



Grievances Policy

Description

The purpose of the Grievances Policy is to provide guidelines for managing grievances held by Shire Christian School staff, parents and students that directly relate to their involvement in the school. This policy seeks to ensure that those interacting within the School have access to a clear and effective process to remedy any such conflict before it escalates. Processes for dealing with the resolution of grievances may be informal or formal depending on the nature of the grievance.

Related policies

Where a grievance relates to child protection issues, the Child Protection Policy will be the first authoritative source of information when managing the grievance.

This policy does not extend to complaints which are whistleblowing disclosures. The procedure for processing whistleblowing complaints are outlined in the School's *Whistleblower Policy*.

In summary a whistleblowing disclosure is a disclosure which:

- could be made by a current or former: association member, board member, employee, contractor or volunteer.
- Involves alleged misconduct, an improper state of affairs or circumstances, or illegal activity, and
- Is made to an executive staff member or officer of the school, the school's auditor or a person who the school has authorised to collect such disclosures.

This policy does not apply to:

- Grievances between students. They are managed by teachers with reference to student welfare policies and procedures.
- Grievances or disputes between parents.

Other related policies to be aware of:

- *Staff Code of Conduct*
- *WHS Policy and Procedures*

Context

All members of the School community are encouraged to maintain respectful and collaborative working relationships and address any misunderstandings quickly should they arise, however, disputes and grievances between individuals and groups of people are an inevitable consequence of living in a sinful and fallen world. A Christian school has a duty to provide a mechanism for the resolution of grievances based on biblical principles.

- Forgiveness of those who sin against us – Mark 11:25, Luke 17:3
- Speak to those who may have grieved you – Matthew 18:15

The principles of natural justice apply to school grievance procedures in that all parties (both the complainant and those perceived to have caused the grievance) have the right to be heard, to be treated fairly and with respect. The School takes any raised complaints or concerns seriously and will address issues through a structured process, with the aim of bringing about a resolution.

Grievances may involve multiple staff members, students and/or parents, potentially creating a range of competing perspectives and interests. It may not be clear where the appropriate balance point lies between all those interests. In some instances, parties to a grievance may make requests or demands which cannot be fully met or which seem unreasonable given the need to also balance the interests of others. Parties must be open to compromise to allow for a timely resolution of the grievance. No person shall be disadvantaged in any way by bringing forward a complaint.

Confidentiality

All persons involved in a grievance should seek to ensure that communication related to a grievance is not shared with those who do not have a direct interest in the issues associated with the grievance. Details should only be disclosed, should it be necessary, with the permission of the complainant. An exception to the requirement for confidentiality will be made if there are legal obligations (such as duty of care) to report the information disclosed by the complainant.

Informal Process

Minor grievances may be resolved by the parties themselves, however, if not dealt with, minor conflicts can escalate. Therefore, the aggrieved should raise issues of grievance and conflict as soon as possible.

In the first instance, issues should be raised as summarised in the table below:

If the grievance involves...	Then in the first instance it should be raised with...
Students	The relevant teacher
Teaching staff	The relevant head of department
Administration, support or other staff	Their direct manager or supervisor
Contractors	The person who engaged them at the School
Executive	The Principal
The Principal	The Chairman of the board

Parties may:

- choose to keep a written record of their discussions and are encouraged to record any resolutions.
- mutually agree to invite someone to objectively facilitate the informal process.
- if a party engaged in an informal grievance process believes that this process has failed or if such an approach is not appropriate, s/he may request that the school’s formal process be used.

How to raise a concern

A general concern is best raised via our confidential [feedback form](#) which can be accessed via our parent tab or contact tab on the school’s website. This can also be used if you are unsure as to which staff member to contact when using the table above, please ensure your contact details and an outline of your concern is provided, so we can direct it to the appropriate staff member. If it is in relation to a students learning or welfare needs then the [“who to contact when”](#) page on our website may be of assistance.

School response

The School reviews all complaints raised and they are referred to the relevant leadership who will respond and investigate if necessary.

Support

It is acknowledged that dealing with issues of conflict may be difficult for some people, therefore, the option exists for a support person for either party to be included in any meetings regarding the grievance. The role of the support person is to provide support to either party by discussing the issue with them or taking notes in the meeting. A support person should not advocate for the person they are supporting or suggest solutions to the grievance.

To avoid escalating the issue a support person should not be an industrial advocate, or a person from another school. Similarly, in order to prevent matters from becoming personal rather than professional, it is not usually appropriate for an employee's support person to be a spouse, partner or close family member.

In the event of a formal complaint or grievance, the executive member or delegate managing the grievance has the authority to exclude the support person if the support person acts beyond his/her role of providing support, breaches confidentiality or in any way impedes the process of resolving the grievance. The executive member or delegate has the authority to determine if an alternate support person can be appointed under these circumstances.

Formal process

The aggrieved person should request a formal grievance process by writing to an executive member, informing him/her of the nature and substance of the grievance. This written request should outline what informal steps have been taken and why a formal process is being requested.

In the event that the grievance or complaint concerns the Principal, the formal grievance should be provided in writing to the Chair of the board who will notify the board of its receipt and convene the Complaints Committee (a minimum of 2 Directors, least affected by any conflict of interest) who will manage the process outlined below and make recommendations to the Board to be considered at the next meeting or earlier if deemed appropriate.

On receipt of a formal grievance the school (executive member or delegate) will generally take the following steps:

- Determine the best method of handling the grievance.
- Ascertain the nature of the grievance by gathering relevant factual information.
 - The executive member or delegate has wide discretion as to how these facts are gathered and what information is recorded.
 - The aggrieved person will have an opportunity to explain the nature of his/her grievance, outline factual information relevant to the grievance and any impact that the alleged grievance may have had on him/her.
- Seek a response from anyone who is the subject of an accusation by the aggrieved person.
 - The person who is the subject of an accusation by the aggrieved person will be entitled to know the name of the aggrieved person.
- Inform the aggrieved person, in writing, of any decisions, resolutions or findings of the investigation.
- If the aggrieved person requests information in addition to any decision or finding, the executive member or delegate will determine what, if any, information will be given to the aggrieved person. If the executive member or delegate chooses to refuse a request by the aggrieved person for

additional information, a reason(s) will be provided for this refusal. This reason may be communicated verbally or in writing.

- keep notes of the formal process including his/her:
 - findings from an investigation.
 - resolutions (a way forward where both parties agree).
 - arbitrated decision if the parties to the grievance cannot agree.

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

Parties to the formal grievance process are expected to honour what has been mutually agreed and abide by any arbitrated decision.

Appeals

The school does not offer unlimited opportunities for appeal if a complainant is unhappy with the resolution of a complaint. Any appeal against the resolution of a grievance should be made in writing to the Principal. The Chair of the school board will determine whether the board will consider an appeal against the Principal's decision based on whether this policy has been followed correctly.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

A complaint can be withdrawn at any stage during the processes outlined in this policy. A complaint can only be withdrawn by the person who made the complaint to the school and should be communicated in writing. The school will notify affected parties if a complaint is withdrawn, where considered appropriate.

Definitions	
<i>Natural Justice</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving the complainant the opportunity to state his/her case, which should give the person or people who are alleged to have caused the grievance a clear and accurate understanding of the nature of the grievance. • Giving those who are alleged to have caused the grievance a reasonable opportunity to respond to the claims made by the person holding the grievance. • Unbiased decisions based on evidence. • Individuals who are the subject of an allegation are entitled to know the name(s) of those who make the allegation.
<i>Grievance</i>	An actual or supposed cause for complaint, especially unfair treatment.
<i>Parent</i>	An adult who is the legally recognised primary caregiver of a Shire Christian School student, but is not his/her parent, is considered a parent for the purposes of this policy.

<i>Employee</i>	Any person who is engaged in a contract of service by the school in return for payment. The term <i>staff</i> is synonymous. Independent contractors who are engaged in a contract for services are not considered employees for the purposes of this policy.
<i>Executive member</i>	The school executive members are the Principal, the Deputy Principal, the Business Manager, the Head of Junior School, the Head of Secondary School and the Academic Head.
<i>Delegate</i>	A delegate, for the purposes of this policy, is a person vested with the responsibility of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conducting an investigation • acting as a mediator or • acting as an arbitrator