



GROWING TOGETHER
IN CHRIST

MATER DEI SCHOOL

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Communication of Concern

We ask that parents who may have concerns and wish to express them follow the appropriate protocols:

- If you have a concern regarding your child and their progress or welfare, please begin with the organised meetings and procedures that are scheduled in the school calendar.
- If you need to make an appointment with your child's teacher at another time, please make an appointment when quality time can be given, in an appropriate setting.
- Please do not ask a teacher to hold a conversation, when they are in class or on duty, as they have an imperative "Duty Of Care" to give their full attention to the children.
- If you have an issue with the behaviour of a child at school, you need to speak to the child's class teacher who will follow up on the incident and advise you of the outcome. It should be understood that the school is not responsible for the behaviour of students out of school hours including weekends. Incidents which occur at these times are the responsibility of parents.

No child is to be approached or disciplined by the parent of another child. The dignity owed to every child must be supported in conversation with children and adults.

- If you have a classroom matter to discuss, the first point of contact is with the class teacher. Most concerns can be addressed and resolved most efficiently in this way.
- If following discussion with the class teacher, your concern is not allayed, please make an appointment through the office to meet with the Assistant Principal or Principal.

Guidelines For The Resolution Of Concerns And Complaints

Sydney Archdiocesan Catholic Schools are committed to living the gospel values of justice, love and reconciliation. All of the activity of the school should take place within the context that reflects the Catholic, Christian Community to which we belong. These are principles that need to be upheld at all times and in all situations.

At Mater Dei Primary School we aim to:

- develop a positive and collaborative relationship between home and school;
- welcome and value diversity of opinion; and
- have clear and open communication within the community.

The school acknowledges that parents can sometimes feel concerned about something that they believe is happening in the school. It is recognised that parents and caregivers must have access to processes that allow them to resolve concerns in a supportive, conciliatory environment and for this reason a model for this has been developed that is designed to resolve such issues in an authentic and dignified manner.

The Scope Of The Guidelines

These Guidelines apply to the concerns of parents and care-givers about:

- Children's learning, behaviour and welfare
- Student health and safety issues

Certain matters concerning Child Protection or other areas covered by specific legislation will be referred immediately to the relevant external agency.

The resolution of conflict in every school community is vital to the well being and success of the school community.

Rights and Responsibilities of Parents

The greatest success in resolving concerns is when they are addressed as soon as they arise. Parents have a responsibility to raise their concerns at the earliest possible time so that they do not become overwhelming for either the child or the family. Parents have a responsibility to maintain confidentiality in the best interests of their child and to ensure a just outcome for any other person who may be involved. **Parents must exercise respect and civility in a manner that reflects the Catholic ethos in which our school operates.**

General Principles

Confidentiality will be respected and maintained by all parties. Concerns will be resolved according to the principles of procedural fairness as follows:

- the person considering the concern will act impartially;
- anyone involved in the matter has the right to be heard fully;
- all relevant information will be taken into account; and
- where a conflict of interest arises or is perceived to arise, an independent person may be involved with the consent of all parties.

Every endeavour will be made to address all concerns within reasonable timeframes and under mutual agreement. The resolution of concerns is most successful when prompt responses are obtained. However, Principals and school staff may not always be available to address concerns at the exact time they are raised, but will make an appointment to do so at the earliest mutually available time. Any person raising or responding to a concern may have a support person present during meetings. Support persons must maintain confidentiality and exercise the other principles set out in these Guidelines. The support person would act as an observer but may take a more active role with the mutual agreement of all parties. The Principal is to be advised of the attendance of a support person before any meeting or interview. Similarly the Principal will advise of any other person he/she may invite to attend. This observer for either party would never be legal counsel in the first instance.

Accurate and appropriate notes will be kept with due regard to the confidentiality of the concerned parties. Access to relevant records may be given to parties directly involved in the process or to others by mutual consent whilst adhering to the conditions of the Commonwealth Privacy Act. The outcome of a complaint resolution process will be communicated to the Parent/Caregiver in writing and there may be an agreement to review its effectiveness within an agreed timeframe. Anonymous complaints or allegations will **ONLY** be accepted and forwarded for investigation in the case of:

- Allegations of child abuse;
- Allegations of misconduct of a sexual nature by a staff member against a student; or
- Alleged breaches of legislation, including the Crimes Act.

Anonymous complaints will not be accepted in any other circumstance.

The Principal has delegated authority to manage concerns and complaints at school. Where the matter involves Child Protection or other areas covered by specific legislation (such as matters being handled by Police or courts), the Principal is required to refer it to the Regional or Head Office.

In all other matters, every attempt will be made to resolve the matter at the level of the Principal. **The Principal and staff are within their rights to require that any meeting or discussion be discontinued if a complainant becomes abusive, uses profane or threatening language or attempts to verbally, physically or emotionally intimidate a staff member. Should this occur the complainant will be required to leave the school premises.**

↓ **PATHWAY FOR RESOLVING CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS AT SCHOOL**

(Indicates that the concern has not been resolved and the matter should move to the next step)

