

# HUNTER CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

## 4.3 COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES POLICY & PROCEDURE

Prepared by	Malcolm East (Principal)
Date authorised	March 2019
Authorised by	HCS Board
Monitored by	HCS Executive Staff
Suggested review date	2022
Reference documents / legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Registered Accredited Individual Non-Government Schools (NSW) Manual (NESA)</li><li>AIS Sample Grievance Policy (2011)</li><li>AIS Sample Complaints Handling Procedure DRAFT (2019)</li><li>HCS Complaints and Grievance Policy (2013 Boyd Allen)</li><li>HCS Child Protection Notification Flowchart 2018</li><li>HCS Child Protection Policy 2017</li><li>Peacewise – Christian solutions to conflict (<a href="https://peacewise.org.au/">https://peacewise.org.au/</a>)</li><li>NIV Bible</li></ul>
Publicly posted	Yes, to be available to parents via school website and/or parent portal
Policy Framework Category	4.3 Establishing a Safe & Supportive Environment

Version	Date	Amended by	Notes
1.1			
1.2			
1.3			

### **POLICY**

#### **1. Introduction and Purpose**

This policy and procedure apply to the school in handling complaints made in respect of services provided by the school or against staff members (including between employees), which includes employees, contractors and volunteers. The procedure is intended to ensure that complaints are handled fairly, efficiently and effectively and makes clear that the school will decide the most appropriate method of dealing with the matter on a case by case basis.

All parties involved in complaints handling are required to maintain confidentiality, including in relation to handling and storing records.

#### **2. Scope of who the policy applies to**

This policy and procedure apply to:

1. All employees
2. Volunteers
3. Parents and Carers
4. Contractors employed by the school

#### **3. Complaints and Grievances**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to the school about an educational and/or operational matter relating to services provided by the school or the behaviour or decisions of a staff member, contractor or volunteer, including misconduct.

A complaint that concerns the behaviour of a staff member which may constitute reportable conduct will be addressed in accordance with the Child Protection Policy. Please refer to the Child Protection Policy for information about reportable conduct.

Complaints may also be in the form of a grievance between staff members about work matters, including work relationships and decision made by other staff members which impact on their work.

#### **4. Rationale and underpinning Biblical principles**

This policy and procedure aim to support the mission statements of HCS that say we will actively seek a school community committed to unity in Christ. It is also intended to support the core values of the school, namely to;

- Honour Christ
- Learn without limits
- Unite in community
- Serve selflessly
- Live courageously

As a Christian community, our school follows Biblical principles. Additionally, we draw upon the resources of the Peacewise organisation to understand Christian peacemaking principles.

## 4.3 HCS Complaints and Grievances Policy and Procedure

### 4.1. Principle 1: Preserve unity at 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."* (Ephesians. 4:2-3).

### 4.2. Principle 2: Resolve differences quickly

*"... each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbour, for we are all members of one body. In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry ..."* (Ephesians. 4:25-26).

### 4.3. Principle 3: Deal with issues in the proper order and way

- a. **First, try to resolve it respectfully & privately with the person directly:** *"If your brother or sister sins against you go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over."* (Matthew 18:15.)
- b. **Then, if you can't resolve the problem, seek a neutral mediator:** *"But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses."* (Matthew 18:16)
- c. **Refer matters to authorities when the prior steps have been tried:** *"If they still refuse to listen to them, tell it to the church."* (Matthew 18:17)

### 4.4. Principle 4: Forgive and restore

- a. *"Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy times seven."* (Matthew 18:21-11)
- b. *"Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven."* (Luke 6:37)
- c. *"Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."* (Ephesians 4: 31-32)

## 5. General Expectations in the handling of complaints and grievances

In handling complaints and grievances, it is generally expected that staff will seek to undertake the following;

- 5.1. maintain privacy and confidentiality;
- 5.2. ensure procedural fairness and natural justice prevail;
- 5.3. maintain objectivity and avoid conflicts of interest;
- 5.4. follow child protection protocols;
- 5.5. undertake required and mandatory reporting;
- 5.6. support students with adult assistance, and
- 5.7. offer support for persons involved in a complaint.

## COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCE HANDLING PROCEDURE

### 1. How a complaint (including a grievance) is to be raised?

Informal complaints may be raised by a complainant directly with the person involved. The complainant may also raise the matter to either the Head of Primary, the Head of Secondary or Support Services Manager. However, if the complainant does not feel comfortable doing so or the matter is one where it may not be appropriate to do so, or if the complaint is about the conduct of a staff member then a formal complaint should be made.

Formal complaints should be made in writing to the Principal or Associate Principal, via email.

If it is not appropriate for the complaint to be raised with the Principal, or if the complaint is about the conduct of the Principal, the complainant should make their complaint, in writing, to the Chair of the Board, via email.

### 2. What will the School do if a complaint is raised?

#### 2.1. Assessing a complaint

The Principal (or delegate), or Chair of the Board (or their delegate) will determine the most appropriate method to assess the complaint, which may include:

- a. requesting further information from the complainant;
- b. requesting information from other staff members or third parties;
- c. meeting with the complainant or others involved in the matter;
- d. reviewing and responding to the complaint or arranging for an appropriate person to review and respond to the complaint; or
- e. if appropriate, facilitating a meeting between the complainant and the staff member that the complaint is about.

The Principal (or delegate), or Chair of the Board (or their delegate) will determine:

- f. whether the complaint is one to be addressed by this policy and/or another relevant policy such as the School's Child Protection Policy and/or Staff Code of Conduct
- g. the priority of the complaint in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness raised.

#### 2.2. Managing a complaint

The Principal (or delegate), or Chair of the Board (or their delegate) will generally manage the complaint by:

- a. advising the complainant of the likely steps that will be undertaken by the school in relation to the complaint;
- b. if appropriate, advising the relevant parties of the complaint at the relevant time and provide them with an opportunity to respond;
- c. collecting any additional information the School considers necessary to assess the complaint;
- d. making a decision about how the complaint will be resolved ("resolution decision"); and
- e. advising the complainant and the relevant parties that the complaint is about of the Principal (or delegate) or Chair of the Board (or their) resolution decision and if appropriate, any proposed action to be taken, within 7 days of the decision being made (where possible).

There may be circumstances in which some of the steps outlined above are not appropriate and the School will determine, in its absolute discretion, on a case by case basis the most appropriate method of handling the grievance.

## 4.3 HCS Complaints and Grievances Policy and Procedure

A complainant and the relevant parties that the complaint is about may choose to have an appropriate support person present at any meeting with representatives of the School about the complaint. However, depending on the nature of the complaint it may not be appropriate for the support person to be another staff member.

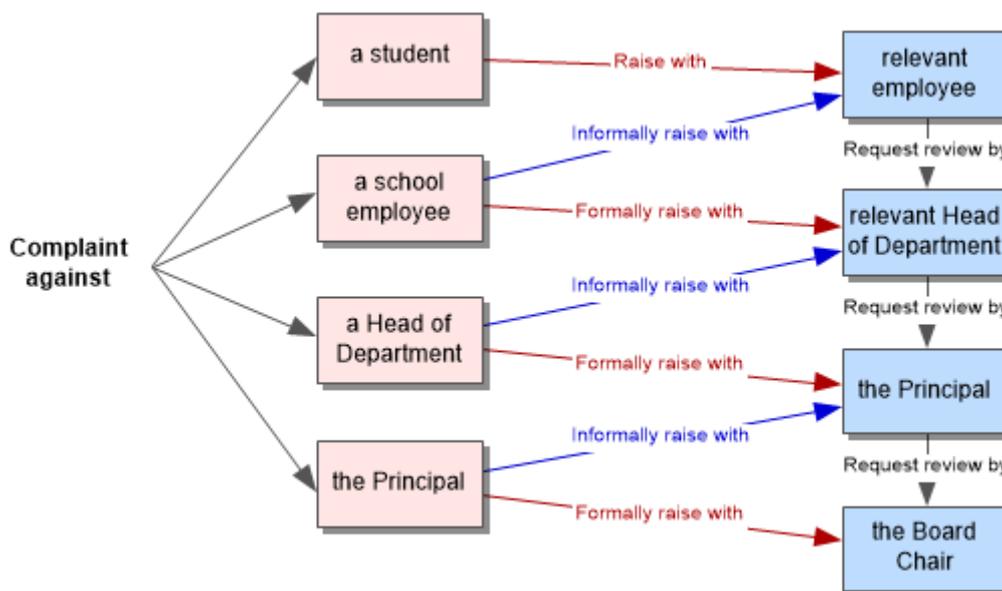
### 3. Reviewing a complaint

A complainant may request a review of the resolution decision if they are not satisfied with the decision or that the process for handling the complaint was unfair.

A complainant should make such a request in writing to the Principal (or delegate) or Chair of the Board (or their delegate), within 7 days of receiving notification of the resolution decision. A review of a decision made by the Principal will be conducted by the Chair of the Board. A review of a decision made by the Chair of the Board will be conducted by the School Board.

A review decision of the School Board is considered final.

### 4. Complaint Handling Flowchart



Complaints of serious misconduct **MUST** be raised formally and not directly with the person

### 5. Restorative Practice and Peacemaking

In resolving complaints, the School encourages all parties to adopt a “restorative” or “peacemaking” approach that encourages the repair and improvement of relationships at both an individual and community level. *Peacewise* provides a range of useful resources on strategies to build peace and to resolve conflicts. They classify three types of responses to conflict such as these below;

Peace-faking	Peace making responses	Attack and peace-breaking
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Denial</li> <li>Avoidance</li> <li>Surrender</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Negotiating</li> <li>Mediating</li> <li>Adjudicating</li> <li>Reconciliation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Abuse</li> <li>Threats</li> <li>Assault</li> </ul>

For more information visit: <https://peacewise.org.au>