

PROCEDURE: Student, Parent, and Guardian Complaints Management

1. PURPOSE

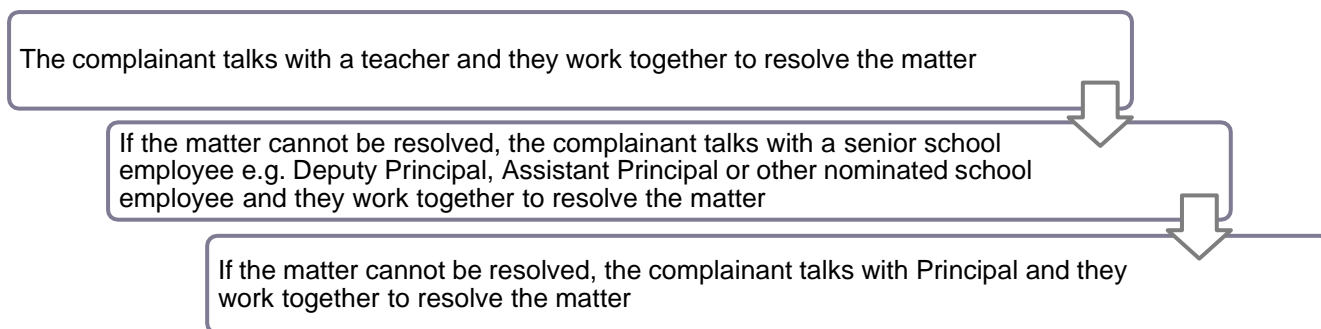
The purpose of this procedure is to describe Brisbane Catholic Education's (BCE) approach to managing and resolving complaints from students, parents and guardians. This procedure applies to BCE employees and must be read in conjunction with: BCE Student, Parent and Guardian Complaints Management policy and Catholic Education Archdiocese of Brisbane Code of Conduct.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES

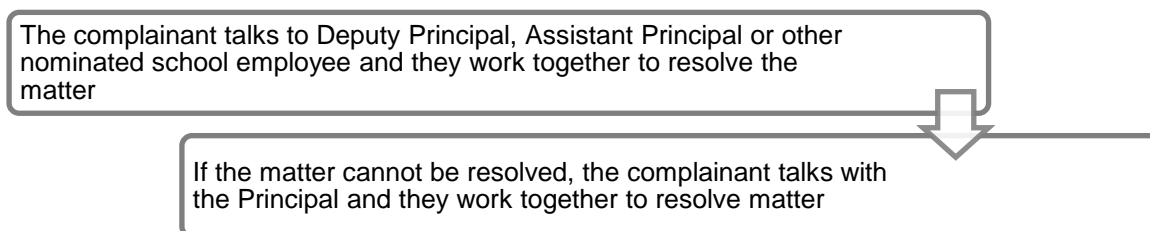
2.1 General requirements

It is the responsibility of the school to promptly initiate a response and resolve complaints from students, parents and guardians.

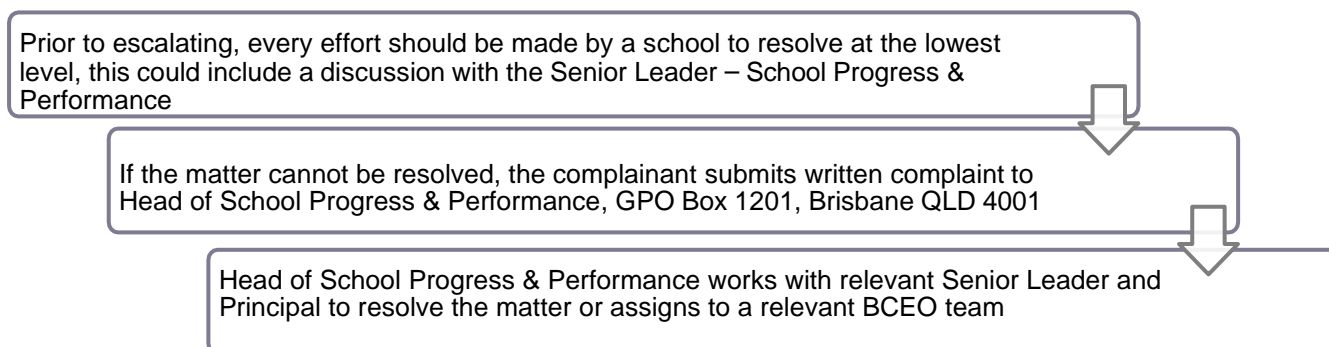
Scenario 1: Managing a complaint about a teacher or a student



Scenario 2: Managing a complaint about a school process or policy



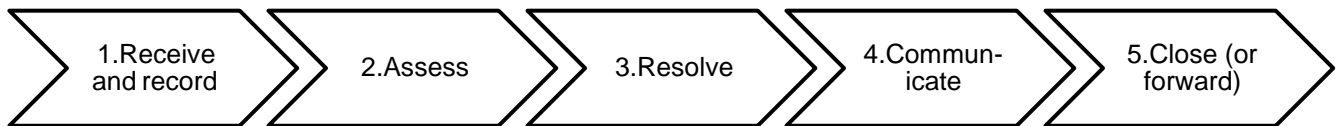
Scenario 3: Managing a complaint about a Principal



If dissatisfied with the school's complaints processes, a complainant may submit a written request for a review to the Principal (see section 3.3. below).

The following diagram outlines the complaints handling process for BCE employees with responsibility for handling complaints from students, parents and guardians.

Diagram: Complaints handling process



See section 3.1. for details.

2.2 Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Student, parent and guardian (complainant)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work with the school to resolve the complaint • provide the school with a clear description of the problem and desired outcome • provide all relevant information and documentation to the school when the complaint is made • understand that resolving complaints may take some time • inform the school of changes affecting the complaint • cooperate in a respectful way with the school and understand that unreasonable conduct may lead to the complaint not being processed • if dissatisfied with the school's complaints processes, submit a written request for a review to the Principal • if complaining about the Principal, submit a written complaint to Head of School Progress & Performance, GPO Box 1201, Brisbane QLD 4001.
Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implement and maintain written processes about receiving, assessing, investigating, and otherwise dealing with complaints made by students, parents or guardians • ensure information on how to make a complaint is accessible to students, parents and guardians • maintain a register of complaints using the approved BCE complaints register template • initiate a response and resolve complaints promptly and communicate outcome to the complainant • when a complainant requests a review of a decision by a school employee, review to assess the merits of original complaint, processes used to resolve the complaint and outcome decided

Role	Responsibilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • when a complainant requests in writing a review of a decision by the Principal, forward the written request to the Senior Leader – School Progress & Performance • for complaints about the Principal, request that the complainant submit the complaint in writing to Head of School Progress & Performance, GPO Box 1201, Brisbane QLD 4001 • liaise with the Senior Leader – School Progress & Performance on complex complaints • ensure written complaints are acknowledged in writing as soon as possible • ensure the school manages complaints in accordance with BCE’s Student, Parent and Guardian Complaints Management policy and this procedure.
School employee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • manage complaints in accordance with BCE’s Student, Parent and Guardian Complaints Management policy and this procedure.
Senior Leader – School Progress & Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure all actions in complaints management conform to BCE’s Student, Parent and Guardian Complaints Management policy and this procedure.
Head of School Progress & Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • liaise with Senior Leaders – School Progress & Performance on complaints about Principals, internal reviews of school management of complaints, school-generated and complex complaints • liaise with School Operations and Programs Leads, as required.
School Operations and Programs Leads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lead on complaints redirected from external agencies as assigned by School Progress and Performance • liaise with BCEO business teams and Head of School Progress and Performance, as required.
Complaints receiving officer (BCEO only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • direct the complainant to school (for complaints excluded under this procedure see the BCE Student, Parent and Guardian Complaints Management policy) • capture, and maintain records of, complaints escalated to BCEO • record when a complaint is referred to a school • ensure written complaints are acknowledged in writing as soon as possible • participate in training as required.
BCE office employee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • direct the complainant to school.

3. PROCEDURE

3.1 Complaints handling process

Receive and record

Determine if the complaint is a complaint or something else e.g., an issue or an enquiry. It is not a complaint when a student, parent or guardian:

- requests information e.g., about the school service or policy
- requests a change in a service or requests a new service from the school
- makes suggestions for improving a service from the school
- expresses a concern about a situation in the school
- provides feedback on the performance of the school.

Record the complaint. Complaints from students, parents and guardians must be recorded in the school's complaints register using the BCE approved complaints register (available on Spire). Complaint records must be secure to ensure protection of privacy.

Relevant details of the complainant, the complaint and desired outcome, must be recorded. Information recorded must be objective and factual.

Complaints about Principals, complex complaints and requests for internal review must be forwarded to the relevant Senior Leader – School Progress & Performance.

Complaints redirected from external agencies must be forwarded to the School Progress and Performance team for triaging and possible assigning to the School Operations and Programs Lead or other BCEO team, as required.

Assess

Assessing a complaint can involve:

- clarifying the problem
- identifying causes and impacts
- gathering information
- talking to relevant employees.

Resolve

Decide solution. Solutions include:

- providing explanations and reasons
- suggesting a compromise
- implementing specific actions
- referring the complainant to a different process
- making improvements.

Wherever possible, complaints must be resolved immediately at the point where the complaint is received. When resolved, the complaint is updated in the register and closed.

Communicate

Communicate to the complainant the process used, progress made, outcomes decided and the reasons for the decision.

Close (or forward)

If resolved, close the complaint record in the complaints register. Record the outcome, including action to be taken and communications with the complainant. Then close the record.

3.2 Response times

While the attempt will always be made to promptly initiate a response and resolve complaints, the time required to resolve a complaint will depend on the nature and complexity of the complaint, as well as employee availability.

As a guide:

- simple complaints and reviews may take up to 20 working days
- complaints requiring some assessment may take up to 45 working days
- complex complaints* may take up to 90 working days or longer.

*See section 3.4. below.

Receipt of written complaints or written requests for a review must be acknowledged by the receiving school or office as soon as possible.

These guiding timeframes apply during school terms. Additional time may be required if a complaint from a student, parent or guardian is submitted toward the end of a school term or outside of school terms.

The Principal must ensure these timeframes are communicated to students, parents and guardians to ensure understanding of the time required by the school to resolve complaints.

Complaints that identify a potential or actual breach of legislation may be subject to specific timeframes.

3.3 Internal review

Internal reviews are only undertaken when a complainant submits a written request for a review to the Principal. An internal review assesses the merits of the:

- original complaint and
- process used by the school to resolve the complaint and
- outcome decided.

The result of the internal review will either:

- support the original outcome decided or
- propose a modified, or new, outcome.

Who performs an internal review

The Principal reviews the complaint resolution of a school employee.

When a complainant submits to the Principal a written request for a review of a school employee's resolution or process used, the Principal must perform the internal review and communicate the result to the complainant.

The Senior Leader – School Progress & Performance coordinates review of the complaint

resolution of a Principal.

When a complainant submits to the Principal a written request for a review of a Principal's resolution or process used, the Senior Leader – School Progress & Performance must coordinate the internal review in consultation with the Head of School Progress & Performance. A nominated BCE employee communicates the result to the complainant.

3.4 Complex complaints

A complaint is complex when it:

- raises several distinct matters or significant system-wide issues
- requires legal advice or advice from an external third party
- involves an issue that is notifiable under legislation
- requires the involvement of a BCEO business area.

Principals must liaise with the Senior Leader – School Progress & Performance on complex complaints. If required, the Senior Leader – School Progress & Performance liaises with the Head of School Progress & Performance to determine capacity and appropriate action.

Complaints about a Senior Leader must be forwarded to the Head of School Progress & Performance.

3.5 Unreasonable complainant conduct

Unreasonable complainant conduct involves actions or behaviours which raise significant health, safety, resources, or equity issues for BCE. Responses to unreasonable complainant conduct include:

- not processing the complaint
- closing the complaint
- referring the matter to police.

4. PERFORMANCE

Implementation of this procedure is monitored as part of school compliance processes.

5. REFERENCES AND DEFINITIONS

5.1 References

- Catholic Education Archdiocese of Brisbane Code of Conduct
- Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act 2017 (Qld)
- Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2017 (QLD)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Privacy statement (BCE website)
- Whistleblower policy.

5.2 Definitions

Complaint	An expression of dissatisfaction about a service, decision or action of a BCE employee.
Complainant	A student, parent or guardian directly affected by a service, decision or action of a BCE employee.

Internal review	A process used to assess the merits of the original complaint, the complaints processes used to resolve the complaint and the original outcome decided.
Resolution	A complaint is resolved when the complaint has been handled in accordance with BCE’s Student, Parent and Guardian Complaints Management policy and this procedure.
Unreasonable complainant conduct	<p>Unreasonable complainant conduct involves actions or behaviours which raise significant health, safety, resources or equity issues for BCE. Unreasonable complainant conduct includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unreasonable persistence e.g., making excessive and unnecessary phone calls or emails. • unreasonable demands e.g., demanding a different process or more reviews than allowed for by the school's complaints procedure and/or BCE's Student, Parent and Guardian Complaints Management policy and this procedure or demanding a different outcome without demonstrating the original decision of the school was incorrect or unfair • lack of cooperation e.g., refusing to identify the problem or providing disorganised information • unreasonable arguments e.g., making irrational or illogical claims • unreasonable behaviours e.g., aggression or violence to BCE employees or threatening to harm BCE employees, self or others.