



Catholic Education
Diocese of Rockhampton

Right Relationships

Parent and Student Grievance and Resolution Procedures

Version 6 • April 2023

Document Number: D17/73297[v6]

Date of next Review: 2024

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Introduction

Right relationships are at the core of the mission of Catholic Education in the Diocese of Rockhampton (CEDR) and every effort will be made to maintain a safe and supportive work and learning environment for all within our school communities. CEDR is committed to developing a culture based on mutual trust and respect.

It is acknowledged that during the course of a child's school years, at times, there may be a grievance that you wish to raise about a decision, behaviour, act or omission that you consider to be unacceptable. CEDR is committed to ensuring that all grievances are addressed in a fair and equitable manner and the following procedures will guide parents and students in addressing grievances as quickly as possible.



Table of contents

General Principles	2
Definitions.....	3
Guidelines	3
How Do I Resolve a Grievance?	3
How Do I Resolve a Grievance? - Options	4
Grievances – Record Keeping	7
Parent and Student Grievance Process	8
What Do I Do If I Have a Concern?	9
Formal Grievance Form	11
References	11



General Principles

Student Safety

- If the matter relates to the commission of a crime, you should report the matter to the police
- If the matter involves child abuse or reportable conduct there are processes outlined for parents on the CEDR website
- There are also separate policies on Sexual Harassment, Bullying and Discrimination located on the CEDR website.

Subsidiarity

- Every endeavour will be made to solve grievances at the local level. You are encouraged to voice your concerns appropriately and quickly so a timely resolution can be achieved
- The application of subsidiarity sees all grievances addressed at the most appropriate level for the matter to be resolved.

Natural Justice

- If a grievance is made against a person, whenever possible, that person will be informed of the nature and /or content of the complaint and have the right to respond
- Objectivity and procedural fairness inform the handling of all grievances.

Confidentiality

- All parties have the right to expect strict confidentiality in the management of grievance processes.

Reconciliation

- Be prepared to seek mediation as a possible outcome to resolve the issue
- Be forgiving should there be admission of fault or neglect.

Solution Focused

- Be prepared to negotiate and compromise when such is possible.

Effective Communication

- For grievances that are to be resolved using an informal option, a record of the grievance should be retained at the school or workplace
- For grievances that are to be resolved using a formal option, an official record must be submitted in writing using the '**Catholic Education – Diocese of Rockhampton – Grievance Form**'.

Mutual Trust and Respect

- The CEDR *Parent Code of Conduct* outlines that all members of the school community treats each other with mutual trust and respect. Conflicts of interest are declared to ensure that arm's length practices prevail.

Definitions

- **Grievance:** a complaint / concern that a parent or student has in relation to a matter.
- **Grievance Process:** Step by step process a parent or student must follow to have his or her complaint addressed satisfactorily.
- **'Serious' Complaint:** A matter that has progressed beyond the management at the school level. A parent has worked with school Principal to resolve the concern without a satisfactory resolution.
- **Complainant:** The person making a complaint.
- **The Respondent:** The person about whom the grievance is made.
- **The Parties:** Refer to both complainant and respondent.
- **Grievance Manager:** The person handling the matter (e.g. Leadership Team member, Principal or Assistant Director: Schools).
- **Witness:** Persons who directly witness an alleged incident.

Guidelines

These guidelines apply to parents / carer, students, visitors, volunteers, community members, and contractors of CEDR.

The complainant is encouraged to voice their grievance appropriately and quickly so a timely resolution can be achieved. Grievances are responded to as a matter of priority with the intention of restoring mutual trust and respect.

The respondent must be given all the information about the complaint, including the name of the person making the complaint and given the opportunity to present their side of the story.

The Grievance Manager will assess any potential conflict of interest and complete the requirements of the CEDR [Conflict of Interest Declaration Procedures](#) as required.

The complainant and the respondent may access support. If meetings with the parties are held, the parties may have a support person present. This third person must be respectful of the process, in particular the spirit of respect and restoration. For parents, please refer to the *Parent Code of Conduct – Position Statement*.

The grievance process is implemented to ensure it is culturally appropriate and responsive to the special needs of people involved. Personal information collected as part of the grievance process is not released publicly.

How Do I Resolve a Grievance?

Most grievances are best resolved promptly at the local level. In schools, the classroom or subject teacher is often the best person to handle routine concerns about matters within their classroom and/or area of responsibility.

Some grievances will need the involvement of the Principal, Workplace Manager or another Executive staff member. As issues are clarified, these may be handed to another suitable staff member.

Right Relationships - Parent and Student Grievance and Resolution Procedures

Few grievances should require management at the Director level. Grievances received at the Director or Executive level may also be suitable to be referred to the school or workplace.

Who	What For...(Examples)
Classroom Teacher	Student learning matters, class discipline, friendship issues, homework, issues outside of school that may impact learning, etc...
Member of the School Leadership Team	Continuation of issues raised with classroom teacher; school wide matters (traffic, school policies and procedures, etc), grievances with other parents, students, etc
Principal	Continuation of unresolved issues; student protection concerns, serious breaches of the Parent Code of Conduct or School Behaviour Management Procedures, etc
Catholic Education Office	Continuation of unresolved issues

How Do I Resolve a Grievance? - Options

There are **informal and formal options** for making and resolving grievances. Where appropriate, the aim is to resolve grievances informally.

Informal Options

Wherever possible, grievances should be raised directly with the person concerned (unless the person is a child, in which case, it is more appropriate to contact the relevant teacher or member of the School Leadership Team). Approaching the person who may be the cause of the grievance and letting them know the impact of their actions may be the most appropriate action. This provides the person with an opportunity to stop or change what they are doing and /or explain their actions.

Informal grievances may be received in a number of ways, including face-to-face contact (preferable), email, letter or phone.

Resolving Grievances – Informally

Use of informal options to resolve grievances may prevent escalation of conflict and achieve resolution of the concern. Informal options apply to the resolution of grievances concerning most day to day operations.

An informal option is usually appropriate when:

- the complainant wants to resolve the grievance informally;
- the allegations are less serious and are best resolved at the school level;
- there is a chance of quickly stopping the concern before it develops.

The following **informal options** should be considered in order of priority:

A) Self-resolution

Self-resolution is based on reflective practice and direct conversations respectful of each person's needs within the school. Concerns may be resolved through the provision of relevant information or clarification of issues in open discussion by all parties themselves.

B) Assisted Self-resolution

Assisted self-resolution may be discussed with a support person. This person may be a teacher, school counsellor, member of the School Leadership Team or Principal. Their role is to provide professional advice or assist the parties with resolving possible misunderstandings, miscommunication or lack of clarity concerning the issue.

Once informal options have been genuinely attempted, or the concern has become persistent or serious, then formal procedures are recommended.

Formal Options

When to Explore Formal Options for Resolving a Grievance:

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of **informal attempts** to resolve their concern, they should proceed to addressing their grievance using a formal process. A formal complaint may be made when:

1. A complaint cannot be resolved informally;
2. Where you cannot approach the person directly or remain dissatisfied with their response;
3. The seriousness of the issue warrants a higher level of formality.

Resolving Grievances – Formally:

In circumstances where it is inappropriate or not possible to resolve a matter informally, there are four formal options (outlined below) available. In some instances, it may be necessary to apply more than one option.

Formal Options

A) Intervention

Intervention is the process of developing a solution or agreement through discussion or correspondence with the parties. It may require a decision by the Grievance Manager if no mutually acceptable resolution is reached. It applies to complaints that while assessed to be less serious, for some reason, have been unable to be resolved informally.

This procedure requires the Grievance Manager to assist in the resolution by communicating with both parties, and if needed, meeting with them separately or jointly.

If this does not resolve the issue, then the Grievance Manager makes a decision and notifies the parties of that decision.

This procedure is generally used to resolve parent/carers or student matters which have not been resolved informally.

B) Investigation

Investigation procedures may be used in serious complaints about a person or entity. It will generally relate to a serious breach of system policy, rules or contractual matters (Employment contract).

The goals of an investigation are to:

- Articulate the specific nature of the allegations;
- Identify and document the material evidence;
- Comply with procedural fairness obligations;
- Facilitate an informal decision.

C) Mediation

Mediation is a structured process and is available following assessment by the Grievance Manager where self-resolution or other forms of assisted self-resolution have not resolved the issue.

Parties to a grievance may explore the possibility of reaching agreement with the assistance of a mediator. The mediation process itself involves identifying issues, exploring options, considering alternatives and finding resolution. The mediator does not make decisions on behalf of the parties.

If mediation is preferred, contact the **Assistant Director: Schools** for the region to check that the grievance is suitable for mediation and to make arrangements.

D) System Improvement

System improvement procedure is used for a grievance that is about policies, procedures or systems rather than a person.

The procedure can be initiated by a Principal, parent, student or Assistant Director: Schools.

System improvement provides remedies by way of processes, procedures, policies and practices to address various needs of the system, and which is identified as a result of a grievance.

Resolving grievances using formal options may result in several options being applied to achieving a positive outcome for all parties. (e.g. Mediation and System Improvement Procedures)

Process

The process followed to resolve grievances that are of a formal nature will include:

- interview the complainant and document the allegations;
- inform the respondent of the details, and ask them to respond;
- if the facts are disputed, seek more information including evidence from any witnesses;
- find whether the grievance has substance;
- report the process, the evidence, the findings and recommend an outcome;
- implement the outcome or decide on other action.

The complainant or respondent cannot stipulate the formal option to be used to address the grievance, however, the **Grievance Manager** may take into account preferred options indicated by the parties in choosing an appropriate option.



Grievances – Record Keeping

For grievances that are to be resolved using an informal option, a record of the grievance should be retained at the school or workplace.

For grievances that are to be resolved using a formal option, an official record must be submitted in writing using the '[Catholic Education – Diocese of Rockhampton – Grievance Form](#)'. The following guidelines indicate the person to whom the Grievance Form is to be sent to:

- a) For school related matters, the form should be forwarded to the School Principal. If the complaint is related to a Principal, the form should be forwarded to the relevant Assistant Director: Schools.
- b) For unresolved school related matters, the form should be forwarded to the relevant Assistant Director: Schools.
- c) Grievances relating to the Assistant Director: Schools the form should be forwarded to the Diocesan Director Catholic Education.
- d) Grievances relating to the Diocesan Director Catholic Education, the form should be forwarded to the Bishop, Diocese of Rockhampton.

The Grievance Manager will keep written records of the resolution process and outcomes. These records will be filed and stored in accordance with Catholic Education's *Records Management Business Classification Structure (including Retention and disposal schedule)*.

Unsubstantiated or Vexatious Grievances

If the grievance is unsubstantiated (did not occur or not proven) the manager will communicate this outcome to the parties concerned and determine further action if necessary.

If the grievance is found to be vexatious / malicious, similar remedies for a substantiated grievance including a written apology could be implemented by the Grievance Manager.

Appeal

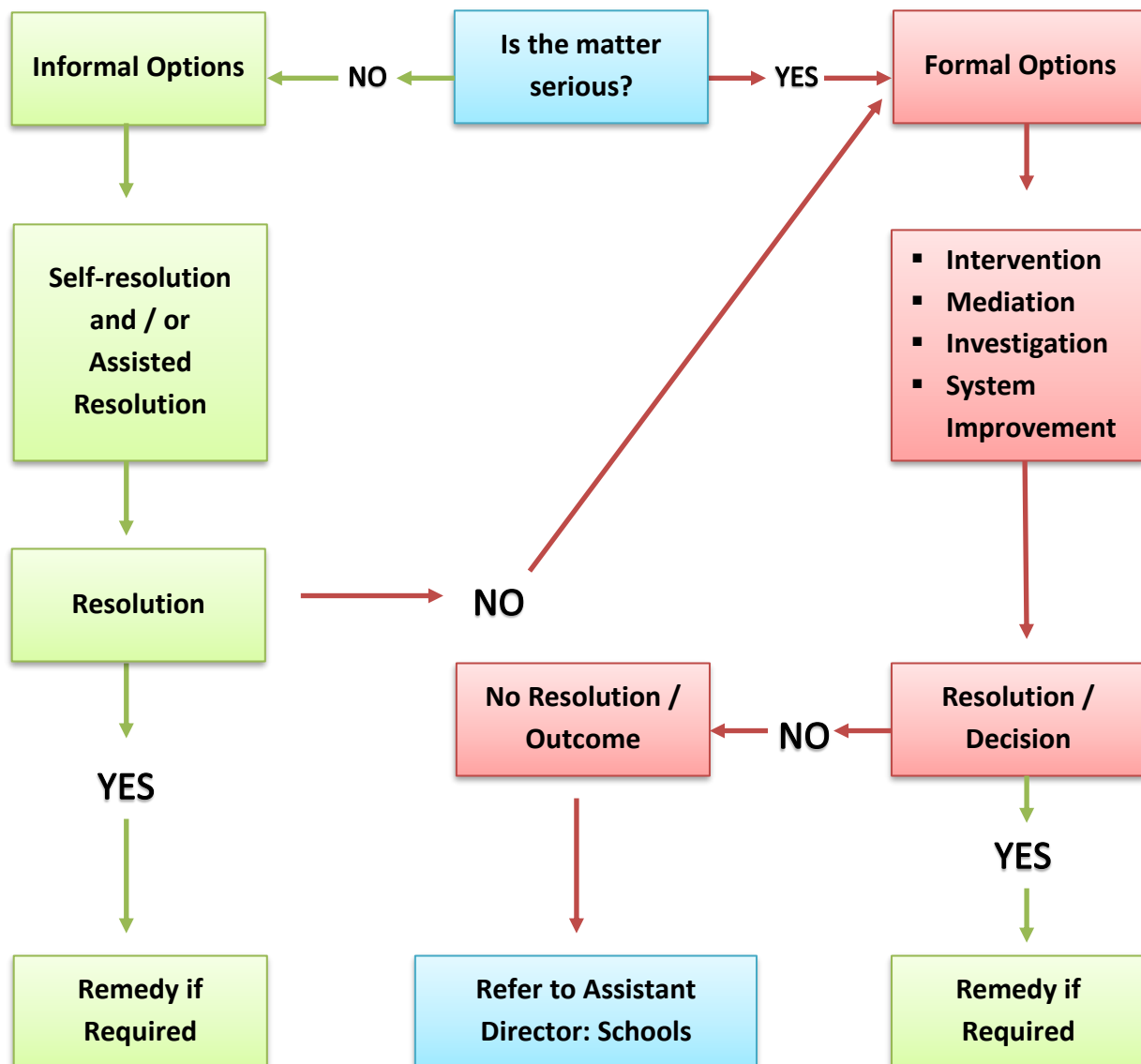
If the complainant, or respondent, is not satisfied with the outcome of the grievance process, they may wish to appeal the outcome. An appeal must be submitted within **14 days**, providing details of why the outcome of the grievance process is considered to be unsatisfactory. The appeal is to be made in writing and addressed to "Diocesan Director Catholic Education, PO Box 524, Rockhampton, Qld 4700" (director@rok.catholic.edu.au).

Please include:

- Your Name and Contact details.
- Copy of the completed 'Catholic Education - Grievance Form'.
- Outcome of the Grievance Process.
- Reason(s) for making the appeal.
- Resolution that is sought.

Parent and Student Grievance Process

WHAT DO I DO?



What Do I Do?

A. If the issue is not a serious matter, the following informal steps may help:

Step 1 – Informal Option

Self-resolution

Seek to discuss your concern with the person most able to help.
Be respectful, positive and constructive.

Need Further Assistance?

Step 2 – Informal Option

Assisted Resolution

Contact the School Office (T:).

Your grievance will be directed to the most appropriate leadership personnel.

(eg. Pastoral House Co-ordinator, School Counsellor, Head of Department or member of the School Leadership Team)

Still No Resolution?

Step 3 – Informal Option

Assisted Resolution

Ask to speak with the School Principal and every effort will be made to address your grievance.

If not resolved, you may contact the Assistant Director: Schools

(T: 07 4994 8010)



- B.** If the issue is a serious complaint, or your grievance has not been addressed satisfactorily through the above informal options, the following formal procedure is recommended:

Step 1 – Formal Procedure

How do I have my grievance addressed formally?

Complete and submit a '**Rockhampton Catholic Education - Grievance Form**' to either the School Principal and/or Assistant Director: Schools

Step 2 – Formal Process

What happens when my grievance is addressed formally?

1. Wherever possible, you are contacted within **1 working day** of the Grievance Form being received and invited to attend an interview;
2. All relevant material is reviewed.
3. If necessary, additional inquiries are made.
4. Formal options are applied. This may include :
 - a) Intervention
 - b) Mediation
 - c) Investigation
 - d) System Improvement
5. A decision is communicated to all parties

Not Happy With the Outcome?

Appeal Process



You have a right of appeal within **14 days** to the Diocesan Director,
Catholic Education – Diocese of Rockhampton

T: 07 4994 8050 (director@rok.catholic.edu.au)



Formal Grievance Form

<https://www.rok.catholic.edu.au/parents-community/parents-community-overview/>

Catholic Education – Diocese of Rockhampton Grievance Form	
YOUR DETAILS	
Family name: Click or tap here to enter text.	Given names: Click or tap here to enter text.
Child's name: Click or tap here to enter text.	Child's school: Click or tap here to enter text.
Address: Click or tap here to enter text.	
Home phone: Click or tap here to enter text.	Work phone: Click or tap here to enter text.
Mobile: Click or tap here to enter text.	Email: Click or tap here to enter text.
PLEASE PROVIDE DETAILS OF THE COMPLAINT	
Click or tap here to enter text.	
<small>(You may also attach further documentation if you wish)</small>	
PLEASE GIVE DETAILS OF THE OUTCOME YOU ARE SEEKING	
Click or tap here to enter text.	
HAVE YOU PREVIOUSLY RAISED THIS CONCERN WITH A STAFF MEMBER (please ✓)	
<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	
IF YES, in what form? <input type="radio"/> Email <input type="radio"/> Phone Call <input type="radio"/> Meeting When: Click or tap to enter a date.	
Who dealt with the matter? Click or tap here to enter text.	
What was the result? Click or tap here to enter text.	
Signature: 	Date: Click or tap to enter a date.
For Grievance Manager Use	
Office Use	
Advice / Action (Please tick) <input type="checkbox"/> Self-resolution <input type="checkbox"/> Assisted Self-resolution <input type="checkbox"/> Mediation <input type="checkbox"/> Intervention <input type="checkbox"/> Investigation <input type="checkbox"/> System Improvement	
Click or tap here to enter text.	
Outcome: Click or tap here to enter text.	
Date Finalised: Click or tap to enter a date.	
Name of Grievance Manager: Click or tap here to enter text.	Date: Click or tap to enter a date.
FOR MATTERS REQUIRING FURTHER ACTION	
Referred to: Click or tap here to enter text.	
Referred by: Click or tap here to enter text.	
Signature: 	Date: Click or tap to enter a date.

References

- 'Complaint Handling Procedures and Guidelines' Catholic Education - Diocese of Parramatta
- 'Making a Complaint – Information for Parents and Carers' Department of Education and Training, Queensland.
- 'Got a Complaint or Grievance? – Here's How to Resolve It' Catholic Education - Diocese of Cairns
- 'Grievance Process for Parents, Guardians and Carers' Catholic Education - Diocese of Townsville
- <http://www.eoc.sa.gov.au/eo-business/employers/dealing-complaints-workplace/complaints-between-staff/formal-complaints>
- https://www.humanrights.gov.au/publications/chapter-7-complaint-procedures-effectively-preventing-and-responding-sexual-harassment#7_1