



# St. Damian's Primary School

## GRIEVANCE POLICY

*Catholic schools have a moral, legal and mission-driven responsibility to create nurturing school environments where children and young people are respected, their voices are heard and they are safe and feel safe (CECV Commitment Statement to Child Safety).*

St Damian's Primary School is a caring Catholic School, where each community member feels safe, included and respected. The issues of dignity, equity and justice in the relationships between all people within the school community are of fundamental importance.

### RATIONAL

St Damian's Primary School has both a desire and a responsibility to ensure that high standards of conduct are maintained by students, staff and parents at all times, and that grievances are managed and resolved fairly, efficiently and promptly.

Grievances occur when a student, employee or parent complains that an action or decision has been taken (or not taken) at the school that he/she believes to be in breach of a relevant Act, Regulation or Order, infringes upon the principles of merit and equity, or is otherwise unreasonable.

St Damian's Primary School recognises the rights of its students, employees or parents to register a complaint or grievance about any decision, behaviour, act or omission that they feel is unfair, discriminatory or unjustified.

There exists in the Diocese specialised policies, guidelines and procedures to cover certain types of complaints that may occur in schools (for example, Sexual Harassment, Equal Opportunity or Antidiscrimination). This policy is not intended to replace any such specialised policies, guidelines or procedures but rather provide direction in how to deal with student, employee or parent grievances.

This Grievance Policy does not apply to complaints alleging criminal or unlawful behaviour, which shall be referred to the appropriate authorities.

A resolution to a grievance from a student, employee or parent should be sought through **informal** discussions with the appropriate person in order to come to a mutually acceptable resolution. If this informal process is unsuccessful, a **formal** Grievance Procedure shall be followed.

## **Formal Grievance Procedures:**

All grievances should be dealt with in a timely manner at the appropriate level before being escalated to a higher level.

### **1. Information for Students:**

At St Damian's Primary School we believe it is important that everyone feels happy and safe so that the best learning can take place. We believe that everyone, including students, staff and parents need to work closely together to provide the best educational opportunities for all. If there is a problem, a concern or a complaint, we encourage our students speak to a trusted adult about it.

Steps to take:

- identify the problem(s).
- if appropriate, meet with person and discuss issue and try to resolve problem. Ask for support or advice, from parents or teachers, as soon as practicable to the problem arising.
- If problem continues, talk to staff member about concerns and ask for support to deal with it.
- stay calm when discussing your problem. This will help you get your concerns across more clearly than if you are upset or angry. It may help to take someone with you.
- • If the problem has not been resolved, make an appointment to talk to another staff member, the Deputy Principal, or Principal about your concern.

#### ***Remember:***

- effective management of a Grievance requires face to face, personal dialogue. All electronic forms of communication (e.g. Email, Text Messages, Twitter, Facebook etc.) are NOT acceptable.
- sometimes the person helping may need to speak to someone else so that the problem can be resolved.
- a parent or teacher may be present to support you when you need to talk about the problem.
- no one will be allowed to pick on you or hurt you because you made a complaint
- If preferred, the grievance can be submitted in writing to the relevant person, but this person will need to speak to you later.

### **2. Information for Staff:**

The relationship between colleagues is an important part of ensuring that students are happy, secure and open to learning. St Damian's Primary School recognises that all staff need to work closely to provide the best educational opportunities for students. If a staff member has any concerns or complaints regarding any other member of the school community, they are encouraged to work together to resolve them as promptly and efficiently as possible.

Steps to take:

- identify the problem clearly before taking any action. If there is more than one problem, list them to ensure that the extent of the problem is clear to the school.
- Decide whether the problem is a concern, enquiry or a complaint, this will help in finding a solution.
- In the interest of resolving matters quickly and effectively, you are encouraged to informally discuss your problem with the person concerned.

- If informal strategies do not resolve the problem, lodge your complaint formally and in writing to the Principal. Where the Principal advises, mediation can be arranged between the parties concerned.
- If you do not believe the problem has been resolved, if your complaint is serious, or involves the Principal, send your complaint to the Regional Manager, Eastern Region Office, stating your concerns in writing.

### **3. Information for Parents:**

The relationship between home and the school is fundamental in ensuring that students are happy, secure and open to learning. St Damian's Primary School recognises that parents and staff need to work closely to provide the best educational opportunities and care for their students. We encourage parents/carers to discuss your child's progress with staff and inform the school of any concerns so that together these may be resolved as promptly and efficiently as possible.

#### **Steps to take:**

- identify the problem clearly before contacting the school. If there is more than one problem, list them to ensure that the extent of the problem is clear to the school.
- Decide whether the problem is a concern, enquiry or a complaint, this will help in finding a solution.
- Make an appointment to meet with your child's class teacher or staff member. The best way to do this is to contact the school office to arrange a mutually convenient time for a telephone call or a meeting.
- If you do not feel after your meeting that the problem has been resolved, or if you have a complaint about a staff member, make arrangements to meet with the Principal.
- Try to stay calm when discussing your problem. Even if you don't feel it, being calm will help you get your concerns across more clearly than if you are upset or angry. If it will help, take someone with you.
- If you do not believe the problem has been resolved, or if your complaint is serious, send your complaint in writing to the Principal.
- If you do not feel that the problem has been resolved, or if the matter involves the Principal, send your complaint to the Regional Manager, Eastern Region Office, stating your concerns in writing.

Remember, staff are committed to resolving any issues that parents might have regarding their children and will discuss with you actions that might be taken in regard to your concerns.

St Damian's Primary School will document all formal grievances and any processes implemented to seek a resolution. Where a complaint is made against an individual, that person will be informed of the nature and content of the complaint and they will have the right to respond. All discussions will be kept strictly confidential. A person who has made a complaint may withdraw it at any time. No one will be victimised as a result of initiating a formal Grievance Procedure. At the formal stage, a person who has made a complaint has the right to be represented and supported by another person of his/her choice. A process of mediation may be available if a complaint is not satisfactorily resolved.

St Damian's Primary School will not tolerate parents who approach children from other families with a school related complaint. In the interests of safety and respect for all within the school community,

parents must bring their concerns or complaints to the relevant Staff Member, or the Principal to ensure that an appropriate resolution can be achieved.

***The best interests of the school community will generally exceed those of any individual.***

## **Complaints Against Teachers & Staff Members**

The nature of the complaint will determine who is the most appropriate person or body to manage a complainant's concerns.

### ***Misconduct***

All complaints of alleged misconduct or serious misconduct by a teacher or staff member should be reported to the Principal of the school. Complaints about teachers can also be reported to the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) and Catholic Education Melbourne, which is the regulator in relation to the registration and investigation of serious misconduct, including conduct which is of a physical or emotional nature, of all teachers in the state of Victoria.

In some cases, certain actions which involve physical or emotional misconduct, such as unlawful assault or threats to the person, may constitute a criminal offence. These types of offences should be reported to and investigated by the police. Initial consultation with the principal of the school may help to determine the appropriate course of action in these circumstances.

### ***Child Abuse (Including Sexual Offences)***

There are legal obligations on all adults to report child abuse to police once a 'reasonable belief' is formed that a sexual offence has been committed against a child. Failure to disclose a sexual offence against a child is a criminal offence under Section 327 of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.) and applies to all adults (18 years and over) in Victoria.

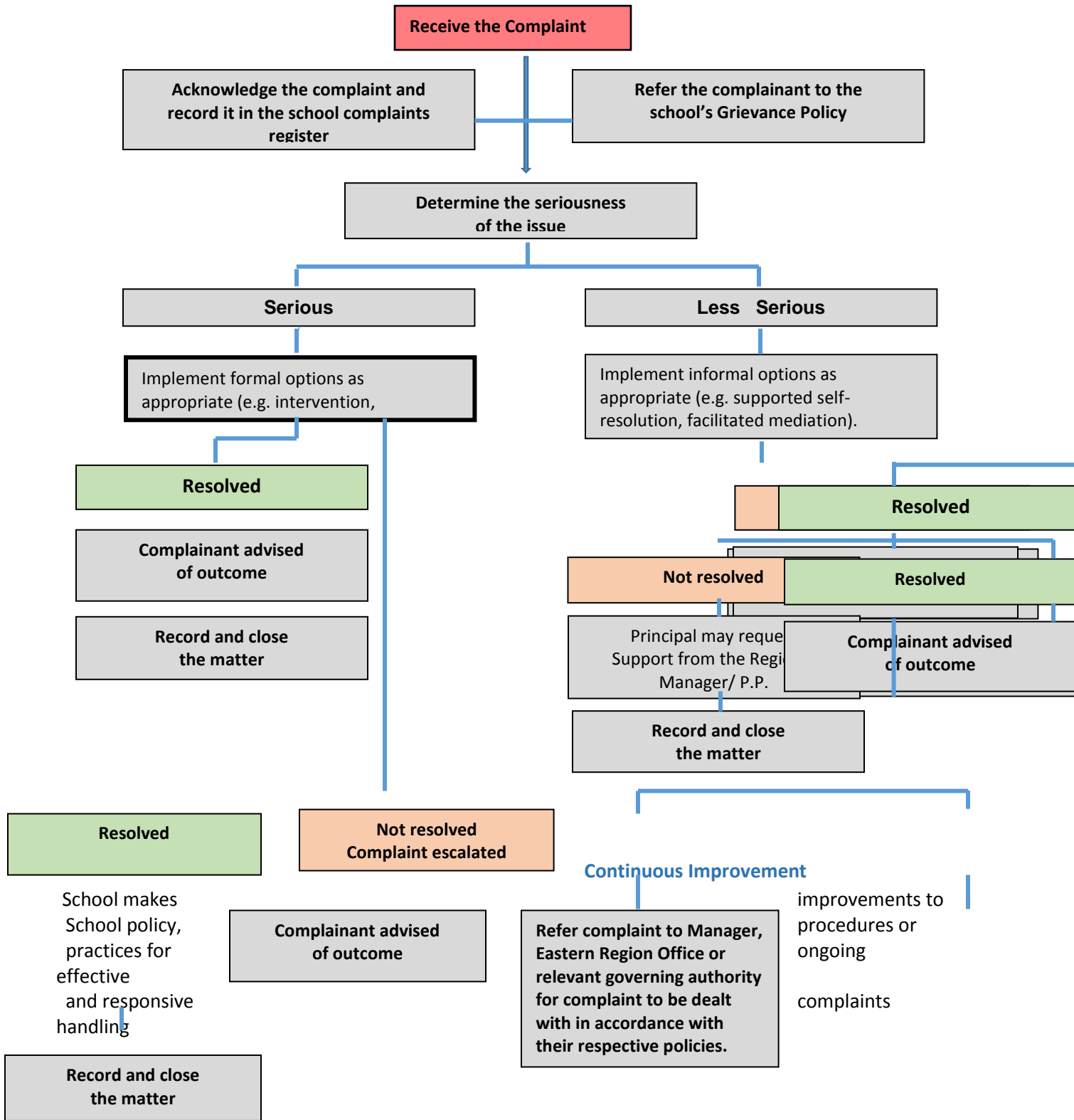
The school also has a statutory duty to inform the *Victorian Commission for Young People & Children* of any alleged misconduct committed by a staff member or volunteer.

Complaints involving communication with children under 16 years by teachers, staff, or any other person to prepare or 'groom' a child for future sexual activity is a criminal offence under Section 49B (2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.) and must be reported to the police. The offence of grooming applies to any person aged 18 years or over and does not apply to communication between people who are both under 18 years of age.

### ***Complaints Against the School Principal***

In the case of complaints involving the principal, the Parish Priest ('the employer') and the Region Manager of Eastern Office, Catholic Education Melbourne should be informed immediately.

# Appendix 1: Complaint & Grievances Flowchart



## Formal Complaint Form

**Complainant Details**

Given Name:		Family Name:	
Address:			
Contact Number:		Email:	
<b>Subject of Complaint</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> School	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff Member	<input type="checkbox"/> Student	<input type="checkbox"/> Policy/Procedure
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)			
<b>Details of The Complaint</b>			
<i>(Please attach additional pages if space is insufficient)</i>			
<b>Have You Previously raised This Concern with a Staff Member?</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	If Yes, When?	
Who dealt with the matter?			
What was the result?			
Signature:		Date:	
<b>School Office Use: Record of Outcomes</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Self Resolution	<input type="checkbox"/> Supported Self Resolution	<input type="checkbox"/> Facilitated Mediation	<input type="checkbox"/> Intervention
<input type="checkbox"/> Investigation			
<b>Actions Taken to Resolve the Complaint</b>			
Date the matter was finalized:			
Name of Staff Member:		Signature:	