APPENDIX 3

St Patrick's Pyramid Hill

Procedures for Making a Complaint - School Level

The school maintains a fair, equitable and efficient complaint handling process so that complaints about events or decisions at the school can be addressed at the local level in the first instance.

The following can assist parents/guardians and students when lodging a complaint about issues arising at a school:

1. Clarify the issue:

- Be clear about the topic or issue to be discussed, and to whom the complaint relates
- Be mindful of the need to ascertain all the facts relating to the circumstances of the topic or issue
- Consider what would be an acceptable outcome
- Read the school's Complaints Policy or Procedure.

2. With whom should the complaint be raised?

- In most cases, the first step is to raise the concern at the school with the staff member most closely associated with the complaint in the first instance. This may be a classroom teacher or a member of the school's leadership team. They may be able to resolve the complaint immediately through discussion on the telephone, by email or in person.
- Sometimes a teacher may refer to another member of staff or a member of the leadership team to assist in dealing with the complaint.
- Email is the preferred method to contact teachers. The complaint will be acknowledged within 2-5 business days.
- In some instances, however, if the complaint is deemed to be alleging serious misconduct or is not covered by the school's Complaints Policy, the complaint may be referred to the CES Limited Office.
- If the complaint relates to the Principal the complainant can contact the CES Limited Office via:
    - email complaints@ceosand.catholic.edu.au

- post PO Box 477, Bendigo 3552
- telephone 03 5443 2377

3. Process for dealing with complaints

- The principles of procedural fairness apply to the handling of complaints and includes:
    - respecting the right of all parties to be heard and treated fairly
    - responding to complaints promptly and thoroughly
    - if the complaint is about a person, providing that person the opportunity to respond to any allegations
    - ensuring the Complaints Policy and Procedure is clear to all parties
    - maintaining impartiality, substantiating the facts, appropriate communication including reasons for decisions or actions
    - complying with legal and privacy obligations
    - recording complaints on a secure database with appropriate access controls
- If requested, the complainant will be provided with a copy of this Policy and Procedures in order to clearly establish expectations at an early stage of the complaints handling process.
- The complaint will be acknowledged within 2-5 business days by email or telephone.
- If the complaint requires further investigation or to be referred to another member of staff, the complainant will be given a timeframe for when they can expect an outcome for the complaint. This would generally be four weeks from the date of acknowledgement. If it is necessary to extend this time frame, the complainant will be notified by a member of staff.
- To resolve the complaint, it will determine the substance of the complaint and whether consequential action is necessary. The investigation may involve interviewing relevant witnesses and examining relevant documents. The person against who the complaint has been made will be provided with details of the complaint and will have the opportunity to respond to any allegations which have been raised against them.
- Face to face meetings with the relevant parties may be held to achieve a resolution through discussion.

4. Complaints resolution

- Determine the best option to achieve resolution of the complaint.
    - Less serious complaints should be resolved promptly through facilitated communication

- Serious complaints should be resolved as soon as possible using formal options such as intervention or investigation as determined appropriate to the situation.
- Move to a formal option when an informal option has not led to resolution. This option will be initiated by the Principal, Deputy Principal or school leader or the complainant.

- The outcome of the complaint will be communicated to the complainant and, if applicable, to the person about whom the complaint was made. Details of any consequential actions may not be communicated with the complainant, particularly where it may breach the rights of privacy or contractual responsibilities.

5. Should the matter not be resolved

If the matter cannot be resolved at the school level, or if the complaint is about the Principal of the school, the CES Limited Office should be contacted via:

- email complaints@ceosand.catholic.edu.au
- post PO Box 477, Bendigo 3552
- telephone 03 5443 2377

6. Appeal

If the complaint is unable to be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, the complainant has the right to seek alternative independent or other advice, or contact other entities such as the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) or the courts.