

PROCEDURE: Student, Parent and Guardian Complaints Management

1. PURPOSE

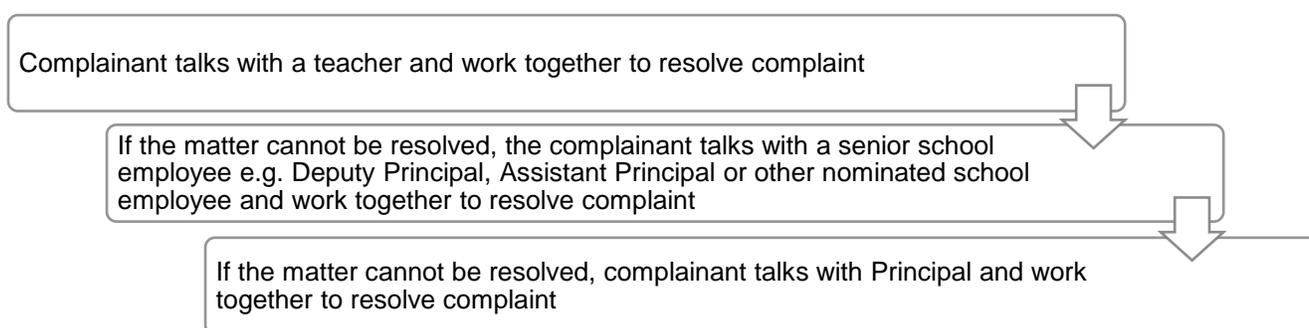
The purpose of this procedure is to describe Brisbane Catholic Education's (BCE) approach to managing and resolving complaints from students, parents and guardians. This procedure applies to BCE employees and must be read in conjunction with the BCE Student, Parent and Guardian Complaints Management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

2. RESPONSIBILITIES

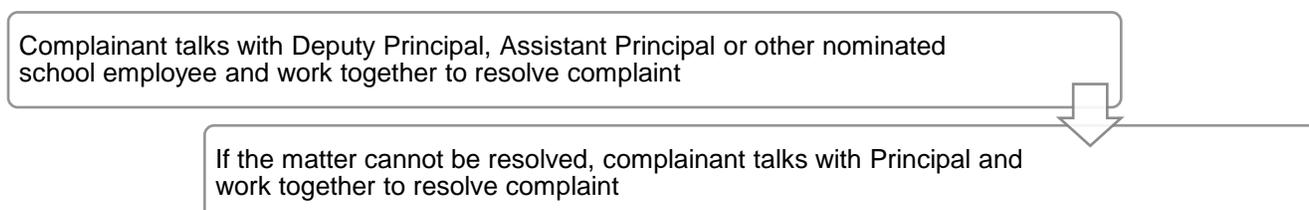
2.1 General requirements

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

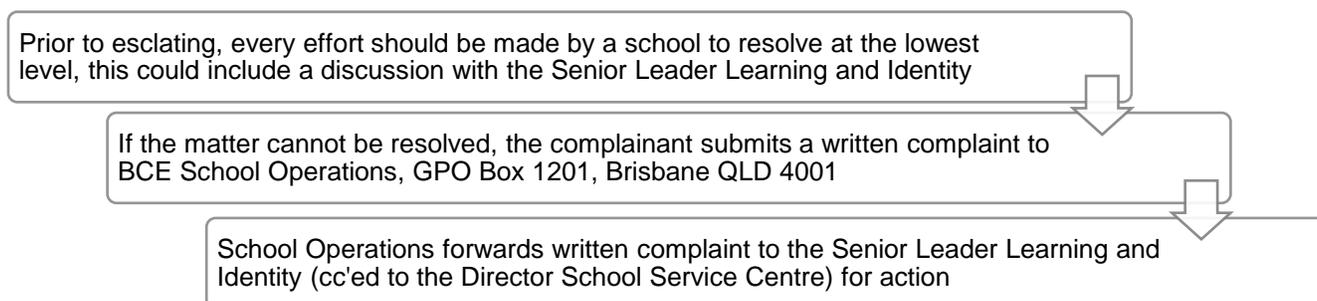
Scenario 1 – Managing a complaint about a teacher or a student



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



Scenario 3 – Managing a complaint about a Principal*



*A significant complaint about a Principal's behaviour, professional standard and action must be forwarded to BCE Professional Standards.

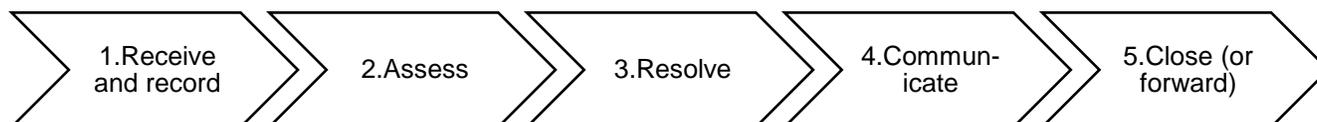
If dissatisfied with the school's complaints processes, a complainant may submit a written request for a review to the Principal (see section 3.3. below).

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BCE employees must seek to initiate a response and resolve complaints promptly and as close as possible to the point of receipt.

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 BCE School Operations, GPO Box 1201, Brisbane QLD 4001.
School 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. • 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. • when a complainant requests in writing a review of a decision by the Principal, forward the written request to the Senior Leader Learning and Identity. • for complaints about the Principal, request that the complainant submit the complaint in writing to BCE School Operations, GPO Box 1201, Brisbane QLD 4001. • liaise with the Senior Leader Learning and Identity on complex complaints. • ensure written complaints are acknowledged in writing as soon as possible. • ensure the school manages complaints in accordance with the school's complaints procedure, 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 the school's complaints procedure, BCE's Student, Parent and Guardian Complaints Management policy and this procedure.
Senior Leader Learning and Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure all actions in complaints management are compliant with BCE's Student, Parent and Guardian Complaints Management policy and this procedure.

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Role	Responsibilities
Senior Leader School Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> as part of the school compliance questionnaire, ensure schools have written processes for managing complaints from students, parents and guardians.
Director School Service Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> liaise with the Senior Leader Learning and Identity on complaints about Principals and requests for, or the conduct of, internal reviews of school management of complaints. liaise with School Operations to determine capacity to resolve complaints about Principals and complex complaints.
Director School Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> liaise with Directors School Service Centres to determine capacity to resolve complaints about Principals and complex complaints.
Complaints receiving officer (BCE offices 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 about Principals, complex complaints and requests for internal reviews forwarded by Principals in the BCE complaints system. 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. direct complaints about Principals to the School Service Centre. forward Non-State School Accreditation Board complaints to BCE Legal Counsel and copied to School Operations. forward Queensland Catholic Education Commission complaints to School Operations.
BCE complaints manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> direct the complainant to school. for complaints about Principals, request that the complainant submit the complaint in writing to BCE School Operations, GPO Box 1201, Brisbane QLD 4001. ensure information on BCE's complaint management processes is accessible to office and school employees and the public. monitor system performance and data quality and undertake analysis and reporting. maintain systems, in consultation with relevant business areas. facilitate training, as required. maintain relevant documentation. ensure all actions in complaints management are compliant with BCE's Student, Parent and Guardian Complaints Management policy and this procedure.

3. PROCEDURE

3.1 Complaints handling process

1. 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; or 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. 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.

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Complaints about Principals, complex complaints and requests for internal review forwarded to the Senior Leader Learning and Identity must be recorded by the BCEO complaints receiving officer in the BCE complaints system.

2. Assess

Assessing a complaint can involve: clarifying the problem; identifying causes and impacts; gathering information; and talking to relevant employees.

3. Resolve

Decide solution. Solutions include: providing explanations and reasons; suggesting a compromise; implementing specific actions; referring the complainant to a different process; or 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.

4. Communicate

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

5. Close (or forward)

If resolved, close the complaint record. Record the outcome, including action to be taken and communications with the complainant. Then close the record. If unresolved, forward to a senior employee (see section 2.1. above).

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:

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- 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

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.

Senior Leader Learning and Identity 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 Learning and Identity must coordinate the internal review in consultation with the Director School Service Centre and, if required, School Operations. 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; or requires the involvement of a BCE business area e.g. School Operations.

Principals must liaise with the Senior Leader Learning and Identity on complex complaints. If required, the Senior Leader Learning and Identity liaises with the Director School Service Centre and School Operations to determine capacity and appropriate action.

Complaints about a Senior Leader must be forwarded to the relevant Director.

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

This procedure will be monitored as part of school compliance processes.

5. REFERENCES AND DEFINITIONS

5.1 References

- Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act 2017 (Qld).
- Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2017 (QLD).
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth).
- Privacy policy.
- Code of Conduct.

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- 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 through the school's complaints processes and in accordance with the school's complaints procedure and the BCE Student, Parent and Guardian Complaints Management policy and procedure. Should the complainant submit a complaint to an external agency, e.g. Non-State Schools Accreditation Board, the complaint is considered resolved and closed, until notified by the external agency.
Unreasonable complainant conduct	Unreasonable complainant conduct involves actions or behaviours which raise significant health, safety, resources or equity issues for BCE. Unreasonable complainant conduct includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unreasonable persistence: for example, making excessive and unnecessary phone calls or emails. • unreasonable demands: for example, 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 procedure or demanding a different outcome without demonstrating the original decision of the school was incorrect or unfair. • lack of cooperation: for example, refusing to identify the problem or providing disorganised information. • unreasonable arguments: for example, making irrational or illogical claims. • unreasonable behaviours: for example, aggression or violence to BCE employees or threatening to harm BCE employees, self or others.

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6. DOCUMENT INFORMATION

Version	Final
Audience	BCE Employees
Directorate	Learning Services
Key words	Complaints; student complaints; parent complaints; guardian complaints
Procedure Owner	Doug Ashleigh
Procedure Manager	Mary Wallis
Procedure Author	Doug Magendanz
Effective date	1/01/2018
Last review date	N/A
Next review date	1/01/2021
Related documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Code of Conduct. • Student, Parent and Guardian Complaints Management policy.