COMPLAINTS POLICY

PURPOSE
Red Bend Catholic College is committed to providing a pleasant, safe and effective working environment for the students in our schools. The duty of care should be paramount in all schools. To this end, policies such as Work Health and Safety, Child Protection, Pastoral Care, Disability, Discrimination, Staff Code of Conduct and Privacy have been developed.

With every good will, complaints may still arise and it is important that these complaints be dealt with promptly and effectively to address the complaint, allay fears and prevent minor complaints developing into major complaints.

A complaint is an “expression of dissatisfaction made to an organisation, related to its products, or the complaints handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected” (as defined by the Australian Complaint Handling Standard ISO AS 10002-2006).

- Parents and students will be made aware of the policy through its publication on the RBCC website and in school enrolment folders.
- All staff will be made aware of the Complaints Policy through staff training.

It is expected that all complaints will be dealt with impartially, confidentially, fairly and in a timely manner.

PRINCIPLES
The following principles should govern all complaint handling processes:

- **Impartiality** – Complaints should be investigated in an open and unbiased way with both parties seeking a fair hearing and clarification of the complaints. No decisions or judgements should be made until all the facts are clear.
- **Confidentiality** – All parties involved in the complaint are asked to maintain confidentiality. The dignity and privacy of all concerned must be maintained.
- **A commitment to fairness** – Repercussions should not be feared following the lodging of a complaint made in good faith. Repercussions will not be tolerated.
- **Timeliness** – It is important that all complaints be dealt with promptly to ensure a quick resolution of the complaint.

PROCESS
- At Red Bend Catholic College, contact should first be made with the Deputy Principal for matters relating to the Day School and to the Director of Boarding for matters relating to the Boarding School. A File Note is to be completed by the Deputy Principal or the Director of Boarding that includes the date, person making the complaint and nature of the complaint. The Deputy Principal or the Director of Boarding will act on the complaint or forward information to the relevant staff member/s within 24 business hours.
- The relevant staff members are to initiate a process of following-up / investigating the complaint with 48 business hours.
- In general, parents / students would then be directed to first address the complaint with the staff member most closely related to the complaint, as soon as possible after the incident. This can often result in the complaint being dealt with easily and effectively.

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1 If the complaint to be addressed concerns the Deputy Principal then initial contact should be with the Principal of the College.
2 If the complaint to be addressed concerns the Coordinator of Boarding then initial contact should be with the Principal of the College.
appointment should be made with the relevant staff member at school to outline the complaint and seek a solution.

- Complaints should be investigated in an open and unbiased manner with all parties receiving a fair hearing and clarification of the issues.
- Good will on both sides and clarification of the complaint should ensure a resolution for both parties.
- Where possible restoration is best achieved through a ‘Restorative Practices’ approach.
- The relevant staff member will summarise the complaint and resolution in writing to be kept on file.
- The relevant staff member will respond to the complainant outlining the resolution of the complaint in an appropriate timely manner.
- Depending on the nature of the incident, the relevant staff member will monitor and/or follow-up the situation for an appropriate period of time.
- If however, an informal approach is not successful in resolving the complaint, a formal complaint may be lodged with the school through the Principal. This should be submitted in writing (if possible) outlining the complaint and the concerns about the initial handling of the complaint. It is important that this is dealt with promptly and that a written response is made.
- Complaints may also be raised with Marist Schools Australia. Most complaints should however be dealt with at school level and Marist Schools Australia would encourage this approach.
- If the complaint is still not resolved, reference to the appropriate external agency e.g. Anti-discrimination Board, may be made.

**NOTE:** Child Protection complaints will be dealt with outside this process using the investigative processes set out by the Ombudsman. All Child Protection complaints must be passed on to the Principal without delay.

**TIPS FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS**

- Encourage people to communicate their complaints and assist them with this.
- Allow people to fully explain before jumping to conclusions.
- Listen carefully and ask for clarification.
- Investigate carefully. Follow the policy and be open.
- Be tactful. Be open and supportive to everyone’s dignity.
- Avoid snap judgements. Be objective.
- Communicate constantly with the complainant.
- Consider the consequences.
- Admit any mistakes. Don’t bear grudges. Don’t blame.
- A Restorative Approach is essential in following up concerns.
- Explain the decision.

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3 If the complaint to be addressed concerns the Principal then initial contact should be with Marist Schools Australia.