

# VCCP6.4 Grievance/Complaint Handling Policy

## A Child Safe School

### 1. RATIONALE

As Christians we are exhorted in Ephesians 4 to *'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'*. Jesus taught: *"If a brother or sister sins, go and point out the fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'* *If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector"*. (Matthew 18:15-17)

Christians are called upon to resolve disagreements amongst themselves and to *'live in harmony with one another'* (Romans 12:14)

Therefore, if a person has a concern about, or complaint against another member of the College community, the first step is to take it to the person directly and deal with it in a Christ-like manner. If this is not possible, or if it is felt that the grievance is of a more serious nature, the college Principal should be advised.

Verity Christian College adheres to **procedural fairness**. **Procedural fairness** is a basic right of all when dealing with authorities. **Procedural fairness** refers to what are sometimes described as the 'hearing rule' and the right to an 'unbiased decision'.

### 2. SCOPE

All staff will be made aware of this policy as part of their induction and annual professional development. It is intended that the College Staff and Principal are bound by this policy. Any other parties such as parents and students will have the expectation of abiding by this policy.

Students and parents will also be made aware of this policy via the college's website, Newsletter, Chapel talks and parent meetings.

### 3. RELATED POLICIES / DOCUMENTS

- **VCCP2.01 - Anti-Bullying (Staff) Policy**
- **VCCP6.02 - Anti-Bullying (Student) Policy**
- **VCCP6.7 - Counselling Services Policy**
- **VCCP6.71 - Chaplaincy Policy**
- **VCCP9.3 - Communication Policy**
- **VCCP9.31 - Privacy Policy**

### 4. LEGISLATION / REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

- **Fair Work Act 2009**
- **A Guide to the Child Safe Standards (Office of the Children's Guardian)**

### 5. DEFINITIONS

**Grievance:** a real or imagined wrong or other cause for complaint or protest, especially unfair treatment or an official statement of a complaint over something believed to be wrong or unfair.

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SECTION: 6 - Safe and Supportive Environment

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## 6. PROCEDURES

### 6.1. General Principles

In an effort to live in accord with the biblical pattern of dealing with disputes, the following will apply in the College community:

- A great deal of formal and informal communication occurs within the College community as set out in **VCCP9.3 - Communication Policy** and it is not the intention of the College to restrict the relationships that are an important part of the life of the College. In order to minimise the potential for harm to the College and the members of the College community, the principles set out in Matthew 18 should be followed, not in a legalistic way but as a model given by Christ Himself for us to follow.
- Where a grievance is in relation to an incident of bullying, sexual harassment or discrimination then the procedures for dealing with these issues are set out in **VCCP2.01 - Anti-Bullying (Staff) Policy** and **VCCP6.02 - Anti-Bullying (Student) Policy**.
- The process of this grievance procedure is confidential and any complaints are a matter between the parties concerned and those directly involved in the complaints handling process in accordance with **VCCP9.31 - Privacy Policy**.
- The College will provide, where necessary, suitably trained and competent persons such as translators, College Chaplain and/or Christian Counsellor to facilitate a resolution as outlined in **VCCP6.7 - Counselling Services Policy** and **VCCP6.71 - Chaplaincy Policy**.

The College will seek to address and resolve relevant College-related grievances, complaints and appeals by staff, students and parents in a gracious, God-honouring and timely manner.

In dealing with grievances the following will be considered:

- Take time to step back and reflect upon the situation. Be prayerful at all stages of the process and look for a win-win solution.
- Grievances will be treated seriously and sensitively, having due regard to **procedural fairness**, confidentiality and privacy.
- Grievances will be handled without delay and directly with the people involved. For these reasons persons with concerns should raise them as early as possible.
- Wherever possible, grievances will be resolved by a process of discussion, co-operation and conciliation. The aim is to reach an acceptable outcome which restores and maintains good relationships.
- Support can be provided to the person bringing the grievance and to the person against whom the grievance is made.
- No person should be victimised because they raise a complaint or are associated with a grievance.
- All parties are expected to participate in the grievance procedure in good faith.

### 6.2 Formal Procedures

The following outline the preferred procedural pathways in order to secure a result that is God honouring and restores and builds relationships within the College community. At every stage of the process the goal must be to resolve the issue seeking a win-win result through repentance, forgiveness and restoration.

6.2.1.a. Parent Grievance

6.2.1.b. Special Circumstances – Parental Concerns for the Safety and/or general Welfare of a child/children

6.2.1.c Concerns relating to Staff misconduct

6.2.2. Student Grievance

6.2.3. Staff Grievance

6.2.4. Grievance against a Parent

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### 6.2.5 Grievance against the Principal

#### 6.2.1 a Parent Grievance

1. Where there is a concern, unresolved issue or complaint then review the facts of the situation. Reflect upon these and if it is necessary to take it further then speak directly with the teacher concerned to discuss the issue. Aim for a resolution that includes forgiveness and look to communicate ongoing progress – if applicable.
2. If the issue is not resolved request a meeting with the College Principal to discuss the issue. All parties are to prepare a written report outlining issue/s and any actions taken to date.
3. If the issue is not resolved then request another meeting with the Principal and the College Chaplain to discuss the issue.
4. If the issue is not resolved a copy of the written report is to be provided to the College Board outlining the issue and any actions taken to date. The Board will consider the actions taken to date and investigate as necessary through consultation with others to determine the next course of action. The Principal will advise the aggrieved parent of the Board's decision and offer help to action the decision where appropriate.
5. If the issue is not resolved then the aggrieved party has the right to seek advice from a legal representative.

#### 6.2.1. b Special Circumstances – Parental Concerns for the Safety and/or general Welfare of a child/children

A parent/ or caregiver may develop a concern for the safety and/or general welfare of a student of the College (or, indeed, a child from within the community). Parents and caregivers are encouraged to act upon such concerns so as to ensure that the child's needs are addressed.

Parents/caregivers are encouraged to take one of the following actions:

- 1) If the child is a student of the College, arrange a meeting with the Principal or make contact by telephone, to advise him/her of those concerns. As a mandatory reporter, the Principal will notify the relevant authority of those concerns so that appropriate responses can be "triggered". The Principal will advise the parent when such contact has been made and will provide the concerned parent with the case number. This will occur within 5 days of the Principal being notified.

If the Principal is unavailable, or if the concern may involve the Principal, the concerned parent should notify the School Chaplain, or the Chairperson of the school Board via telephone.

Concerned adults can be assured that the appropriate level of confidentiality will be maintained at all times.

- 2) If matters relate to a child who is not a member of the school, then the concerned parent could ring the College Principal for general advice or make contact directly with:
  - The Police via '000' if the child is in imminent danger or
  - contact the Child Protection Helpline on 132111 to make a report.

Concerned adults are discouraged from making any direct contact with the parents/caregivers of the child for which they have concerns.

#### 6.2.1.c Concerns Relating to Staff Misconduct:

If a parent/caregiver develops a concern that a member of the College staff has, in some way, been acting inappropriately towards students, then that parent is encouraged to raise that grievance/concern with the College Principal as soon as possible.

Parents are discouraged from conducting their own investigation into such matters as this would create undue stress if the allegations turn out to be false, or could lead to the "tainting" of evidence, when an investigation proceeds into the concerns.

However, Parents/caregivers/community members can also lodge their concerns with the relevant authorities via the **Child Protection Hotline. (132111)**

As a mandatory reporter, the Principal will lodge the concern with the relevant authority and will also begin an on-site investigation into the matters (known as Reportable Conduct.).

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The Principal will provide any relevant/appropriate feedback to the Parent within a few days.

If the concern is about the Principal, then it should be raised with the Chairperson of the School Board –Ps Steven Rand (02 6964 9953), who will initiate the investigative process.

### **At the conclusion of the agency investigation:**

Once the head of entity is satisfied that the investigation has been concluded, they must, as soon as practicable, provide the Office of the Children’s Guardian with an Entity Report that includes:

- in relation to a reportable allegation— information about the facts and circumstances of the reportable allegation, the findings the head of the relevant entity has made about the reportable allegation and an analysis of the evidence and the rationale for the findings,
- in relation to a conviction considered to be a reportable conviction— information about the conviction considered to be a reportable conviction, and the determination the head of the relevant entity has made about the conviction (including whether the head of the relevant entity has determined the conviction is a reportable conviction),
- a copy of any written submission made by the employee,
- information about what action has been, or will be, taken in relation to the reportable allegation or conviction considered to be a reportable conviction, including the following—
  - remedial or disciplinary action in relation to the employee,
  - whether information about the matter has been referred to a different entity,
  - changes to systems or policies,
  - if no further action is to be taken—that no further action is to be taken,
- the reasons for the action taken, including taking no further action; and
- any copies of documents in the relevant entity’s possession that are relevant to the report, including transcripts of interviews and copies of evidence.

### **6.2.2 Student Grievance**

**Students are encouraged to raise concerns that may cause them to feel uncomfortable or undervalued.**

**Students will be advised of their rights to express a grievance if they feel they need to.**

1. Where there is a concern, unresolved issue or complaint then check all the facts. Reflect upon these and if it is necessary to take it further then encourage students to speak with their parents or Classroom teacher or one of the staff members listed below to discuss the issue.
  - School Chaplain: Ps Theresa Mataora
  - Supervisor of Girls: Mrs Roanne Rizzeri
  - Pastor Steve Rand, Pastor Maika Ravitu or Pastor Rodney Bortolin
  - Business Manager: Mrs Margo Stone
  - Secondary Co-ordinator Mrs Natasha Greig
  - Primary Co-ordinator Mrs Petra Badenhorst

Aim for a resolution such as forgiveness and look to communicate ongoing progress – if applicable.

2. If the issue is not resolved then parents should request a formal meeting with the Classroom teacher to discuss the issue. All parties are to prepare a written report outlining issue/s and any actions taken to date.
3. If the issue is not resolved parents and student should request a meeting with the College Chaplain to discuss the issue.
4. If the issue is not resolved then request a meeting with Principal to discuss the issue.
5. If the issue is not resolved a copy of the written report is to be provided to the College Board outlining the issue

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and any actions taken to date. The Board will consider the actions taken to date and investigate as necessary through consultation with others to determine the next course of action. The Principal will advise the student and their parents of the Board's decision and offer help to action the decision where appropriate.

6. If the issue is not resolved then the student has the right to seek advice from a legal representative.
7. Students have the right to expect to:
  - Be heard
  - To receive a response
  - Have their grievance investigated
  - Not feel belittled, but valued
  - To receive a response which is sincere and helpful.

### 6.2.3 Staff Grievance

1. Where there is a concern, unresolved issue or complaint then check all the facts. Reflect upon these and if it is necessary to take it further then arrange a meeting with the staff member to discuss the issue. Aim for a resolution and look to communicate ongoing progress – if applicable.
2. If the issue is not resolved request a meeting with the College Chaplain to discuss the issue. All parties are to prepare a written report outlining issue/s and any actions taken to date.
3. If the issue is not resolved request meeting with Principal to discuss the issue.
4. If the issue is not resolved the Principal, College Chaplain and staff member with the grievance is to provide a written report to the College Board outlining issue and any actions taken to date. The Board will consider the actions taken to date and investigate as necessary through consultation with others to determine the next course of action. The Principal will advise the staff member of the Board's decision and offer help to action the decision where appropriate.
5. If the issue is not resolved then the staff members has the right to seek advice from the **Fair Work Commission** or a legal representative.

### 6.2.4 Grievance against a Parent

1. Where a conversation between a parent and a staff member is considered to be threatening, offensive, abusive or inappropriate the staff member is to terminate the conversation immediately. If it is possible seek clarification of the conversation from any witnesses. If it is appropriate after a short 'cooling off' period seek to make contact with the parent and attempt to clear the matter.
2. If the issue is not resolved or the matter has been an ongoing occurrence then speak to the Principal about the matter and at the Principal's discretion, the parent is contacted either by phone or by letter regarding the incident of concern. The parent is reminded of the College's Grievance Policy and of its commitment to ensuring a safe work place for all employees and students.
3. If the issue is not resolved then a meeting should be arranged between the parties involved including the Principal and College Chaplain.
4. If the issue is not resolved a copy of the written report is to be provided to the College Board outlining issue and any actions taken to date. The Board will consider the actions taken to date and investigate as necessary through consultation with others to determine the next course of action. The Principal will advise the staff member of the Board's decision and offer help to action the decision where appropriate.
5. If the issue is not resolved then the staff members has the right to seek advice from a legal representative.

### 6.2.5 Grievance against the Principal

In certain circumstances a grievance may develop between one of the previously identified stakeholder groups and the Principal of the College. If the concern or issue cannot be resolved between the parties then the party should refer the matter in writing to the Chairperson of the College Board. The Chairperson will then consider the matter and any actions taken to date. The Chairperson will advise the College Board and the Principal of the College of the

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next course of action to be taken and of any decisions regarding resolution of the matter.

<b>Date Reviewed/Amended</b>	<b>Who</b>
July 2017	David Fox
2019	David Fox
2021	Steve Rand
Oct 2022	David Fox
Feb 2023	David Fox