

INTERNATIONAL CHINESE SCHOOL



COMPLAINTS & GRIEVANCE POLICY

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RATIONALE

The School can only claim authentic ownership of a Christian worldview if it is lived out through the shared relationships across the school community.

Our relational nature reflects the character of the One whose image we bear. Distorted by the fall, the relationships that we were created to enjoy with God and each other, have been corrupted. Christ is ever present and active in redeeming and restoring relationship to His original intent. The school is called to partner with him in his redemptive purposes.

The very need for a Grievance Policy and Procedures evidences this corruption of God's good creational intent for relationship. When the distortion of God's good intent manifests in conflict, it is appropriate for the Christian school to seek restoration in light of the Bible. A proper gospel understanding of human relationships enables conflict and associated grievances to be addressed in a God-honouring way.

Restoration as opposed to mediation

Sprouting from the seed of postmodernity, since the early 1980's, mediation method has grown in prominence as a major strategy in the field of conflict resolution. Mediation seeks to have the dispute settlement process mirror the values the parties wish to promote among themselves. Contrary to Christian worldview, mediation has little concern for truth, instead focusing on solving problems through parties coming to agreement on a solution they can live with. Rather than address the root cause of the conflict, mediation seeks an expedient solution that at best empowers tolerance that enables relationships to function.

Truth is essential to redemptive and restorative processes. The humanistic worldview of this present age views truth as relative, having its roots in human experience and ideas. This is opposed to the acknowledgment of a transcendent creator God who has a right to rule, whose heart is for redemption and restoration of relationships, and who revealed truth through the person of his son, Jesus (John 14:6).

Truth should always be tempered with love. Above all Christ desires unity, oneness among His followers.

"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called." (Ephesians 4:2-4)

DEFINITION

Grievance:

A grievance may exist when a member of the school community has a complaint against a person or the school or a group of persons within the school concerning an action taken, a policy, a process, structures, or some other matter that, for whatever reason, has not been addressed or, in the view of the complainant, has not been addressed.

POLICY

This policy sets out a broad framework for how the School is to respond where students, parents, contractors, local residents, visitors and others express a grievance.

The school seeks to resolve grievances through the biblical processes set out in Matthew 18. This process brings openness and truth to the table, tempered by Christ's call to love and preserve unity as much as you on your part can do (Ephesians 4:2-3). Rather than resorting to mediation as the first port of call, aggrieved parties are expected to:

1. Talk first with the person with whom you have a problem (Matthew 18:15).
2. If you can't resolve the problem involve a third party (Matthew 18:16). It is appropriate if this matter involves a teacher that their direct supervisor be involved at this point.
3. Only refer the matter to Principal when the prior steps have been tried (Matthew 18:17).

All members of staff have responsibility for receiving grievances, treating them seriously and dealing with them promptly and courteously.

Grievances will be dealt with in terms of their potential seriousness, rather than on the basis of the category of person who is making the grievance. This means that students or community members should be treated on similar terms.

Staff members will use professional judgment and balanced consideration of the rights and needs of the parties involved.

Where appropriate, a key focus of the implementation of this guideline is to be on making changes to existing procedures and practices to prevent any recurrence of problems.

If a grievance or allegation is about a person's behaviour and concerns the protection of children and young people or any other behaviour which, if substantiated, could amount to a crime, then the Principal is to be notified immediately. Such matters are subject to guidelines and procedures other than these. (refer to Child Protection Policy)

In general, the Principal is ultimately responsible for resolving grievances, but may designate this responsibility to another member of staff who has not been involved, to investigate, as appropriate.

PROCEDURES

Procedural fairness is of paramount importance when investigating a grievance (refer Procedural Fairness Policy). The respondent to a grievance should have the opportunity, where there may be detriment arising from the resolution of that grievance, to have their case heard by an impartial decision maker.

A person who has a grievance is to be encouraged to approach the relevant member of staff to seek to address the concern promptly and directly. Attempts should be made to resolve grievances informally, between those immediately concerned.

Each party needs to be prepared to recognise that a problem exists. Each party needs to be prepared to be conciliatory as resolution may require compromise on each side. It is recognised, however, that compromise will not always be possible, nor necessarily desirable.

If a grievance is related to the Principal, or a member of the School Board, the issue should be directed to Chair of the School Board.

In cases where allegations are made, reasonable steps should be taken to protect the interests of both the complainant and any respondent (for example, a member of staff about whom a grievance is being made) by not disclosing their identity or the details of their information, except to those with a reasonable need to know.

Both the person voicing a grievance or allegation and the respondent to a grievance have the opportunity, where they are not happy with the resolution of that grievance, to be heard by the Principal and to present evidence and submissions, as appropriate.

Record keeping

Even small issues, can over time grow into major source of dissatisfaction and conflict.

Staff are required to keep diary notes on all conversations where a parent raises a particular concern, no matter how small that concern may seem. The diary note should make reference to:

- Date and time of conversation/interview with parent.
- Name of parent and child.
- Outline of concern.
- Other parties involved.
- Promised action on the part of the school.

This note should be stored electronically on the school's management database.

The Principal will maintain in his own personal files a confidential record of all significant grievances dealt with.

The outcome of grievances dealt with may also be considered to feed into the school's quality improvement processes.

Irresolvable grievances

In the event that an issue is raised with the Principal and in the view of the complainant is not satisfactorily resolved, it would be appropriate for that person to review their continuation as a member of the school community.

Privacy

Grievances should not be discussed with other people who are not directly concerned with process as set out above. The Body of Christ, which is in effect Christ himself, is hurt when people gossip about problems or talk to others about issues that they do not need to know about. Such gossip can hamper ongoing resolution of issues. Members of the School community are called to be patient, humble, forgiving and keeping unity as much as they can.

Confidentiality

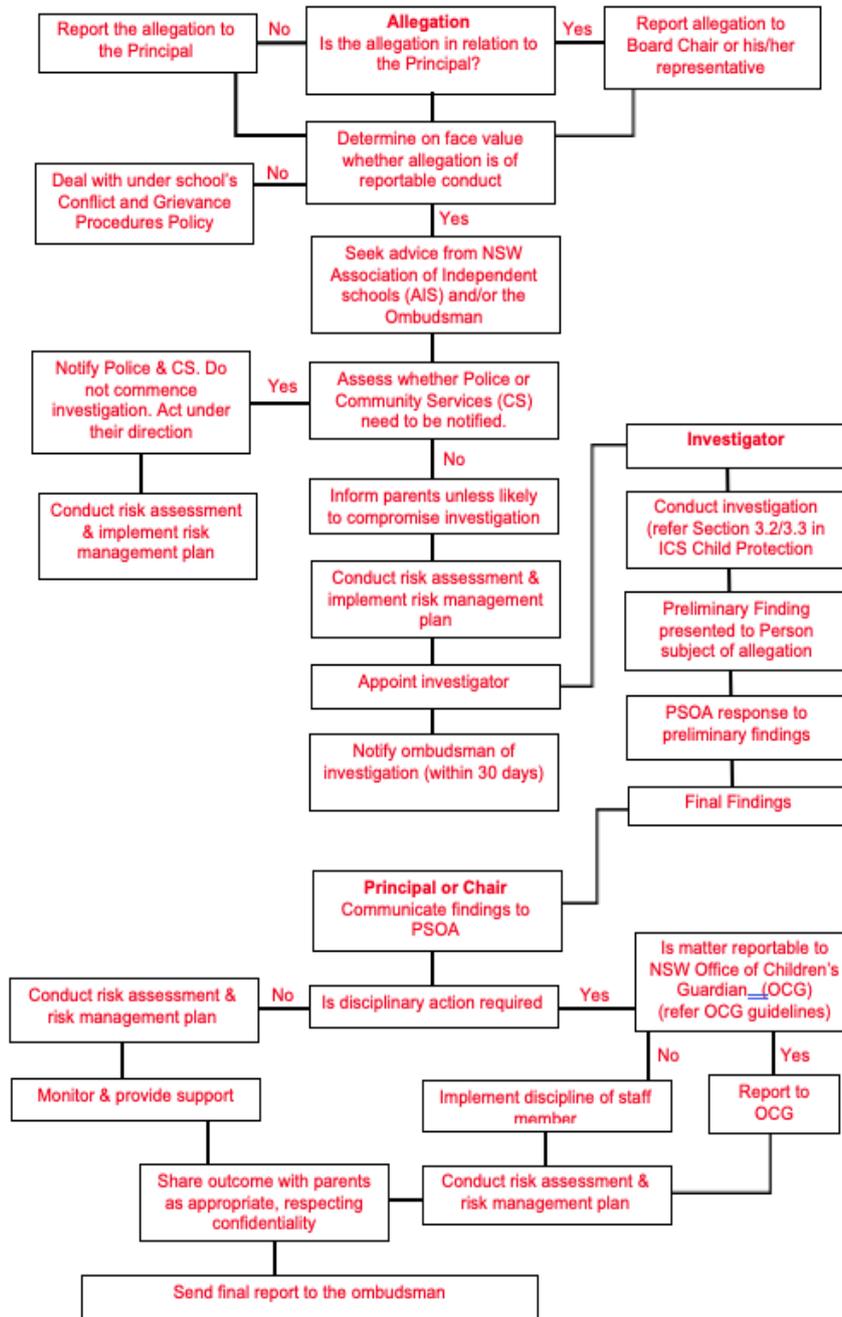
Individual parties, as well as the school, have a right to confidentiality in relation to issues and procedures related to the resolution process. At times this may result in decisions being made for reasons that cannot be fully explained because of the need to maintain confidentiality. While it is intended that a response will generally be made to matters raised, this will not usually include details of any discussion and may consist only of acknowledgment that the issue has been raised and/or dealt with.

COMPLAINTS OR ALLEGATIONS REGARDING STAFF MISCONDUCT OR REPORTABLE CONDUCT

The Child Protection legislation [*Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW)*] demands clear procedures in relation to complaints or allegations regarding staff misconduct or reportable conduct. For such complaints or allegations please refer to the ICS Child Protection Policy which sets clear guidelines for stakeholders in the School.

The school's complaint handling procedures regarding allegations of staff misconduct or reportable conduct has been reproduced below to outline the process should a parent or other community member has an allegation of staff misconduct or reportable conduct.

What happens when an allegation of reportable conduct is made?



(Reference: ICS Child Protection Policy, p 18.)

Peter Jamieson
Principal
March 2019