RATIONALE:

The Catholic Education Office (CEOB) is committed to working in partnership with schools and the community in achieving excellent outcomes for students. CEOB believes that school issues should be managed at the local level. There are occasions however, when a member of staff, a student, a parent or a member of the wider community can be concerned about something that is happening at a school that appears to be unsatisfactory or unreasonable. The CEOB will assist in such instances using procedures and processes that are fair, consistent and safeguard the dignity of all parties.

DEFINITIONS:

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction or grievance with the policies, procedures and/or service provided by a school. Complaints may be spoken or written. Complaints could include (but are not limited to) the management of incidents between students, educational progress of a student or an issue of interest that is raised to change or improve a situation.

This Policy is followed for general complaints about a school and its application of policies, procedures and/or service.

The BDSAC School Investigations Policy is followed for complaints that pose a serious risk management issue such as an alleged breach of school policy.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The Catholic Education Office seeks to resolve concerns, grievances and complaints in a prompt, impartial and just manner.

It is the policy of CEOB to ensure that the complaints handling processes are in alignment with the Australian standard for complaints handling in organisations.
PRINCIPLES:

1. The External Complaints Handling Policy will
   - Encourage in the first instance communication and resolution at the local school level
   - Ensure that complaints are dealt with consistently in a timely and confidential manner
   - Encourage individuals, with support, to resolve issues directly without third party intervention, and reduce the likelihood that external agencies will need to be involved
   - Ensure that complaints and any resolution are documented

2. Procedural fairness will be followed in all aspects of complaint handling. This includes:
   - Giving the complainant the opportunity to put their case
   - Offering reasonable assistance to enable the complaint to be made and to know the complaint handling procedures
     - Informing the respondent of the substance of the complaint investigation process including outcomes
     - Handling the complaint process confidentially
     - Determining the findings of investigations as quickly as possible and advising all parties the outcome of the investigation
     - Assessing the facts and circumstances of the situation objectively and determining the findings fairly
     - Providing all parties with details of the determination and reasons
     - Informing all parties of any avenue for review

3. In conjunction with this policy, note should be taken of relevant legislation, guidelines, policies and procedures pertinent to the issue, including for instance:
   - Occupational Health and Safety issues
   - Child Protection issues
   - School and Diocesan enrolment policy and procedures
   - Anti-harassment and anti-bullying legislation
PROCEDURES:

The following should be noted:

- Complaints to the CEOB generally come via the switch board or Educational Consultant.
- Complaints that do not come through the CEOB general switch board or directly to the Educational Consultant, are to be referred immediately to the Educational Consultant. In these instances the recipient of the complaint does not investigate the issue but refers to the Educational Consultant.
- Not all complaints can be handled immediately and complainants should be advised, if appropriate, that their complaint will be communicated to the Educational Consultant who will communicate with them as soon as possible.
- CEOB staff will have professional development to assist in handling complaints.
- As a general rule, complaints need to be handled at the school level and complainants are strongly encouraged to make their initial complaint to the School Principal. If this is not possible then the process outlined in Appendix A is used.

REFERENCE DOCUMENTS:

This Policy should be read in consultation with the following:

1. The relevant school Complaints Policy or Protocol
2. BDSAC School Investigations Policy 2014
3. Appendix A: Process for resolution of a complaint
4. Appendix B: How to make a complaint
## APPENDIX A: PROCESS FOR RESOLUTION OF A COMPLAINT

1. **Complaint Received**
   - Satisfactory Outcome: No action required
   - No satisfactory outcome: Complainant referred to Educational Consultant (if not available and urgent, Assistant Director: School Operations)

2. **Complaint referred to Educational Consultant**
   - Satisfactory Outcome: No action required
   - No satisfactory outcome: Referred to Assistant Director: School Operations

3. **Referred to Assistant Director: School Operations**
   - Satisfactory Outcome: No action required
   - No satisfactory outcome: Reviewed by Catholic Education Office Designated Person

4. **Reviewed by Catholic Education Office Designated Person**
   - Decision/Resolution by Director

Complainant can consult external Agency or Organisation at any stage.

For example:
- Police
- Government
- Peer
In relation to a School Staff Member
- As soon as possible, contact the school and speak to the relevant person to explain the problem and the outcome you want. In many cases a simple phone call or visit can fix the problem.
- If you are not satisfied, make an appointment to speak to the Principal.
- If you are still having difficulty resolving a problem, you may want to seek assistance. Contact the Catholic Education Office on 03 5337 7135 to request to speak to the relevant Educational Consultant.
- If you are still not satisfied contact the Catholic Education Office and request to speak to the Assistant Director: School Operations.

In relation to a Principal or a Policy/Decision
- As soon as possible, contact the Principal to explain the problem and the outcome you want. In many cases a simple phone call or visit can fix the problem.
- If you are still having difficulty resolving a problem, you may want to seek assistance. Contact the Catholic Education Office to request to speak to the relevant Educational Consultant. Alternatively you could contact the Governing Authority of the school.
- If you are still not satisfied contact the Catholic Education Office on 03 5337 7135 and request to speak to the Assistant Director: School Operations.

In relation to a CEO Staff Member
- As soon as possible, contact the Catholic Education Office and speak to the staff member to explain the problem and the outcome you want. In many cases a simple phone call or visit can fix the problem.
- If you are still having difficulty resolving a problem, you may want to seek assistance. Contact the CEO to request to speak to the relevant Team Leader or the Director of Catholic Education.
- If your complaint relates to the Director of Catholic Education, you may wish to contact the Bishop of Ballarat.

Catholic Education Office Contact Details
Ballarat: (03) 5337 7135
Email: director@ceoballarat.catholic.edu.au