



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

DISPUTE AND COMPLAINT RESOLUTION PROCEDURE

AIM

St Columba's School welcomes all forms of feedback to inform ongoing direction and improvement.

St Columba's School understands the rights of parents/guardians, students and staff to have their complaints taken seriously, and responded to promptly and thoroughly.

DEFINITIONS

Complaint means where an expression of dissatisfaction with St Columba's School is required to be escalated to the School Principal or Principal Delegate.

Concern means a matter of concern or interest to someone. It may be the cause of worry or anxiety.

Dispute means a conflict regarding a right, claim, or demand on one side, met by contrary claims or allegations on the other and is required to be escalated to the School Principal or Principal Delegate.

Resolution means that a matter has been resolved to the satisfaction of St Columba's School, Bayswater and/or Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) with respect to the paramount importance of the student(s).

Procedural Fairness means all persons involved are provided reasonable opportunity to have their side of the case heard.

PRINCIPLES

1. The Principal and CEWA Deputy Executive Director must address a complaint disclosing an immediate and serious risk to the safety or wellbeing of a person outside the terms of this Executive Directive.
2. The Principal and CEWA Deputy Executive Director must prioritise the safety and well-being of a student in their community of faith in addressing and resolving a complaint.
3. The Principal and CEWA Deputy Executive Director must address and resolve a complaint to their satisfaction and in accordance with Executive Directives.

4. It is preferable that the complainant is verifiable, however, the Principal and CEWA Deputy Executive Director must address anonymous complaints to inform continuous improvement.
5. The Principal and CEWA Deputy Executive Director must support a person to make a complaint in the manner described in the CEWA Executive Directive, which should include the appointment of a support person if the complainant is a staff member or student.
6. The Principal and CEWA Deputy Executive Director must use complaints to inform continuous improvement in Executive Directives, CEWA processes, and staff training.

PROCEDURE

1. We ask that all members of our school community first treat their issue as a concern with the relevant staff member of the school. However, in unique circumstances or where a matter involves **an immediate risk to the health, safety, or well-being of a student**, the matter should be referred directly to the School Principal.
 - a. Should the concern be resolved the matter and outcomes will be documented on SEQTA.
2. If a concern (as per point 1) is not addressed to the complainant's satisfaction, they may forward their complaint to the Principal via the below methods:
 - a. Lodging a complaint via email through the admin office admin@stcolsbays.wa.edu.au
 - b. Write a letter or email to the Principal gina.burns@cewa.edu.au or
 - c. Telephoning the school administration and requesting an appointment to speak directly to the School Principal.
3. The Principal will acknowledge receipt of a complaint within three school days.
4. The Principal will refer a complaint whose resolution lies outside their authority to the Deputy Executive Director to address.
5. The Principal will support complaint resolution by school staff as the first point of contact.
6. The Principal will conduct an investigation into the issues raised, following the principles of procedural fairness, and make a determination. Where there is a CEWA Ltd policy or directive relevant to the 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.
7. The Principal will communicate in writing with the complainant the steps taken to resolve the complaint, or an update as to when this will occur, within ten school days of receipt.
8. The Principal will be satisfied that a complaint has been addressed and resolved in accordance with the Dispute and Complaint Resolution CEWA Executive Directive and any relevant Executive Directive process.
9. The matter will be closed if the response of the Principal, or their delegate, is accepted. If the response is unaccepted, please refer to the Reviews and Appeals process below.
10. 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.
11. The Principal will refer a person dissatisfied with the resolution of their complaint to the CEWA Executive Director for review of the Principal's decision, according to the Dispute and Complaint Resolution CEWA Executive Directive.
12. The Principal will notify the CEWA Executive Director of a complaint for recording on the CEWA Complaints Register.

13. Where a dispute or complaint is about the Principal, the immediate parties may refer the dispute or complaint to the Executive Director of Catholic Education Western Australia Limited (CEWA Ltd).

Reviews and appeals

Once a decision has been made, parties may request a review of the decision in accordance with Dispute and Complaint Resolution CEWA Executive Directive by escalating the dispute or complaint to the Executive Director of CEWA Ltd. The Executive Director will investigate the complaint and/or areas of disputation 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 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. More information is available here: <https://www.education.wa.edu.au/non-government-school-concerns>

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 school is committed to maintaining the confidentiality of information throughout the complaints process.

Personally identifiable information about a complainant will only be made available for the purpose of addressing the complaint and (unless the complainant consents) will be actively protected from disclosure.

Children and young people have the same right to privacy, anonymity and confidentiality as adults. Children and young people may waive their right to privacy and confidentiality if they decide to involve somebody else in the complaints process, e.g. to access support.

If a complainant chooses to make a complaint without disclosing their identity, this will limit the options for proper and thorough investigation and resolution. It also raises issues in relation to procedural fairness for those who have a complaint made against them as they have the right to know the particulars of the complaint and to respond. The school therefore cannot guarantee that anonymous complaints can or will be dealt with effectively. Complainants are always encouraged to identify themselves.

As far as possible and appropriate, due discretion will be respected and maintained by all parties throughout the resolution process, save where persons are required to be informed on a 'need to know' basis or where investigative, statutory or legal requirements stipulate that matters be disclosed, reported or discussed. Therefore, there can be no overriding legal obligation or right with respect to confidentiality.

Where complaints are made in circumstances where an alleged crime may have been committed or the matter falls under the *CEWA Child Protection Procedures*, the WA Police and CEWA Ltd will be contacted and formally advised.

Child-friendly complaints

The principles that apply to complaints also are applied to complaints and concerns raised by students. Our school is committed to improving the visibility, accessibility and responsiveness of the complaints process for our students.

Students are encouraged to report complaints by:

- Talking to someone in the school they feel comfortable with, whether it is a Classroom Teacher, a member of the support staff, or the School Counsellor
- Talking to the Principal

Students can make a complaint in different ways:

- Face to face
- By telephone (92082700)
- In writing - delivered to their teacher or admin office or emailed to admin@stcolsbays.wa.edu.au
- Senior students can use an online form to report all matters of concern to their Classroom Teacher who will assess if this should be referred to the Principal. A QR code providing access for the students is in the classroom.

Complaints will be acknowledged at the time of receipt or as soon as possible afterward.

Complaints that appear trivial will still be handled seriously.

If the issue is a painful one, or if exploration of it is taking time, a student may need support from another student or from an adult. Our students are encouraged to choose a person with whom they feel comfortable to provide the support they need.

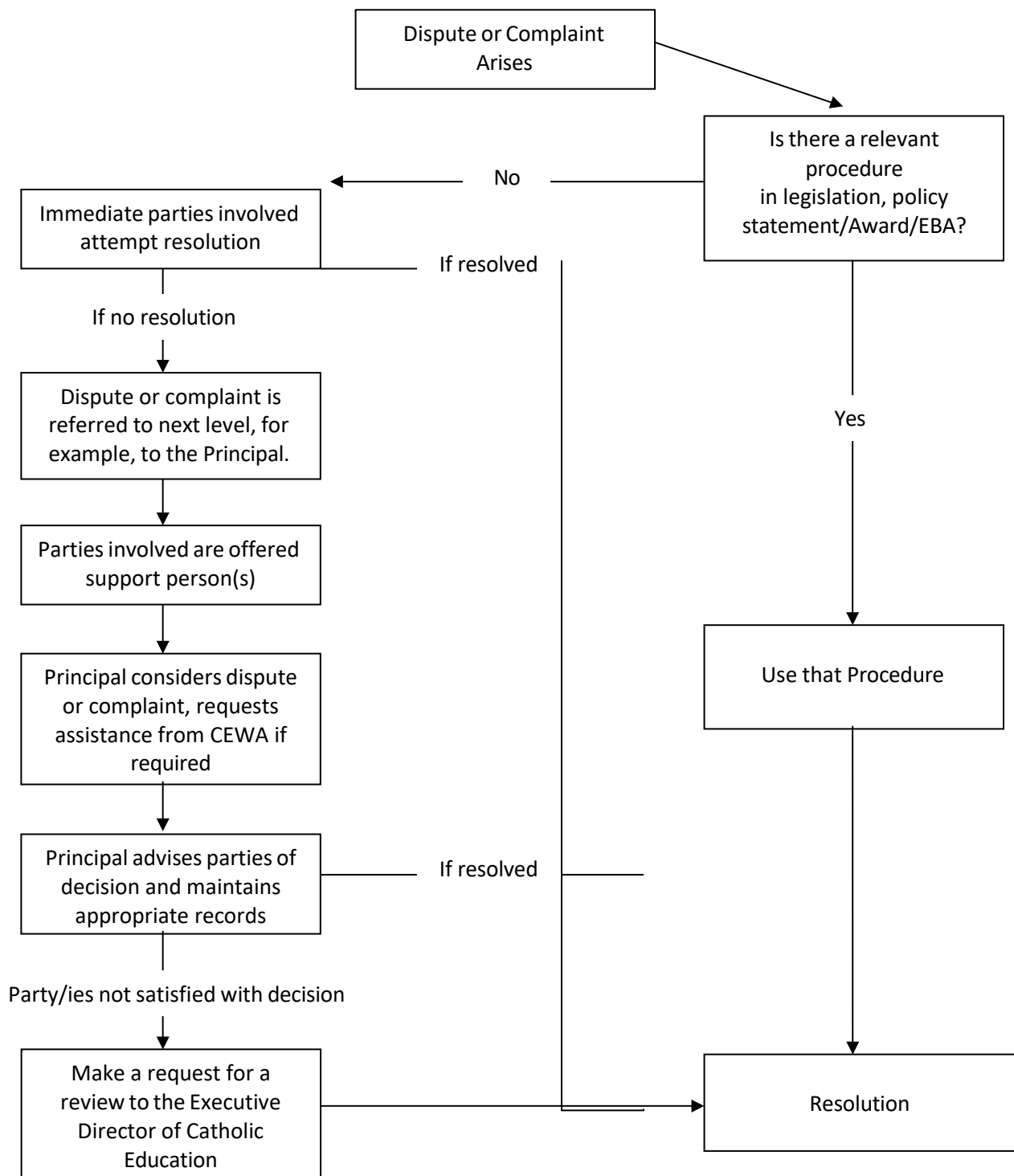
In circumstances involving an allegation or complaint in relation to grooming, child abuse and breaches of the Code of Conduct the school will follow the *CEWA Child Protection Procedures (Mandatory Reporting)*, and the matter is reported promptly to the responsible government authorities.

REFERENCES

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

Catholic Education WA 2021, Dispute and Complaint Resolution Executive Directive: March 2023

Flowchart for Dealing with Disputes and Complaints



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