

St. Matthew Catholic School, San Antonio, Texas
2017-2018 Student- Parent Handbook

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

All disciplinary actions/decisions that do not result in student expulsion will be resolved at the local school level. Neither the local grievance council nor the Archdiocesan Council of Conciliation will hear these matters.

St. Matthew Catholic School provides an opportunity for individuals to be heard in redress of a policy, regulation or decision that is perceived to inflict hardship on an individual or group.

Student complaints will be presented by the students in the presence of their parents/guardians.

The primary aim of the St. Matthew Catholic School complaint procedure is to establish and publish the procedure to be followed and to provide fair notice and hearing of the matter. Complaints may be heard from individuals, parents and parent organizations.

Complaint Resolution Process for Non-Disciplinary Issues

In conjunction with the local grievance policies, this complaint process is for non-disciplinary issues. No complaint is to be acted upon until the following process has been exhausted:

1. Any complaint about a teacher, employee or student must be addressed to the School Administration first.
2. After hearing such complaint, the School Administrator will contact the party to whom the complaint is lodged.
3. The School Administrator will schedule appropriate time to listen to the person to whom the complaint is directed against.
4. Parents have the right and obligation to be present if their son/daughter is part of the complaint.

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5. Once both parties have had a chance to share their particular points of view, on the issue at hand, both parties will be brought together by the School Administrator who will share, with those involved, what was heard, discovered and judged to be the major issue or concern which brought the initial complaint.
6. The School Administrator offers a proposed solution to the complaint.
7. The hope is this process finds a resolution on common ground.

8. If the solution is acceptable to the parties involved, implementation is to take place.
9. Written copies of the solution are to be given to all parties, including the Pastor or his delegate.
10. This is to be done within 14 days of complaint being addressed.

If the proposed solution is not acceptable:

1. A committee of three members from the School Council will be appointed by the President of the School Council to review the situation and complaint.
2. This is to be done within a 7-day period.
3. If the proposed solution seems appropriate, the School Council committee will re-affirm such.
4. If needed, the School Council committee can also offer an alternative solution to the issue.

If a solution is still not found:

1. The complaint will come before the Pastor, or his delegate, who will decide upon the complaint and what solutions are to be implemented.
2. This is to be accomplished within a 10-day period.

Thus, if the process comes to the Pastor, the resolution will take place within a month's time from the initial date of complaint.

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Complaint against the Principal

The following procedures must be followed for filing and investigating a harassment claim:

1. The person may first choose to tell the individual causing the harassment that the conduct is offensive and must stop. If the objectionable behavior does not cease immediately, the person must report the harassment to the Principal. In the case of sexual harassment allegations, the person is free to raise the issue with another administrator if he/she prefers to do so.
2. As soon as the verbal report has been given, the pastor or authorized agent must report the incident to the parent (if applicable) and superintendent.
3. The person alleging harassment must file a formal, written complaint. The claim against the principal will be investigated thoroughly by the pastor or authorized agent involving only the necessary parties. Confidentiality will be maintained as much as possible.
4. The investigation will include a meeting with the principal, sharing with him/her the nature of the allegations as well as the name of the person bringing the allegation.
5. Once the facts of the case have been gathered, the pastor or authorized agent, in consultation with the superintendent, will decide what, if any, disciplinary action is warranted. The disciplinary action will relate to the nature, context and seriousness of the harassment and can include all disciplinary actions up to and including immediate termination.

Complaint against Anyone Other Than the Principal

The following procedures must be followed for filing and investigating a harassment claim:

1. The person may first choose to tell the individual causing the harassment that the conduct is offensive and must stop. If the objectionable behavior does not cease immediately, the person must report the harassment to the principal. In the case of sexual harassment allegations, the person is free to raise the issue with another administrator if he/she prefers to do so.
2. As soon as the verbal report has been given, the principal must report the incident to the parent (if applicable) and superintendent;

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3. The person alleging harassment must file a formal, written complaint. The claim will be investigated thoroughly by the principal, involving only the necessary parties. Confidentiality will be maintained as much as possible.
4. The investigation will include a meeting with the principal and the person alleged to have harassed, sharing with that person the nature of the allegations as well as the name of the person bringing the allegation.
5. Once the facts of the case have been gathered, the principal, in consultation with the pastor and superintendent, will decide what, if any, disciplinary actions are warranted. The disciplinary action will relate to the nature, context and seriousness of the harassment and can include all disciplinary actions up to and including expulsion.
6. If the complaint is against a non-employee such as a parent, parishioner, volunteer or vendor, the school will take steps, within its power, to investigate and eliminate the problem.

Formal Grievance Procedures

Prior to the initiation of a formal grievance parents who seek redress for their expelled child must first confer directly with the principal (“conference”) for resolution of the situation.

If there is not a satisfactory resolution of the complaint, the following are steps in the formal grievance procedure:

1. A written statement of the complaint, including a brief summary of the initial conference, must be prepared and filed with the school council secretary within (3) school days of the conference, or decision resulting there from, whichever is later. The date and time of filing will be recorded on the original of the complaint.
2. The school council secretary will, within 24 hours of filing, inform and forward the grievance to the Local Grievance Council (“LGC”), who will review the grievance proceedings. If it deems necessary, the LGC may hear further statements, evidence or arguments within (7) school days of its receipt of the grievance. The LGC will render a decision within (10) school days of its receipt of the grievance.

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3. If the aggrieved party is still not satisfied with the decision of the Grievance Council, an appeal may be made to the pastor within three (3) school days of the decision of the Grievance Council. The pastor/authorized agent will review all documentation of the grievance procedure and set a date for hearing the grievance with all parties of the initial grievance in attendance. This meeting will take place within seven (7) school days of the pastor's receipt of such an appeal. The pastor will then render his decision within five (5) school days.
4. If the aggrieved party remains unsatisfied with the decision of the pastor, the avenue of further appeal would be the Archdiocesan Council of Conciliation. Such an appeal must be sent in writing within five (5) school days of the pastor's decision.

Pending outcome of the formal grievance, only the principal or pastor/authorized agent may, with or without condition, abate the expulsion or the termination.

Local Grievance Council – Composition

1. The local Grievance Council shall be composed of three members appointed by the local School Council.
2. Individuals appointed to this Council should be people of integrity with some expertise in education, human relations and conflict management, if possible.
3. One member may be a present or former School Council member. The other two members should have no direct relationship to the school.
4. The appointment to the local Grievance Council is for one year and is renewable.

Local Grievance Council - Duties and Process

1. Both parties to the grievance will prepare a complete written statement of the nature of the grievance and the remedies sought. The Council will review these statements and the procedures followed and decide if additional steps need to be taken or if it will uphold the decision of the principal.
2. If the decision of the council is to uphold the principal's decision, then the process moves to No. 8.

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3. If the decision of the council is such that it feels that additional discussion of the situation needs to take place, it will call a meeting of both parties to the grievance.
4. Each party to the grievance may be accompanied by one other individual who is not an attorney and who will act as observer/advisor. This individual is not to directly address the Grievance Council.
5. Both parties will appear before the Grievance Council together and make an oral presentation of the written statements presented to the council. The aggrieved party will make the first presentation. At no time is there to be cross-examination or direct discussion between parties to the grievance.
6. After both presentations have been completed, the Council will enter into closed session to consider the oral and written presentations.
7. The Council may recall, together, both parties to the grievance for clarification of points that may have been raised in either of the written or oral statements.
8. The Grievance Council will render its decision in writing according to the prescribed grievance procedure.