

Right Relationships

Parent Grievance Procedures and Guidelines

Position Statement



Catholic Education
Diocese of Rockhampton

Introduction



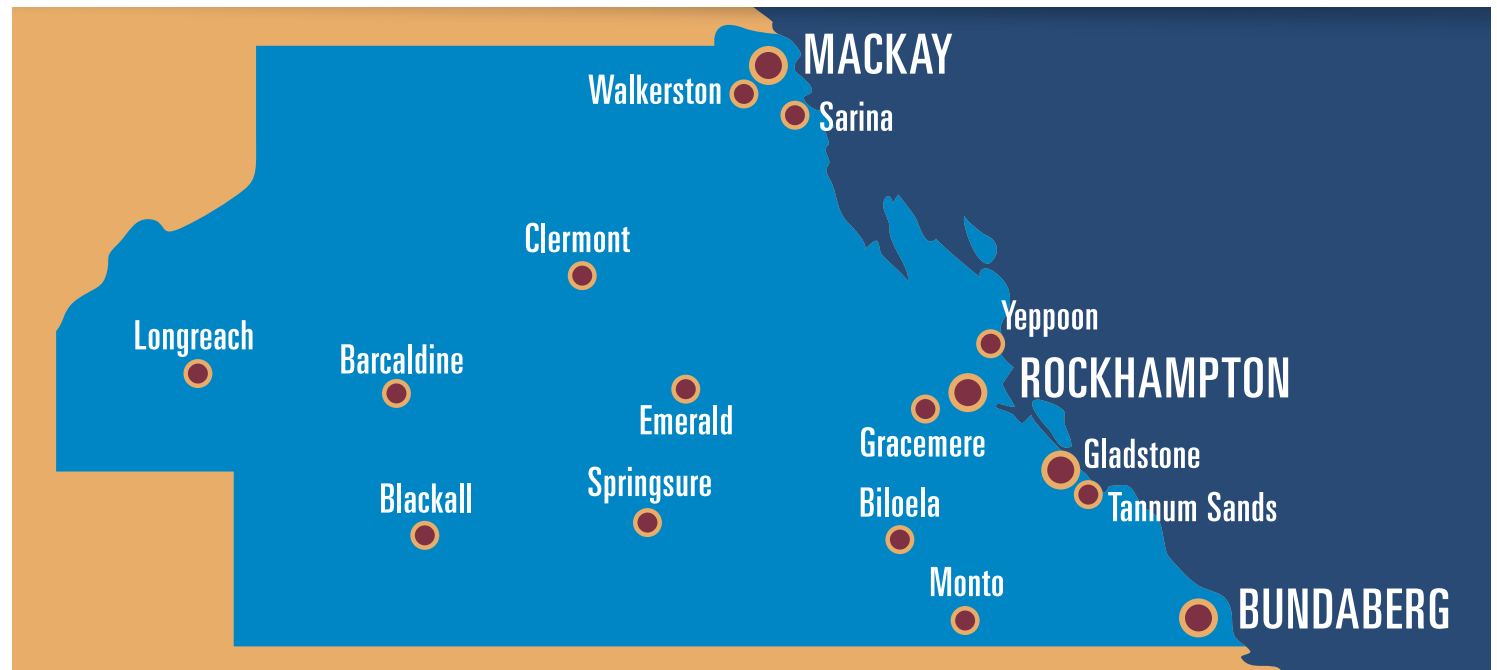
Right relationships are at the core of the mission of Catholic Education in the Diocese of Rockhampton and every effort will be made to maintain a safe and supportive work and learning environment for all within our school communities. Catholic Education is committed to developing a culture based on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

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



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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 Rockhampton Catholic Education website;
- There are also separate policies on Sexual Harassment, Bullying and Discrimination located on the Rockhampton Catholic Education 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.

Natural Justice

- If a complaint 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.

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 Code of Conduct for parents / guardians / caregivers clearly articulates the manner in which grievances should be resolved.

Guidelines



These guidelines apply to parents / guardians, visitors, volunteers, community members, and contractors of Catholic Education Diocese of Rockhampton.

The complainant is encouraged to voice their concern 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 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, as outlined in the Code of Conduct for parents / guardians / caregivers.

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.

Definitions:

- **Grievance:** a complaint / concern that a parent has in relation to their child's education;
- **Grievance Process:** Step by step process a parent must follow to have his or her complaint addressed satisfactorily;
- **'Serious' Complaint:** A concern 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 complaint is made.
- **The Parties:** Refer to both complainant and respondent.
- **Complaint Responder:** The person responding to the complaint (eg. Leadership Team member, Principal or Assistant Director: Schools)
- **Witness:** Persons who directly witness an alleged incident.

How Do I Resolve a Grievance?

Most complaints 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 complaints will need the involvement of the Head of Department, another member of the Leadership Team or the Principal. As issues are clarified, a complaint may be handed to another suitable person (for example, a teacher).

Few complaints should require management at the Director level. Some complaints 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 on 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, etc
Principal	Continuation of unresolved issues; student protection concerns, serious breaches of the Parent Code of Conduct, 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.

How Do I Resolve a Grievance? – Options

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 complaint responder 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 complaint responder 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 complaint responder makes a decision and notifies the parties of that decision.

This procedure is generally used to resolve parent/guardian complaints which have not been resolved informally.

B) Investigation

Investigation procedures may be used in more serious matters where there has been a complaint 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 complaint manager where self-resolution or other forms of assisted self-resolution have not resolved the issue.

How Do I Resolve a Grievance? – Options

Parties to a complaint 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 complaint is suitable for mediation and to make arrangements.

D) System Improvement

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

The procedure can be initiated by a principal, parent 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 complaint.

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

Process

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

- interview the person complaining and document the allegations;
- inform the person being complained about of the details, and ask them to respond;
- if the facts are disputed, seek more information including evidence from any witnesses;
- find whether the complaint 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 complaint, however, the **Complaint Responder** 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'** ([hyperlink here](#)). 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) Complaints relating to the Assistant Director: Schools the form should be forwarded to the Diocesan Director of Catholic Education.

d) Complaints relating to the Director of Catholic Education, the form should be forwarded to the Bishop, Diocese of Rockhampton.

The complaint responder will keep written records of the complaint resolution process and outcomes. These records will be filed and stored in accordance with Catholic Education's Retention and Disposal Schedule.

Unsubstantiated or Vexatious Grievances

If the grievance is unsubstantiated (did not occur or not proven) the complaint responder 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 complaint responder.

Appeal

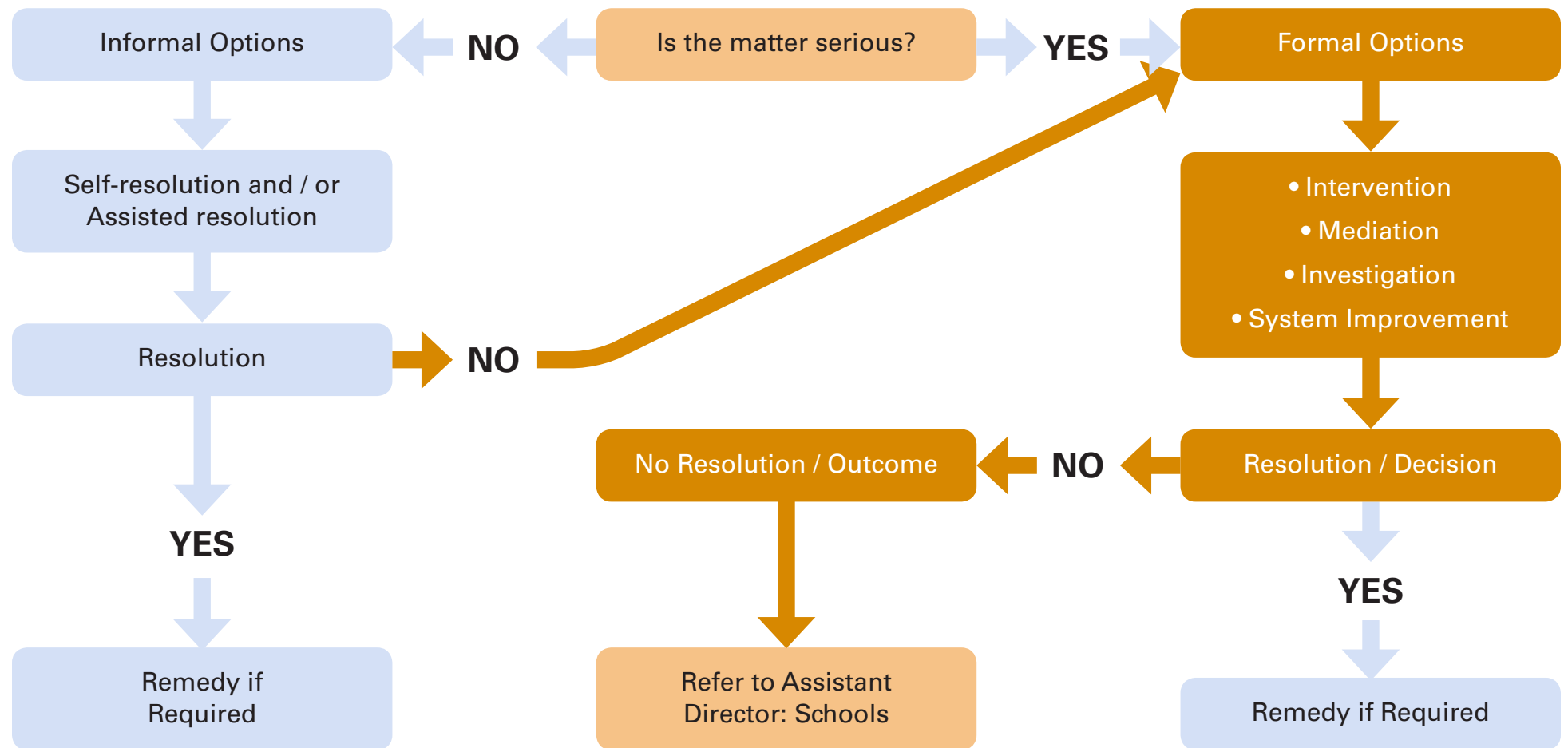
If the complainant, or respondent, is not satisfied with the outcome of the grievance process, they may wish to appeal the outcome. An appeal must be submitted within **14 days**, providing details of why the outcome of the grievance process is considered to be unsatisfactory. The appeal is to be made in writing and addressed to *"Director of 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 Grievance Process

What do I do if I have a concern?



Parent Grievance Process

What do I do if I have a concern?

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
(Ph:).

Your concern 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 concern.

If not resolved, you may contact the Assistant

Director: Schools

(T: 4931 3684 / 4931 3607)

Parent Grievance Process

What do I do if I have a concern?

B. If the issue is a **serious matter**, or your concern 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 concern 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 concern 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

Step 3 – Formal Procedure


Not Happy With the Outcome?

Appeal Process

You have a right of appeal within **14 days** to the Director, Catholic Education – Rockhampton Catholic Education Office
Phone: 07 4931 3652
(director@rok.catholic.edu.au)

Formal Grievance Form





Catholic Education
Diocese of Rockhampton

Rockhampton Catholic Education Grievance Form

YOUR DETAILS	
Family name:	Given names:
Child's name:	Child's school:
Address:	
Home phone:	Work phone:
Mobile:	Email:

PLEASE GIVE DETAILS OF THE COMPLAINT

(Please attach additional page if this space is insufficient. You may also attach further documentation if you wish)

PLEASE GIVE DETAILS OF THE OUTCOME YOU ARE SEEKING

(Please attach an additional page if this space is insufficient)

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:
Who dealt with the matter?	
What was the result?	

Signature:.....
Date:.....

Click here to download the Rockhampton Catholic Education Grievance Form.



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





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