

Date last approved	New Policy
Frequency of reviews	Every year
Next review due	2019
Audience	College Community
Stakeholders	College Executive, College Board

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1. Introduction

1.1. Overview

Portside Christian College recognises that from time to time, complaints will be received from parents or guardians. It is important that these issues are dealt with quickly, respectfully and in a way that reflects the Christian values of the College. This policy outlines principles and guidelines for a positive resolution of concerns or complaints.

1.2. Scope

This policy applies to complaints or grievances against the College as a whole, a specific department, individual member of staff or a student. Generally, grievances which occur between parents are outside the scope of this policy. Staff grievances are dealt with in the *Conflict resolution and grievance policy*.

1.3. Definition of a complaint

A complaint or grievance is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived situation or outcome. The dissatisfaction may be based on a perception that the College has:

- Been at fault
- Failed to do something it should have; or
- Acted unfairly or inappropriately.

1.4. College commitment

Portside Christian College is committed to:

- Outworking the Christ-centred values of the College in promoting respectful relationships.
- Ensuring the College is a safe and fair place in which to work and study.
- Encouraging, wherever possible, the resolution of complaints, if and when they arise, at the College level.
- Supporting the right of parents to have their complaints listened to, taken seriously, in good faith and to be addressed and resolved fairly, reasonably and as quickly as possible.
- Clearly communicating the process for handling complaints to the College Community.
- Complying with all relevant statutory and legal requirements. These include, but are not limited to, privacy laws, anti-discrimination and vilification laws, child protection laws and Family Court orders.
- Training staff to deal with complaints in accordance with the principles, guidelines and processes outlined in this policy and procedure.
- Providing adequate support for parents (and other community members), students and staff during the process of resolving complaints.
- Ensuring that no prejudice will be attached to a complainant or those involved in resolving the grievance.

Note: Neither the Minister for Education and Child Development nor the Department for Education and Child Development has any power to directly intervene in any complaints relating to the operations of a non-government school.

2. Making a Complaint

2.1. Guiding principles

- Parents are entitled to lodge a bona fide complaint with the School. This means that complaints should be lodged in good faith and without frivolous, malicious or vexatious intent.
- All members of the College Community are expected to behave in a way which reflects the Christ-centred values of the College. Romans 12: 9-18, in particular, verse 18, "...do your best to live at peace with everyone."
- Conflict resolution principles include:
 - Separate the person and the problem
 - Look for a well-considered solution
 - Stay calm and in control
 - Only deal with facts and ensure that all parties have access to relevant information

- Forgive rather than judge - Ephesians 4:32 says “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you”
- All parties should participate fully in the resolution process to achieve an outcome which is realistic and reasonable.
- The reasons for decisions should be clearly communicated to all parties.
- Complaints that are well handled contribute to quality improvement of services provided at the College.

2.2. Complaint resolution process

- Parents with a grievance must make an appointment to discuss the matter with the relevant staff member/s in person or via telephone call.
- Parents who have a grievance with a student must not approach the student. This is a breach of Child Protection Policy.
- The safety and wellbeing of staff and students must be ensured. An interview may be terminated if necessary.
- Parents are expected to only discuss the issue with the relevant staff members.
- Parents are expected to respect confidentiality with regards to the sharing of information with the College Community or others.
- Some requests for action may be dealt with immediately. Other complaints may need to follow due process by being referred to other staff, to the Principal, the Board or relevant authorities.
- As a final option, if agreement cannot be reached, the enrolment contract may be concluded.
- The Principal will be involved in any complaint which involves the Police, child protection authorities or illegal activity.

Complaints which are not resolved may be referred to legal or other agencies or authorities.

Refer to:

- Appendix A – Complaints procedure flowchart - Parents

3. Investigating complaints

3.1. Legal obligations

Legal obligations relating to child abuse may limit the College’s ability to undertake a comprehensive investigation. This particularly applies to the mandatory reporting requirements outlined in the *Children’s Protection Act (SA) 1993*.

Involvement by police in some investigations may also limit the nature and scope of College investigations.

The College will always cooperate fully with Police or other government investigations.

3.2. Confidentiality

Portside Christian College will treat complaints with respect, discretion and sensitivity. However, it is acknowledged that any communication with the College, or any documents supplied to the College, cannot be assumed to be treated confidentially. Information regarding the matter may have to be disclosed to relevant staff, the College Board, advisors or authorities, as necessary.

Statements, including those made by witnesses, may be required in legal proceedings.

The College may not be able to resolve a grievance in cases where the complainant wishes to remain anonymous.

3.3. Keeping records

A record of each investigated complaint will be made. As the course of investigations and outcomes may need to be produced in legal proceedings, these documents will be kept securely and confidentially. The record should contain clear and accurate notes of conversations with parents, students and staff. Refer to *Appendix C – Complaint record form*.

Included in the record will be the following details:

- Date when issue was first raised
- Name of parent(s)
- Name of student(s)
- Detailed statement of concern/complaint including:
 - Nature of complaint
 - Identity of person(s) involved
 - Time of allegation
- Description of the procedures applied and the time frame for reporting on the outcomes of any investigation
- Statement of outcomes
- Names of staff member(s) handling complaint

Any relevant insurance notification or documentation will be completed by the Business Manager or Principal.

4. Role of AISSA

The Association of Independent Schools South Australia (AISSA) can assist member schools by:

- Providing advice on handling specific complaints;
- Providing legal advice if required; and
- Referring the College to other sources of assistance or advice as required

AISSA can be contacted for further information on their services.

5. Staff training

As most staff will at some point be involved in handling a grievance, it is therefore appropriate that staff receive professional learning in relation to resolving complaints, including on this policy and procedures.

6. Related documents

The following documents should be read in conjunction with this policy:

- Privacy policy

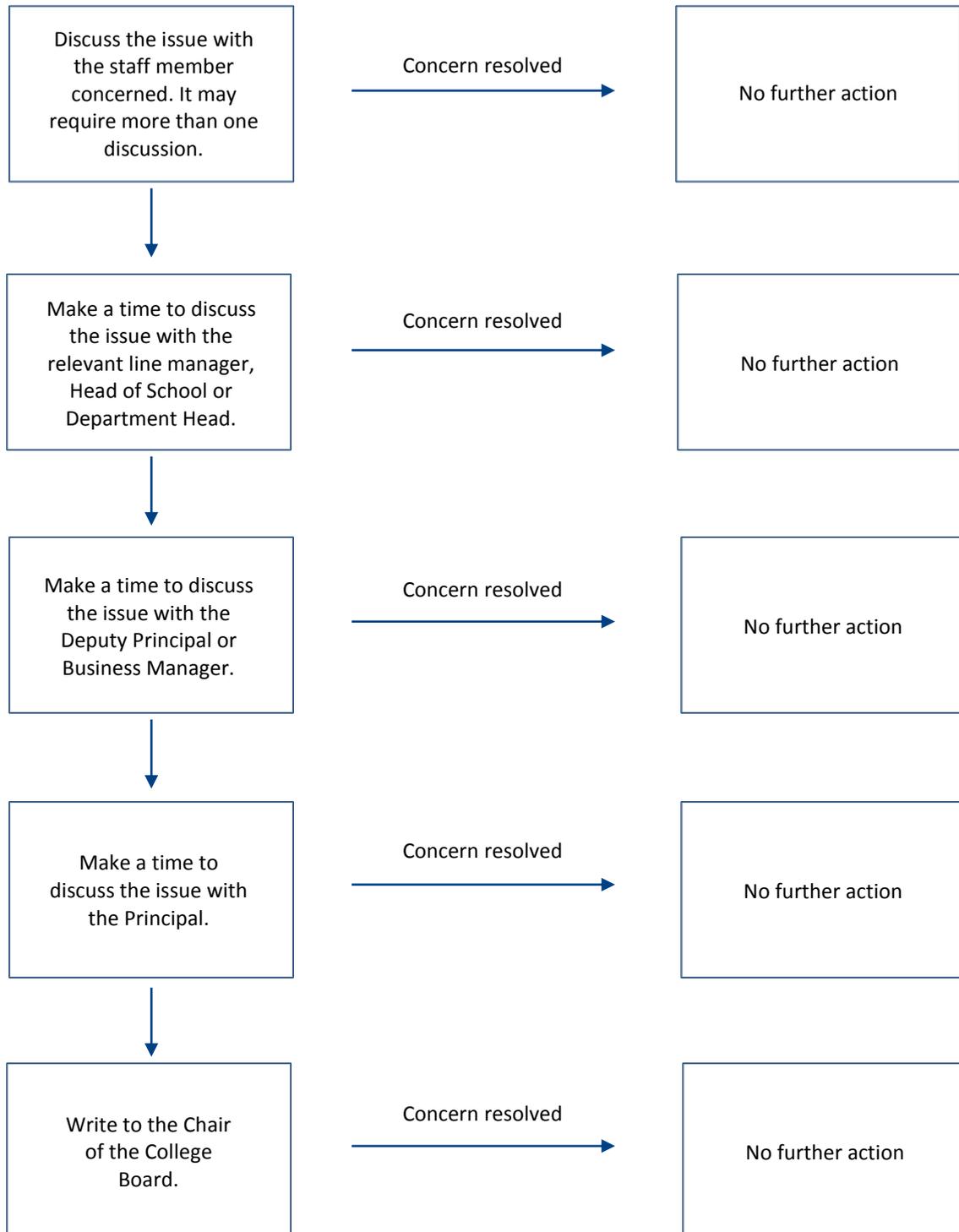
7. References

Association of Independent Schools of SA, *Handling complaints PDF*, 2015.

Appendix A – Complaints procedure flow chart – Parents

The parent or volunteer making a complaint should take time to gather any relevant facts and establish what they wish to achieve. The next step is to make a suitable time to discuss the issue with the relevant staff member, either by telephone or in person.

The Principal will be involved in any complaint which involves the Police, child protection authorities or illegal activity.



Complaints which are not resolved may be referred to legal or other agencies or authorities.