



Philip's Christian Education Foundation

**St. Philip's Christian College
Port Stephens**

Complaints Handling Procedure

RATIONALE

At times parents, guardians and carers may have a concern or complaint that they would like to discuss with the school. I have written this article to describe the process that we normally follow to resolve these issues.

The Bible clearly encourages us to seek to resolve differences between each other and to live in harmony with one another:

- **Do all you can to live in harmony with others** - Romans 12:16 says 'Live in harmony with one another'.
- **Resolve differences quickly** - Ephesians 4:26 emphasises the need to resolve differences before the end of the day.
- **Deal with any issue in the proper order** – Matthew 18:15-17 describes dealing first with the person who may have offended you, then if the person doesn't respond appropriately, to take the matter to a higher authority.

PROCEDURE

Step 1: Try to speak to the person involved e.g. classroom teacher, organising teacher, office staff etc.

Before beginning the process, prayerfully seek God's wisdom and direction.

If you can, speak directly to the person with whom you have the grievance to discuss the matter as soon as possible.

It is important to approach the meeting with humility and an open mind and heart.

Remember, by speaking with the person concerned you give them the chance to stop or to change what they are doing.

If you do not feel comfortable speaking with the person concerned directly, or if you find that the personal approach has not been successful, then go to Step 2.

Step 2: Speak to a Leader of the area in which you have a problem

This may be the Stage Coordinator, Head of Department, Sport Coordinator etc.

Complaints put to one of these Leaders will be treated with respectful consideration and they will try to work through a process of mediation to assist those involved to reach a resolution. You will not be discriminated against or victimised for bringing a complaint to their attention.

If your Head of Department feels that he / she can competently handle your complaint, then the Stage Coordinator, Head of Department, Sport Coordinator etc. will:

- Confidentially interview you;
- Confidentially interview the other person(s) concerned;
- Conduct a thorough investigation into your complaint;
- Attempt to resolve your complaint or if appropriate refer the matter to the Head of School

Step 3: Speak to the Head of School (Junior School, Middle School or Senior School)

If a Head of School believes that that he/she cannot competently handle your grievance, then they will refer this matter to the Principal who will prayerfully consider all circumstances pertaining to the complaint and attempt to resolve your complaint.

As a part of this process they will normally:

- ◆ interview you;
- ◆ interview the other person(s) concerned;

At an appropriate point in time, the person undertaking the mediation will summarise what they have heard, and then give their decision about the way forward.

If you, as the person bringing the complaint, do not believe that to be just or fair, then you may proceed further up the line of appeal, as in the diagram below.

Step 4: Contact the Principal

Complaints put to the Principal will be treated with respectful consideration. If the complaint is with the Principal, you may contact the Executive Principal and/or the Chairman of the Board.

The principles above in terms of how the matter is treated will continue through either of these processes.

If the complaint is referred to the Principal or the Executive Principal/Chairman of the Board, he or she will have full access to any pertinent information, and reserves the right to obtain confidential advice on the matter.

Step 5: Executive Principal – Right to appeal

If a matter is unable to be resolved or the complainant feels the process has been unjust, the matter may be passed to the Executive Principal and/or the Board of Governors for review. The process and all relevant documentation will be reviewed to ensure that procedural fairness has occurred and the matter has been dealt with based on Biblical principles.

The outcome of a review process by the Executive Principal/Chairperson will be final, and communicated verbally and in writing.

GENERAL COMMUNICATION PROCEDURES

Student Diaries

Each student in Years 5-12 is issued with a student diary to assist with their organisation of homework and assignments/assessment tasks. Notes may be written between teachers and the parents in the diaries. Class or Nurture teachers check diaries regularly and parents are asked to check and sign their child's diary weekly.

Information Meetings and Parent/Teacher Interviews

Information sessions are arranged for each year level usually at the beginning of the year. Parent/Teacher interviews are organised formally after student reports are issued and this usually occurs twice each year.

Newsletters

The Parent Newsletter is sent home every second Friday with the youngest child. It is also available on the portal or maybe emailed upon request.

Parents/Teacher Fellowship Meetings

The PTF meets on the third Wednesday of each month at 7.00pm in the staff room. The Principal and other College executive are usually in attendance at these meetings where they present reports and bring parents up-to-date on current events and directions. This is also an opportunity for parents to ask questions and raise important issues directly with senior leaders in the College.

Making appointments

When parents have an enquiry that they wish to discuss with a staff member it is always preferable to make an appointment. Please do this by phoning the relevant office (Junior, Middle or Senior Schools). If the staff member is available at the time the parent rings it may be possible to discuss the matter by phone. Please avoid "door stop" interviews as staff are often on their way to a lesson or a duty.

MAINTAIN CONFIDENTIALITY ABOUT ANY MATTERS DISCUSSED

In order to preserve the dignity of all involved please keep confidential any problems discussed. Gossip or rumours will only harm relationships and ultimately the College. If you have complaints please use the channels described above.

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ST. PHILIP'S CHRISTIAN COLLEGE Port Stephens

COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE SUMMARISED

