



Grievance Policy

Contents

Contents	2
1 Purpose	3
2 Scope of Policy	3
3 Policy	4
4 Definitions	7
5 Responsibility for implementation, monitoring, and continual improvement	7
6 Related policies, procedures, and support documents	7
7 Resources	8
8 Revision Record	8

1 Purpose

Emmaus Christian College is a body, made up of many parts, which intentionally follows God's Word in all that it does. God is love and loves us (1 John 4:16) and therefore we are, as Jesus commanded, to love God and love each other (Mark 12:30-31). Scripture commands us to live like Jesus and specifically, in our relationships, have the same mind as Christ Jesus, who humbled Himself, even to death on a cross (Philippians 2: 5-8). This encompasses our interactions and relationships with each other and we are exhorted to intentionally strive to "live in harmony with one another" (Romans 12:16) and "at peace with everyone (Romans 12:18) and holiness" (Hebrews 12:14).

Emmaus Christian College ("the College") actively promotes and lives out mutual respect, harmony, and Christian unity. The College seeks to proactively manage grievances in a biblical manner with the goal of resolution and reconciliation.

2 Scope of Policy

This Policy and its associated Procedures encompasses the handling of complaints made in respect of services and activities being provided by the College including grievances against employees, contractors, volunteers, and other visitors. It includes complaints or concerns that may be raised by students, parents/guardians, staff, contractors, volunteers, visitors, or any other member of the College community.

This Policy applies across Emmaus Christian College. It is recognised that it is beyond the scope of this Policy to cover all aspects of legal responsibilities; however, the policy is intended to provide direction to all in the College community.

It does not extend to personal, that is, non-school related grievances between, for example, personal grievances amongst parents/guardians, or volunteers, or other members of the College community.

The matters of complaint or grievance, or concern encompassed by the Policy and its Procedures include both academic and administrative issues regarding the College.

This Policy and its Procedures may overlap other Policy & Procedures of the College including for example, but not limited to, Behaviour Management and Anti-Bullying. The principles of this Policy and Procedures will be applied as appropriate and with the specific requirements of Behaviour Management and Anti-Bullying Policies being duly followed.

It is highlighted that complaints arising about Child Protection are to be addressed specifically pursuant to the College's Child Protection Policy including the issue of reportable conduct. It is noted that the complainants are not required to assess whether their concern meets the threshold of reportable conduct before making a complaint. Any concern about a child's wellbeing may be reported under this Policy.

It is highlighted that complaints pertaining to whistleblowing are to be addressed specifically pursuant to the College's Whistle Blowers Policy.

Thus, complaints and concerns regarding child protection and safety, reportable or criminal conduct or any other areas covered by specific legislation will be referred, as required by legislation, immediately to the College's Executive Principal, or his/her delegate, for reporting to relevant authorities/external agencies. For example, this may include (but is not limited to) any sexual offence or sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child

(including a child pornography offence or an offence involving child abuse material); any assault, ill-treatment or neglect of a child; any behaviour that causes psychological harm to a child whether or not, in any case, with the consent of the child; physical assault involving stakeholders on the College premises or at a College event; etc.

3 Policy

3.1 In accordance with the College's Christian beliefs and tenets, the Biblical ethos of God's love and thus our love and care for each other means unity underpins all our interactions and relationships across the College community. Following the life and teachings of Jesus, we are not to be divisive or argumentative. We respect that each person is made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) and therefore has inherent dignity and respect and valuing the unique individuality of each human being. Love, unity, compassion, justice, reconciliation, and hope are from God.

This Policy is formed within the College's Mission, Vision, Values, Purpose, and Philosophy. Authentic Godly relationships and restorative living is entwined in these essential values of;

- Faith – nurturing a Christ-centred faith and lifestyle
- Learning – cultivating a lifelong love of authentic learning
- Fostering authentic Godly relationships
- Encouraging acts of service at the school and in the wider community.

Thus, the College is committed to:

- ensuring the College is a safe, fair, and just place
- ensuring all individuals are treated fairly and impartially
- actively promoting the development of positive personal relationships with genuine Godly respect of one another
- being proactive to minimise the incidence of conflict
- supporting the right of every member of the College community to have his/her grievance listened to and understood, addressed objectively and fairly, and in a timely and responsible manner
- resolving matters in a non-threatening, respectful, and supportive manner with clarity and honesty
- bringing resolution and reconciliation.

The College sincerely seeks honest, constructive input, feedback, and suggestions for improvement. Furthermore, the College seeks the opportunity to work through and resolve any concerns any stakeholders may have about the College's services and activities.

3.2 The College recognises the reality that errors, oversights, and misunderstandings occur and from this divisions and disputes can arise. As Christians, the College specifically seeks to bring peace and harmony to any such situation and intentionally pursues resolution of such matters and thus reconciliation and restoration of relationships.

3.3 The College commits to appropriate pastoral, educative, disciplinary, and legal responses to grievance related issues and incidents.

3.4 All parties to a grievance are to approach the situation in a spirit of genuine respect, gentleness, and with the goal of resolution of the matter and reconciliation of relationship.

The prime resolution method adopted at the College for grievances are the principles taught by Jesus in the Bible, specifically in Matthew 18:15-17, in which Jesus directs us to speak first to a fellow Christian with whom we are in dispute. Within our College community we should always seek to speak directly with respect and intention to resolve the matter with any person with whom we have a difference. Then, if necessary, the matter is to be taken to the appropriate member of the College community who may be able to help assist in resolving the matter. If the matter is unable to be resolved in this manner then more formal processes of resolution may be required, depending upon the circumstances.

In summary, complainants are encouraged to firstly and, where practicable, seek to resolve the complaint or concern informally. Formal procedures for the resolution of such grievance matters will normally only be invoked when a matter cannot be resolved by informal means. To constitute a formal grievance it is a requirement that the particulars of the formal grievances be placed in writing addressed to the College representative managing the matter.

Where formal complaints occur, the College will decide the most appropriate method of dealing with the matter on a case by case basis. Any complaints against the method being applied by the College can be made to the Executive Principal or his/her delegate, who is the final arbiter.

All parties are to act in good faith, exercise good judgment, be honest and open, focusing on the issue and not the person.

3.5 It is highlighted that in the day-to-day life of the College, all students are free to approach their class teacher, home teacher, or Chaplain and Well Being staff about a grievance issue arising in day-to-day issues. Staff will make every effort to listen to and respond to any student complaints and concerns with sensitivity, objectivity, and promptness. In the exceptional situation that students are unsatisfied with such resolution proposed by staff and after thorough consultation then the student may contact the relevant Head of School. It is reiterated that the essential and fundamental process of teachers/staff and students, and parents/guardians all working together to resolve issues or concerns at a classroom level is the norm.

3.6 The College seeks to develop and maintain a positive and collaborative relationship between home, school, and the community with stakeholders understanding that their opinion and any concerns are valued and can be raised without fear of repercussion. That is, complaints and concerns will be attended to with sensitivity and without any threat of victimisation or discrimination.

3.7 The College will undertake the management of unresolved formal complaints/grievances with integrity and objectivity. Depending on the circumstances this may involve measures including but not limited to honest and impartial investigation and assessment. The principles of procedural fairness i.e. natural justice – will be an important consideration throughout.

Students will ordinarily pursue a formal grievance process in conjunction with their parents/guardians.

3.8 Privacy will be respected at all times. It is pointed out that obviously interaction with various parties may be required in the evidence gathering process in order to fully and reliably establish the facts of the matter including the opportunity to discuss and respond to allegations, concerns etc. Therefore, it is important to note that communications and

documents provided to the College may not always be able to be kept confidential. The College reserves the right to disclose details of the matter to other persons who in our opinion need to know them in order to facilitate resolution of the grievance matter.

- 3.9 Basic principles of positive grievance resolution involves all parties;
- Striving to be peace-makers – seek a positive resolution
 - Keeping the matter confidential – as appropriate, talk to those concerned
 - Keeping the circle small – discourage gossip and involving others unnecessarily
 - Being straightforward – be honest about the situation
 - Being self-evaluating – be humble
 - Being forgiving – be loving and self-sacrificing, and actively seek restoration and move forward.

3.10 The College’s overarching approach is one of love, generosity, and grace to resolve the issue as far as practically possible. The College is willing to admit fault and seek reconciliation wherever a complaint against the College is found to have legitimacy. Equally, this is to apply where another party in the matter is at fault. A restorative approach is to be adopted with an emphasis to “right the wrong” when that has been found to occur and reconciliation of the parties involved to go forward in love and unity.

Resolution of the matter and true restoration of relationship is the goal of the College’s grievance process. This is centred around Jesus Christ and the central event of history - His death and resurrection for the reconciliation of human beings with God. In short, as forgiven people we are to forgive. That is, as Jesus Christ forgave us our sins through His death on the cross, so we are to forgive one another (Ephesians 4:2). We are to forgive sincerely from the heart (Matthew 18: 35) and so live together peaceably and fruitfully. This sees us in restored relationships.

3.11 Where necessary, the College may provide Chaplaincy, pastoral, and wellbeing staff support.

3.12 All parties involved in complaints handling are required to maintain appropriate confidentiality, including in relation to handling and storing records.

3.13 The Executive Principal or his/her delegate is to be involved in determining whether the College may be required to report a matter to relevant authorities such as SAPOL, Family & Community Services, Education Standards Board, or other relevant agencies if it relates to unlawful conduct or other potentially reportable matters required by legislation.

3.14 The final arbiter in all matters is the Executive Principal of the College or his/her delegate, or if the specific grievance relates to the Executive Principal, then the College Board Chair. Disagreeing with the outcome of a grievance does not in itself constitute a grievance with the Executive Principal and as such will not involve the College Board Chair.

3.15 Anonymous complaints may be followed up to the extent possible, but are not regarded as legitimate expressions of grievance. The ability, for example, for the College to adequately and completely conduct the investigative process and bring parties together may be inherently restricted by their anonymity and thus College’s goals of bringing resolution of the particular matter and restoration of relationships may not be able to occur. Complainants are therefore encouraged to identify themselves.

3.16 Trivial matters may be disregarded at the discretion of the Head of School.

3.17 Parents/Guardians are respectfully reminded that the College employs experienced educators and other professionals who are well trained in making academic, disciplinary, extracurricular, pastoral, and well being decisions everyday. The College, while always taking into account the interests of the parent/guardian's child, must ultimately make decisions that take into account the interests of all students and stakeholders of the College.

3.18 It is noted that neither the Minister for Education and Child Development nor the Department for Education SA has a power to directly intervene in any complaints or concerns relating to the operation of a non-Government (i.e. private) school.

3.19 The College takes into account various matters and perspectives during the grievance process, including the interest of the Parent/Guardian's child as well as all other affected stakeholders. Even if some may not agree with the final outcome, it is essential that the final outcome/s resulting from the grievance process are respected, followed and adhered to by all parties.

4 Definitions

A complaint or grievance is an expression of dissatisfaction made to the College about an educational and/or operational matter relating to services provided by the school or the behaviour or decisions of a staff member, contractor or volunteer, and may include misconduct.

A complaint can arise if a member of the College community believes, in good faith and with supporting documentation, that the College has, for example,

- Done something wrong.
- Failed to do something that it should have done.
- Acted unfairly, unreasonably, inappropriately, or unprofessionally.
- Significantly breached a college policy or procedure.

Complaints may be about academic educational issues or administrative operational issues.

Examples may include:

Wellbeing issues – such as attendance or behaviour, suspension & expulsion;

Student learning – such as assignments, progress, achievement;

Quality of teaching – such as standard, interactions with students;

School issues – such as fees, administrative matters, buses, etc.

A complaint that concerns the behaviour of a staff member which may constitute reportable conduct will be addressed in accordance with the College's Child Protection Policy. Please refer to the Child Protection Policy for further information.

Complaints may also be in the form of a grievance between staff members about work matters.

5 Responsibility for implementation, monitoring, and continual improvement

Responsibility for implementation, monitoring and review of the policy is vested at the level appropriate to the following roles:

Emmaus Christian College
Teaching/Staff members
Leadership Team
Executive Principal

6 Related policies, procedures and support documents

This Policy is to be read in conjunction with, and is additional to, any other relevant Emmaus Christian College or AISSA policy, procedure or support document. All staff are required to comply with the provisions of any such documents, including but not limited to Statement of Faith; Statement of Life and Conduct Policy; Vision, Mission, Values, Purpose and Philosophy; Staff Behaviour & Code of Conduct Policy; Parent/Guardian Behaviour Code of Conduct.

7 Resources

Equal Opportunity Act 1984

Education and Children’s Services Act 2019

Education and Early Childhood Services (Registration and Standards) Act, 2011 (SA) and Regulations 2011 (SA),

Work Health & Safety Act 2012 (SA)

AISSA 2015 Handling Complaints

AISSA 2016 Resolving Student Concerns and Grievances

South Australian Department for Education – Student Support Services

<https://www.decd.sa.gov.au/supporting-students/student-support-services>

8 Revision Record

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