



# Covenant Christian School Complaint Handling procedures

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

These procedures implement the provisions of the Complaints Policy.

## 2 PROCEDURES

Categories of Complaints/ Grievances:

Level 1 – simple; resolved at first point of contact

Level 2 – more complex; requires consultation/ further inquiry

Level 3 – serious matters; significant or legal implications

### 2.1 General

The initial procedure for all people concerned that a decision or situation might be unfair, or that it might have been made without full consideration of the facts, is as follows:

- (a) Speak with, or communicate in writing with, the person responsible for the decision, outlining your concern, and requesting a review.
- (b) At any interview which takes place, the complainant may be accompanied by a support person.
- (c) Speak and act respectfully towards each other.
- (d) The facts of the matter should be reviewed, and actions or decisions explained.
- (e) In resolving the matter, the original decision may be confirmed, or a new decision made.
- (f) Confidentiality will be maintained, as far as possible.
- (g) Should the complainant be unwilling or unable to speak with the person responsible for the original decision, they may choose to have the matter directed to the school executive.
- (h) Should the matter of concern relate to child protection, the procedure will be followed as set out in the Child Protection Policy.
- (i) Records shall be maintained of the complaint, including any investigation, decision, and review.
- (j) Staff may choose to report a Level 1 complaint to their Director of Studies at their discretion; matters having greater consequences or which have been occurring over a longer time period should be reported.



- (k) Level 2 grievance matters are recorded by the relevant Director of Studies in the Complaints Log.
- (l) The Business Manager records Level 3 complaints in the Complaints Register.

## 2.2 Staff Grievance

In the first place, staff members should speak with the person directly responsible for the decision or action concerning them. In the event that a satisfactory agreement cannot be reached:

- (a) The matter should be referred to the Principal, who may hear the complaint, or decide to form a committee consisting of staff members not previously associated with the matter in hand.
- (b) The decision of the Principal, or the review committee, is normally final.
- (c) The person making the complaint may appeal the decision to the School Council in writing if still not satisfied.
- (d) All decisions will be made with reference to any relevant awards and with a desire to achieve a fair and equitable outcome for all.

## 2.3 Staff Grievance Against Parents/ Visitors to the School

If a parent causes concern for a staff member through threatening, abusive, offensive or inappropriate language or behaviour:

- (a) The staff member should terminate the conversation.
- (b) The incident must be reported to the Principal.
- (c) At the Principal's discretion, a phone call or letter will address the incident of concern, reminding them of the **Code of Conduct** expected from parents and visitors to the School, and the School's commitment to maintaining a safe work place for all employees.
- (d) A mediated interview with the appropriate Director of Studies or Principal will attempt to arbitrate reconciliation.
- (e) In the event of a resolution being impossible, the offending parent or visitor will be asked to discuss their possible future relationship with the School.



## **2.4 Grievance by, or about, the Principal**

- (a) If a staff complaint concerns a decision of the Principal, and a satisfactory agreement cannot be reached, it should be referred in writing to the Council.
- (b) A grievance about the Principal is to be made directly to the Council Chairman, who will form a committee of Council Members and other relevant persons to seek a resolution.
- (c) A grievance of the Principal, which cannot be satisfactorily resolved, is to be made directly to the Council Chairman, who will form a committee of Council Members and other relevant persons to seek a resolution.
- (d) At this time, implementation of the Grievance clause in the Principal's letter of appointment shall be considered.

## **2.5 Parental Grievance**

Parents concerned that a decision by any member of the school staff is inappropriate, unfair or ill-advised, should first contact the teacher, or staff member concerned, to discuss the matter.

- (a) In the event that a resolution is not achieved, parents may pursue the matter by contacting and meeting with: Director of Studies or Principal – in that order.
- (b) The Principal may choose to become involved at any point in the process and form a committee to hear the grievance.
- (c) Those who hear the matter shall do so openly, keeping records of conversations.
- (d) If the parent(s) wish to have a friend or pastor accompany them whilst they express their concern they are free to, so long as that person does not become an advocate, injecting personal opinions into the discussion.
- (e) If a satisfactory agreement cannot be reached with the Principal, the matter should be referred in writing to the Council for review.



## **2.6 Student Grievance**

In the event that a student feels that an action by a teacher is inappropriate, ill-informed or unfair, that student may state their grievance to the teacher or another appropriate person, maintaining a respectful attitude at all times.

- (a) Should the student feel that the matter is unresolved, it may then be taken to the relevant Director of Studies, who may refer it to the Principal.
- (b) The Principal might choose to form a committee to investigate the matter if it remains unresolved.
- (c) The decision of the Principal shall normally be final. Parents/ guardians only may appeal to the School Council on behalf of their child.
- (d) In the event that a grievance is a matter of child protection, the Principal (Head of Agency) shall immediately be informed and the Child Protection Policy enacted.

## **2.7 Review of Decisions by the Council**

- (a) The Council will select a committee to review the complaint, decisions and all known facts, and may co-opt members of staff to assist. The decision of the Council is final for Covenant College Tuggeranong Inc.
- (b) The School Council is a point of appeal for parents and guardians of students, not for students directly. Parents may write to the school Council requesting further investigation if their child's matter remains unresolved.

## **2.8 The Review Process**

To ensure a fair process of review:

- (a) The person facilitating the process cannot have a personal agenda in relation to the parties or the subject matter of the dispute and must be perceived as 'fair' by the parties.
- (b) The parties are individually consulted about their needs and concerns regarding the process.
- (c) Consideration is given to possible unfairness that may arise from differences between the parties in terms of gender, race, disability, workplace hierarchy or positional authority.



## **2.9 When a Complaint is Upheld**

- (a) In the event of a complaint being justified, a new decision will be made to reflect the outcome of the review.
- (b) If a person has been disadvantaged by the initial decision, suitable redress may be considered.
- (c) Where the person about whom the complaint is made is found to be personally biased or prejudiced, some form of appropriate intervention e.g. counselling, or disciplinary action, may be made.

## **2.10 Grievance Prevention**

- (a) Matters brought forward as a grievance will be reviewed to ensure any necessary changes in policy or procedures of the School.
- (b) Mediation or reconciliation between parties involved in a grievance may be pursued, in the case of an ongoing work relationship.
- (c) Responsible behaviour, personal interaction and conflict management is discussed, as appropriate, in information given to new staff, and to parents and students upon enrolment.
- (d) Training in personal interactions, interview protocol and conflict resolution is managed informally during staff meetings and PD week.
- (e) Familiarity with significant related policies and procedures, and changes to relevant legislation, is maintained through new staff induction, PD week, staff meetings and preparation for inter-related events e.g. parent/ teacher interviews.

## **2.11 Complaints procedures around the School Chaplaincy (when operating)**

- (a) The Principal is the Complaints Officer for the purposes of the National School Chaplaincy Programme.
- (b) Any complaints received are to be noted in a Complaints Log.
- (c) The complaint is to be handled following the guidelines contained in Section 7 “Feedback and Complaints Procedures” of the National School Chaplaincy Program 2015-2018 ACT National School Chaplaincy Program Guidelines.