

OLIVET CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

S014 COMPLAINTS & GRIEVANCES POLICY PAGE 1/6

Policy number	S014	Last Approved by Executive	August 2021
Drafted by	Mary-Anne Revell	Scheduled review date	August 2024
Responsible person	Steven Nicholas		

Aim

Our community in the College comprises students, parents, and staff. The relationships are: students / students, students / parent, student / staff, parent / parent, parent / staff and staff / staff. It is inevitable that disagreements will arise from time to time in these relationships. The following is the procedure to be followed based on Jesus' teaching in Matthew 18:

Step one: "Talk to the other person".

An example might be a grievance between a parent and a teacher. The first step is for the parent to speak to the teacher privately (or parent to parent or teacher to teacher etc).

In the case of a student / teacher complaint it would be most appropriate for the child's parents to be involved on their behalf.

Step two: "Take someone else with you".

If the person still has not listened in step one, then take along another person. This could be another parent, another staff member or it could be the Principal. This will be a three-way conversation to air the grievance. If step three is to eventuate then the Principal must be involved.

Note step 1 must be completed first.

Step Three: "Take it to the Executive".

In the context of the College, the next step is to take the grievance to the Executive. This might be a letter of complaint but the Executive will probably require you and the person you have a complaint against to meet with them and present the grievance.

The Principal or Executive will refer a matter back to a person making a complaint if the first two steps have not been carried out. However, there are possible circumstances where a matter is so serious or urgent that steps one and or two could be bypassed.

Notes:

1. The command of Jesus in Matthew 18 not only requires a person to first talk to the other person they have a complaint against, it also strongly implies that the person should listen.
2. Forgiveness in scripture means to forget that the other person ever caused the grievance. It is not simply reaching an understanding of another person's point of view, as helpful as that may be. It is our sinful nature that will continue to make us suspicious and lacking in trust of another person after we have forgiven them. Forgiveness is not at all easy. It is the message of the gospel that God forgives us if we accept Jesus as Lord. It is also this fundamental teaching of Jesus which enables people to live in peace and harmony with one another.

Jesus not only tells us to live in peace and harmony, he tells us how to do it.

It is fairly normal that people from time to time will have disagreements and conflict with one another. Conflict can be destructive or creative depending on how we handle it.

Some of the destructive ways are to spread gossip and slander about the other person and it is interesting that the bible puts these in the same category as those who commit adultery and fornication. Another destructive way is to do nothing and this often leaves a festering wound which eventually erupts.

Aim

Christians are called to love one another and to live at peace with one another. We are called to "be diligent to preserve the unity of the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). We need to develop effective processes which will resolve disputes and bring about reconciliation, keeping in mind that we are still plagued by our sinful natures. There are certain Principles in the Bible which should be recognised and these form the basis of the reconciliation process:

1. Christians are to actively seek reconciliation with one another when disputes of any Nature arise between them. (Matthew 5:23-;6:9-15;18:15-22)
2. Christians are to resolve their disputes in the context of Christian community. (Matthew 18:15-22;1 Corinthians 12:25-27; Ephesians 4:15-16)
3. Christians are firmly directed not to use the secular courts to resolve disputes between themselves. (Luke 12:57-59;1 Corinthians 6:1-8)
4. Christians are to resolve disputes without consideration or calculation of revenge (Romans 12:17- 21)
5. Reconciliation will involve repentance and forgiveness and sometimes restitution. (Luke 17:3-4; Romans 13:8)

Some brief summaries of the above bible passages are:

We need to be right with our brother before being right with God.

If one person is out of harmony, then it affects the whole community.

Speaking the truth in love (solving a grievance by ignoring it is not a solution);

In humility consider others better than yourselves.

God says that vengeance is his to repay, not ours.

Owe no man anything other than love.

Implementation

“If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents forgive him. If he sins against you seven times in a day and he comes back seven times and repents, forgive him.”

“If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he 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 he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you a pagan or tax collector.”

Peter goes to Jesus: “How many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?” The reply from Jesus was..... Not seven times but seventy-seven times”.

Dealing with Complaints

When a complaint is received, the person to whom the complaint is addressed will:

- Inform the complainant of the Complaints and Grievances Policy
- Encourage the complainant to attempt to resolve the complaint with the person directly, or to submit Their complaint in writing to make the terms or basis of any complaint as clear as possible
- Comply with the Privacy Policy in regard to all meetings and discussions in relation to a complaint.

Assessment of the complaint

The Executive will organise a meeting as soon as possible to assess the complaint/grievance and commence investigation procedures. If further clarification is required, the Principal will seek verbal assistance from ISV legal staff to confirm we are taking the appropriate action.

A written report needs to include:

- Details of the event or incident
- The name of the person who initially made the complaint
- If relevant, the name of the child concerned and the condition of the child, including a medical or incident report (where relevant)
- Any other relevant information

Complaints and grievances responsibilities and procedures

The responsibilities and procedures required of the Executive in the event of a complaint include:

1. Any member of the Executive who is personally involved in the complaint must stand aside from the investigation and subsequent processes
2. Meet to deal with the complaint/grievance as soon as possible
3. Consider the nature and the details of the complaint/grievance
4. Identify which policies (if any) the complaint/grievance involves
5. Inform the committee if their involvement is required under other centre policies or the centre's constitution
6. Maintain appropriate records of the information and data collected, including minutes of meetings, incident reports and copies of relevant documentation relating to the complaint/grievance
7. Respect the confidential nature of information relating to the complaint/grievance. The committee and the subcommittee will handle any complaint/grievance in a discrete and professional manner. All written information relating to complaints/grievances will be stored securely in compliance with the Privacy policy of the centre.

Investigating the complaint/grievance and gathering relevant information

When investigating the complaint/grievance and gathering relevant information, the Executive will:

Meet with individual witnesses, and give right of reply to the person against whom the allegations are made in relation to any accusation or information relating to an alleged incident

Offer the complainant the opportunity of meeting with the Executive to discuss the complaint and provide additional information where relevant

- Nominate a member to inform the complainant of the procedures for dealing with the complaint/grievance if the complainant does not take up the opportunity to attend a meeting
- Document the time, date and details of conversations and follow up with a letter outlining information discussed

Review relevant information and documents

Obtain any other relevant information or documentation that will assist in trying to resolve the complaint/grievance

Seek advice, where appropriate, from individuals and organisations that may be able to assist in resolving the complaint/grievance (any cost in seeking advice will require prior approval by the committee).

Following the investigation

Once the investigation of the complaint/grievance is complete, the Executive will:

1. Endeavour to resolve the complaint/grievance by mutual agreement of the parties involved
2. Meet to discuss the information gathered and determine further action
3. Seek advice and information from organisations with relevant expertise in relation to the nature of the complaint/grievance
4. Ensure that any recommendations or actions are in accordance with relevant legislation and funding requirements
5. Report outcomes that may include relevant information gained in investigations and consultations and, where required, and discuss any recommendations for consideration by the Executive

The Executive will review the reports and recommendations and will be responsible for making decisions on the action to be taken (if any), including relevant review mechanisms.

1. Advise the complainant and other relevant parties of any decisions the committee has made relating to the complaint/grievance
2. Follow up to ensure the parties involved are satisfied with the outcome and monitor progress on recommendations (if any) made.

Grievance Procedures for Schools: Families and Students

Procedures

Handling complaints:

- Always act promptly to investigate a complaint
- Listen carefully to the complainant. Give them a chance to tell their story
- Keep an open mind
- Discuss the issues with the complainant in a calm and reasonable way
- Make sure that they are given a copy of the school's Grievance Procedures and discuss the steps that can and should be taken
- Be clear in your own mind about the appropriateness of your own involvement eg. Is this something that should be handed on to the Principal?
- If this is a complaint that you should handle, make sure that you know (or if you don't can find out about) school policies and procedures related to the issue
- Clearly explain to the complainant the actions that you will take to follow-up on the complaint
- Complaints should only be discussed by those responsible for handling them. They should
- NEVER be the subject of casual conversation or gossip•Keep a record of all the relevant details
- It is a policy of the school that anonymous complaints will not be acted upon.

Keeping Records of Complaints

- It is important that adequate records of complaints, eg. In a school complaints log, are kept for the following reasons:
- So that subsequent enquiries and/or concerns can be located within their proper context ie. In the 'big picture'
- So that complaints can be tracked through the stages of action to resolution
- So that patterns of complaints can lead to improvement in policies, operations and processes
- So that accurate information is available to those directly involved in investigating the issues and exploring solutions.

What Should Be Recorded?

- Notes of meetings, interviews, telephone calls, written documents such as letters, faxes, emails etc
- All records should be dated and signed

An exception to the record rule:

Any oral or written communications gathered in a mediation process are strictly confidential to the parties involved. This information should not be made available to any other person without the specific permission of those parties. This confidentiality guarantee does not apply where there are threats of physical violence or where child abuse is suspected or reported.

APPENDIX 1

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES FOR FAMILIES

The relationship between the home and the school is a very important part of ensuring that children are happy, secure and open to learning. Parents and teachers need to work closely together to provide the best educational opportunities for children. We encourage you to discuss your child's progress with his/her teacher and to let the teacher know if you have any concerns so the school can work with you to resolve these as promptly and effectively as possible. What to do if you have a problem:

- Try to identify the problem clearly before contacting the school. If there is more than one problem, list them to ensure that the extent of the problem is clear to the school.
- Decide whether the problem is a concern, enquiry or complaint. This will help in finding a solution.
- Make an appointment to meet with your child's class teacher. The best way to do this is to contact the school office to arrange a mutually convenient time for a telephone call or meeting.
- If you do not feel after your meeting that the matter has been resolved or if you have a complaint about the teacher or another staff member, make arrangements to meet with the Assistance Principal.
- Try to stay calm when discussing your concern. Even if you don't feel it, being calm will help you get your concerns across more clearly than if you are upset or angry. It may help to take someone with you.
- Remember, the staff are committed to resolving any issues that parents might have regarding their children and will discuss with you actions that might be taken in regard to your concern.
- If you still do not feel that the matter has been resolved or if your complaint is about a very serious matter, send your complaint in writing to the Principal.
- After your complaint has been dealt with by the School Principal, if you are still not satisfied with the outcome, you should then send your complaint in writing to the Education Consultant for your school.
- If the matter has still not been resolved, notify the Director of Catholic Education stating your concerns in writing. If no resolution has been achieved, the Director will arbitrate after thorough examination of the grievance and related issues.
- If matters still remain unresolved you have the right to seek arbitration through the courts, ombudsman, legal representation and other government commissions such as Human Rights Commission etc. These might entail some financial cost to you.

When you make a complaint:

- If a complaint is made against a person, that person will be informed of the nature and content of the complaint and will have the right to respond.
- Discussions of complaints are confidential.
- Complaints may be made verbally or in writing.
- All complaints, the actions taken to resolve them and outcomes of those actions will be fully documented.
- A person who has made a complaint may withdraw it at any time. If the complaint is in writing, the withdrawal should also be in writing.
- No one will be victimised as a result of taking out a formal grievance.
- At the formal stage, a person who has made a complaint has the right to be represented and supported by another person eg. A friend or other person of his/her choice as a support person.
- A process of mediation is an option at any stage of the process.

APPENDIX 2

INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

It is important that everyone feels happy and safe at school so that the best learning can take place.

Everyone, staff and students, need to work closely together to provide the best educational opportunities for you. If you have a problem, a concern or a complaint, we encourage you to speak to someone about it. What to do if you have a problem:

- Try to identify the problem that is upsetting you. If there is more than one problem, list them so that you are clear about what you feel or need.
- If you feel you can, talk to the person you are having the problem with and if their behaviour is upsetting you, tell them to stop.
- If you do not feel that you could do this or if your talk with the person does not solve your problem, talk to a teacher about your concerns and ask them to help you deal with it.

Your teacher will often be able to give you good ideas on how to cope with it and will help you. You should explain:

- Who was involved
- What happened
- What you did
- What you believe was unfair or unjust
- Try to stay calm when discussing your problem. Even if you don't feel it, being calm will help you get your concerns across more clearly than if you are upset or angry. It may help to take someone with you.
- Work with the teacher to decide what should be done to help you.
- If you still do not feel that the matter has been solved, make an appointment to talk to the person at the school who deals with student problems. The teacher will tell you who this is if you don't already know.
- If you still do not feel that the matter has been solved, make a time to talk to the Principal about your concern.

Remember:

- Sometimes the person helping you will need to speak to someone else so that the problem can be solved. You need to let that person know that you are comfortable with that.
- You can bring a friend, parent or a teacher to support you when you need to talk about the problem.
- No one will be allowed to pick on you or hurt you because you are making a complaint.
- If you want to, you can write out your complaint in a letter instead of talking about it, but the person helping you will need to speak to you later.
- A process of mediation is an option at any stage of the process.
- At the formal stage, a person who has made a complaint has the right to be represented and supported by another person eg. his/her union, work colleague, friend or other person of his/her choice as a support person.