechanism for addressing the dispute or complaint, that policy statement shall be followed.
- Where there is a binding legislative or regulatory mechanism (including an Enterprise Bargaining Agreement) that addresses the issue raised in the dispute or complaint, that legislative or regulatory mechanism shall be followed.
- When a dispute or complaint arises, the immediate parties involved should attempt to resolve the issue in the first instance.
- Parties may involve a support person(s) to assist them in resolving the dispute or complaint.
- Should a 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, to the Principal.
- The Principal is responsible for the resolution of disputes or complaints within the school referred to them by the immediate parties, in accordance with procedural fairness.
- 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 CEWA Ltd.
- The Principal must be mindful of managing the wider effects that a dispute or complaint may have on the workplace beyond its resolution.
- The Principal may request external assistance and expertise (including mediation), including the involvement of the Employment and Community Relations Team of CEWA Ltd to assist in the resolution of a dispute or complaint.
- The Principal shall inform the complainant (unless anonymous) and relevant parties of the outcome of their decision.
- The Principal shall maintain appropriate records of the relevant particulars used to make a decision in response to any formal dispute or complaint. Where applicable this will include any statements made by the parties involved. A Complaints Register will be kept by Administration.
- Any party may request a review of the Principal's decision, in writing, to the Executive Director of CEWA Ltd.
- The dispute or complaint shall be promptly acknowledged in writing, unless the complainant is anonymous and cannot be identified.
- The Executive Director of CEWA Ltd shall ensure a formal examination and investigation of the complaint and/or areas of disputation.
- The parties to the dispute or complaint shall be notified of the findings(s) of the dispute or complaint, including the basis of the finding(s). There is no duty to notify an anonymous complainant.

- CEWA Ltd shall maintain appropriate records of the relevant particulars used to make a decision in response to any formal dispute or complaint. Where applicable these will include any statements made by the parties involved.
- Procedures are in place to ensure that all complaints are promptly reported to the appropriate authorities and that full cooperation with law enforcement is maintained when required.
- 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.
- A person may make a complaint to an external body or tribunal at any time. The relevant person (i.e. the principal) may choose to suspend addressing the complaint until the external body or tribunal rules on the complaint, or the external complaint is directed back to Catholic Education for resolution.
- 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.

Flowchart for Dealing with Disputes and Complaints



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

Child Friendly Complaints

Students are encouraged to give feedback; the following resource will be utilised: Are you Listening? Guidelines for making complaints systems accessible and responsive to children and young people.

<https://www.ccyp.wa.gov.au/our-work/child-safe-organisations-wa/child-friendly-complaint-processes-and-reporting/>

It is expected that consideration will be given to the following:

- Students are to be acknowledged as service users
- Students are made aware of their right to make a complaint in a relevant language that they understand
- Students can choose how they make a complaint, including speaking to someone face to face
- The school creates opportunities for students to give feedback about school procedures using the following google form <https://forms.gle/akxcc81anMWx4TR39>
- There is also a student feedback link for school events <https://forms.gle/pCrjWQUeFLLxKcRn6>
- The complaint process and possible outcomes are outlined in a publication which are developmentally suitable for and appealing to the students of the school
- The school enables student peers to complain on behalf of a student and, when that occurs, makes sure the student can participate directly to the extent they wish
- Students are provided with an advocate, independent from the complaint investigation and management process, when they do not have one
- A student's complaint is promptly actioned by their teacher and or the school's leadership team
- Staff handling student complaints and those reviewing the outcome of a complaint, have training in working with children
- Understanding, helpfulness and responsiveness are demonstrated towards student complaint
- Students' understanding of information provided about the complaints process is checked
- Students are given choices about how they wish to be kept informed about the progress of their complaint
- The policy maintains confidentiality and obtains the students' consent in relation to the complaint
- Students are made aware of the limits of confidentiality and obtaining the student's consent in relation to the complaint
- Staff are trained in the school's complaint procedures, particularly as they apply to student complaints.

Fair Process

Fairness, which must be accorded to both the complainant and the person against whom the complaint is made, requires that:

- each party has an opportunity to be heard, in person or in writing, as appropriate and to respond to the allegations and or evidence offered by the other;
- issues or facts which are disputed are investigated;
- the investigator is free from bias or the perception of bias and, is not 'judge' in his or her own cause;
- any complaint outcome is supported by the evidence, necessitating a finding on the balance of probabilities in the event of a dispute of fact;
- the complaint outcome is finalised by an adjudicator, who may also be the investigator, who is free from bias or the perception of bias; and
- the outcome is consistent with established school policy.

However, procedural fairness doesn't otherwise dictate the outcome of the complaint.

Information about the system of review for a complaint included in the school's policy and contact details for requesting a review of the complaint outcome, should be provided in the written response to the complaint.

References

Bishops of Western Australia 2009, Mandate of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia: 2009-2015 School Education Act 1999 (WA)

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Executive Directive	Dispute and Complaints Resolution Executive Directive

Authorised by	Chris Cully	Signature:	
		Date:	
Effective Date:	May 2025	Next Review:	May 2027

St Jerome's Complaints and Dispute Resolution Process

Raising Concerns and Lodging a Formal Complaint

At times, you may have questions, concerns, or require greater clarity regarding a situation at school. We encourage open and respectful communication to ensure the best outcomes for all students.

Step 1: Initial Contact with the Classroom Teacher or Relevant Staff Member

If you have a concern about your child's education or a particular incident, the first step is to speak directly with your child's teacher, or the staff member involved. This can be done in person, via email, or by requesting a meeting. In most cases, concerns can be resolved promptly and informally at this level.

Step 2: School Investigation and Response

Once a concern is raised, the staff member will aim to acknowledge and investigate the issue within 48 hours. A formal response or resolution will be provided within 10 school days, wherever possible.

Step 3: Lodging a Formal Complaint

If your concern remains unresolved after engaging with the relevant staff member, or if the issue relates to:

- the conduct of a teacher or staff member,
 - a broader aspect of school life affecting your child's learning or wellbeing, or
 - a matter that requires the attention of school leadership,
- you may choose to raise a formal complaint with the Principal.

If the matter concerns the conduct of the Principal, please contact the CEWA directly.

To lodge a formal complaint with the Principal, click [here](#).

We thank you for working in partnership with us and for following this process to support respectful and constructive communication.

Students are taught, through the age-appropriate Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum, how to raise concerns or make a complaint by speaking to a trusted adult at school, ensuring they know their voices will be heard and respected.