

COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES POLICY



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Version History

Version	Date	Notes
1.0	17/08/09	Initial Draft Document
1.1	17/06/11	Document updated for partial monitoring
1.2	15/09/11	Updated following initial feedback
1.3	22/03/13	Minor edits and updates Post CSA registration

RATIONALE

This policy and procedure aims to support the mission statements of HCS that say we will actively seek a school community committed to unity in Christ.

‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ (Matthew 22:37-39)

Within our school community there is a great deal of formal and informal communication and it is not the intention of the school to restrict the relationships that are an important part of the life of the school. However, we are mindful how our actions and words, even done innocently, have the capacity to hurt and offend.

In response to this we will follow the principles set out in Matthew 18, not in a legalistic way, but as a model given by Christ. A model the school has implemented through using the “Peacemaking Principles. Responding to Conflict Biblically” process. #

Within the context of Hunter Christian School this should happen as follows, whether the person concerned is a parent/ caregiver, staff member or student (see “Dealing with Student Concerns” in the Further Procedural Matters at the end of this document). See also Discipline and Commendation Policy to assist with the “hearing rule” and “right to procedural fairness” during serious disciplinary matters.

POLICY & PROCEDURES:

FIRST PRINCIPLE:

Talk first with the person with whom you have a problem.

“If your brother sins against you go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.” (Matt. 18:15.)

It is vital that Christians should pray about an issue before trying to resolve it bearing in mind that we must not sin when we get angry, “In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.” (Eph.4:26), and that we must always be ready to forgive and to accept the responsibility to live at peace with others as far as it is our responsibility. (Rom. 12:18.)

In the first instance, any conflicts should be addressed informally between the two parties involved. The aim is to find out whether the problem you see is real or just a communication issue. If you then believe the other party is wrong you should lovingly correct them and restore the relationship before it suffers any further harm. This should be done in a private manner. If, and only if, this does not lead to conflict resolution, after prayerful consideration, the matter may be taken to the next stage.

SECOND PRINCIPLE:

If you can’t resolve the problem, take a wiser person with you.

“But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.” (Matt. 18:16)

Prior to involving others in any disagreement it must be borne in mind that to do so reduces the likelihood of the matter being resolved without some damage to the relationship with the other

person. Although this may be healed over time it is wise to count the cost before taking this course of action.

If it is considered that the matter needs to be taken before witnesses it is generally appropriate that this be the person most directly responsible for the person against whom the complaint is made within the authority structure of the school. At Hunter Christian School, this is the Principal. In dealing with any issue the Principal will firstly ensure that the preceding steps have been undertaken and that the accused has been given the opportunity to respond to any accusations made against him/ her. In doing so the Principal may make available any documentation or other information pertaining to the problem.

THIRD PRINCIPLE:

Only refer matters to the Board when the prior steps have been tried.

“If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church.” (Matt. 8:17)

If the intervention of the Principal does not result in a resolution of the dispute the matter should then be referred to the “church.” The school is part of the ministry of the Mayfield Baptist Church. The Board, then, becomes “the church”.

If a matter is referred to the school Board it should be in writing and addressed to the Board Chairman. It is not appropriate for individual Board members to be approached separately. Board proceedings are confidential. Any Board member who is approached should refer the matter to the Board Chairman.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the School Board resolution they need to resolve their grievance or review their position as a member of the school community.

The Principal will monitor of any such formal complaints, and the outcomes of these complaints.

FOURTH PRINCIPLE:

Preserve unity as much as you on your part can do.

“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” (Eph. 4:2-3.)

You should not discuss your grievances with other people outside of the conflict resolution circle. The Body of Christ is damaged when we gossip about problems or when we talk to others about issues they do not need to know about. Sometimes, after an issue has been resolved between two people, the problem recurs because others have discussed the issue without knowledge of how it was resolved. Christians are called to be patient, humble, forgiving and keeping unity as much as they can.

FURTHER PROCEDURAL MATTERS:

Dealing With Student Concerns:

Students may need adult assistance to deal with their concerns due to factors such as their age, lack of understanding, or reluctance to voice concerns to school authorities.

Therefore it is understood that the parents/ caregivers of students may undertake these resolution steps on behalf of, or in partnership with, their child. Other persons would need to be agreed to.

Support for the Complainant:

At all times during this process, support for the person(s) involved in the concern(s) will be offered and provided. Such support may be pastoral or counselling support.

Raising Concerns, Complaints or Grievances against the Principal:

Such matters should be referred directly to the Board Chairman in the first instance, and should be in writing.

Procedural Fairness:

It is important that concerns, complaints and grievances are dealt with quickly and efficiently. All reasonable steps should be taken to resolve issues promptly, and that the complainant receives communication from the school quickly in relation to any concerns, complaints and grievances.

#“Peacemaking Principles. Responding to Conflict Biblically” www.peacewise.org.au

- We acknowledge the assistance of Casino Christian School in developing this policy.