



Penrith Christian School

Strive for the Highest

Complaints and Grievance Handling Policy – External Policy and Procedure Management

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Status	Active
Audience	Volunteers, Parents/carers, Visitors, ELC, OSHC
Related Policies, Procedures, Work Instructions, Forms or Manuals	• Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy • Child Protection Policy • Staff Grievance Policy • Whistleblower Protection Plan

Table of Contents

1.	Introduction.....	3
2.	Complaints.....	4
3.	Raising a Complaint.....	5
4.	Handling Complaints.....	5

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose and scope

The purpose of this policy and its procedures is to promote a safe, supportive and secure community that is connected and unified in its vision and purpose. In 1 Corinthians 1:10b, Paul encourages us, “(let) there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought.” The School prioritises restorative processes that manages conflict and grievances according to Peacewise principles, and encourages students, parents, staff and the community to make known grievances and complaints according to this policy and its procedures. This procedure does not extend to personal grievances between parents, carers, or other members of the school community.

1.2. Policy Statement

- i. The School is committed to the safety and security of its community, including its students and staff.
- ii. The school encourages its members to seek out personal restoration of a grievance or complaint with those affected or involved, or the person immediately responsible for the relevant part of the school (Matthew 18).
- iii. Where a complaint has not been satisfactorily resolved, the complaint should be escalated to the next relevant supervisor, and restorative processes engaged with. A risk management approach may be applied also at the discretion of the supervisor and in consultation with the Deputy Principal.
- iv. All complaints must be made in a respectful manner, with restoration of relationship between members of the community or the school as an organisation as the goal. Complaints should be made in as non-emotive a manner as possible.
- v. All complaints will be acknowledged initially within one working day of their receipt, and with more detail within three working days of receipt. All complaints relating to child safety or reportable conduct will require immediate addressing and investigation.
- vi. All grievances and complaints and their investigation will be made with significant priority given to the privacy, confidentiality and reputational risk to all involved, and be treated in the strictest confidence proportionate to the grievance and complaint.
- vii. All grievance and complaints are entitled to have a support person not involved in the grievance and complaint. However, the support person is not entitled to participate in the process.

1.3. Whistleblower Complaints and Procedures

This procedure does not extend to complaints which are whistleblowing disclosures. The procedure for processing whistleblowing complaints are dealt with in the School's Whistleblower Policy available on our website.

1.4. Related Policies

Complaints about reportable conduct will be addressed in accordance with the School's Child Protection Policy available on our website.

Complaints regarding a grievance between staff members about work matters, including work relationships and decisions made by other staff members which impact on their work, will be addressed in accordance with the School's Staff Grievance Policy.

Complaints regarding unlawful discrimination, harassment or bullying between staff are generally addressed in accordance with the School's Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy.

1.5. Confidentiality

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

2. Complaints

A complaint or grievance 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.

If a parent/carer or student has a concern about the conduct of a staff member, they should raise their concern with the School in accordance with Section 3. If a complaint that concerns the behaviour of a staff member may constitute reportable conduct, the matter will be addressed in accordance with the School's Child Protection Policy in accordance with Section 1.2. Please refer to the School's Child Protection Policy for information about reportable conduct. Complainants are not required to assess whether their concern meets the threshold of reportable conduct before making a complaint. Any concern about a child's wellbeing may be reported under this policy.

Complaints may be made by a student, staff, community or parent/carer.

The School will seek to resolve complaints informally where possible but acknowledges that in some cases a person may wish to make a formal complaint.

3. Raising a Complaint

3.1. The Complainant

Informal complaints may be raised by a complainant directly with the person involved. However, if the complainant does not feel comfortable doing so, or the matter is one where it may not be appropriate to do so, a complaint can be made to the Head of Primary Years or Head of Secondary Years. Any complaint about the conduct of a staff member should be raised directly with the Deputy Principal in the first instance and then escalated to the Principal as required. It should be noted that all reportable conduct should still be escalated directly to the Principal. Should the matter not be resolved through informal processes, the complainant may raise the matter formally with the school. A formal complaint can be made in writing to the Principal via email principal@pcs.nsw.edu.au.

Where a person wishes to make a formal complaint concerning the Principal the complaint should be made in writing to the Chair of the Board, via email boardchair@pcs.nsw.edu.au. In this situation, the references in this policy relating to the role of the Principal should be read as references to the Chair of the Board.

3.2. The School

The Principal will generally acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint in writing as soon as practicable.

4. Handling Complaints

4.1. Assessing a Complaint

The Principal, generally, will assess the complaint and determine:

- i. whether the complaint is one to be addressed under this policy or is a staff grievance or reportable conduct matter which are dealt with by the relevant policies, see Section 1.2; and
- ii. the priority of the complaint in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the matter raised; and
- iii. whether the school may be required to report the matter to the Office of the Children's Guardian, Police, Department of Communities and Justice or other relevant authorities should the complaint relate to possible unlawful conduct or other reportable matters.

4.2. Managing a Formal Complaint

The Principal will manage the complaint by:

- i. advising the complainant of the likely steps that will be undertaken by the School in relation to the complaint;

- ii. if appropriate, advising the relevant parties of the complaint at the relevant time and providing them with an opportunity to respond;
- iii. collecting any additional information the School considers necessary to assess the complaint;
- iv. making a decision about how the complaint will be resolved (“resolution decision”); and
- v. advising the complainant in writing, and any other relevant parties as appropriate, of the resolution decision of the Principal and if appropriate, any proposed action to be taken.

There may be circumstances where some of the steps outlined above are not appropriate and the school will determine, on a case-by-case basis the most appropriate method of handling the complaint.

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, the School maintains the right to determine whether the person’s preferred support person is appropriate and may not approve the attendance of a support person where they are determined by the School to be inappropriate.

4.3. Anonymous lodging of a complaint or concern

4.3.1. We welcome your feedback

As a community, we strive to improve our processes and practice, and as such, we welcome your feedback. Our community is important to us, and we value the perspectives of all who are in it. Use this feedback space to let us know how we are going, make a report, or encourage our staff and students! Once you open the survey, you will be asked to make some selections about the type of concern or encouragement you have so that it can be directed to the appropriate team leader or staff member.

4.3.2. Anonymity

Your feedback will remain anonymous unless you choose to provide your contact details. Whilst we understand the desire to remain anonymous, please note that for important matters this can hinder our processes for improvement or reporting. All reports, comments and feedback are treated with the highest regard for privacy.