



GRIEVANCE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION POLICY FOR PARENTS AND STUDENTS

Definitions

The following are terms and their meanings as used in this policy.

Grievances

A grievance may exist when a member of the college community has a complaint against a person or the college or a group of persons within the college concerning an action taken, a policy, a process, structures, etc. which for whatever reason has not been addressed.

Conflict

A conflict can be said to exist where two parties are in opposition to each other over an issue and are unable to resolve it by themselves.

Mediation

Mediation is a process whereby the listening and speaking between parties in a grievance or conflict situation is facilitated by an independent, skilled person or panel.

Resolution

Resolution is a stage reached between two parties who, though once in conflict, have now agreed on a course of action that is perceived by both parties to be best for themselves and for the community of the college.

Grievances - Parents or Students

It is in the interests of all those involved in the community of the college that parents and students be content and secure; be justly treated within the college; and be free to function effectively within the overall framework and policies of the college community.

However, from time to time, circumstances may arise whereby a parent or a student may find it difficult to function in the college for any one of many reasons.

Where a person has a grievance pertaining to the college, its staff, its policies, its physical facilities that makes it difficult for that person to continue to function effectively within the college, it is very important that the matter be settled at the earliest possible time. With this in mind, the following procedure to hear and work towards the settlement of grievances should be used without prejudice to any party.

The procedure should remain confidential between the parties involved and any action(s) arising from the procedure should, if at all possible, be the subject of a written agreement between the parties involved.

Step 1 Define the grievance.

A grievance is any serious charge that may affect the well-being of any member of the college community and render it difficult for that person/persons to function effectively within the college.

Step 2 Check the details.

Check facts carefully and, where possible, document relevant information. Seek written input from informed persons, and gather documentary evidence. Do not, however, approach third parties for evidence without the express permission of the original complainant.

Step 3 Declare the grievance.

There are a number of options here. If the grievance is against the Board, one of its members, the Principal or the Office Manager, the grievance should be declared to the CEO of the Board. If the grievance is against a member of staff, a parent or a student, the grievance should be declared to the Principal. If the grievance pertains to working conditions, safety or the like, the grievance may be declared to either the Principal or the CEO.

Step 4 Appoint a panel.

To ensure objectivity and integrity, a panel will be appointed by the person to whom the grievance is declared (The Principal). This panel will consist of:

- one person nominated by the aggrieved party.
- one person nominated by the person/group against whom there is a grievance
- and the members of the school Executive that the Principal agrees to be present
- a chairman/mediator – usually the Principal or his agreed representative

Step 5 Administration.

The person to whom the grievance is declared will arrange for the parties to be notified and a time and a venue set to hear the grievance in detail.

Step 6 The hearing of the grievance.

The aggrieved person will be invited to outline the grievance and any details relevant to an understanding of the nature of the grievance.

The party against whom there is a grievance (or his/her representative) will be invited to respond initially and to indicate their position in relation to the grievance.

All parties under the direction of the chairman/mediator will then have opportunity to ask questions and to call for additional information as may be needed to substantiate any claims.

Step 7 Deliberation.

When the members of the panel are satisfied that they have all the information that they require, the Principal & school executive will deliberate privately on the issues and prepare proposals to put to the parties when they return.

Step 8 Action/Resolution/Recommendation.

When the two key parties or their representatives return, the proposals will be put to them by the chairman/mediator who will invite their responses in turn. A period of discussion will follow during which the parties may agree to modify/change the proposals. When agreement has been reached or a stalemate has resulted, these actions will follow:

- A recommendation by the school executive will be prepared to go to the aggrieved person
- A copy of this statement will be kept by each of the key parties
- In the event of a stalemate the Principal will recommend a time frame for his final adjudication of the matter/issue
- An appropriate action will follow in due course and be notified to all parties involved in the process.

Conflict Resolution – Christian Principles - Parents or Students

In any community, it is possible from time to time that members of the community will find themselves in deep personal conflict with others within the community. When this occurs, it is difficult to function within community until there is some sort of resolution to the conflict.

Assumptions to refer to when faced with a conflict situation

1. Christians share a common Lord and are going to share eternity together - being in a state of conflict is therefore not desirable. Christians are expected to exercise charity and to seek the good of others in preference to themselves.
2. To be in personal agreement may not always be possible, but personal antagonism is not an appropriate state to be in.
3. Christians are not called to like (feel affectionate, be drawn to) other Christians (i.e. their personalities, styles, temperaments), but they are called to love (serve, be sacrificial, be selfless) one another.
4. If a brother/sister wrongs another, the one wronged should approach the former and seek to resolve the matter. In the event that the Principal feels it necessary for the good of the school community he may deem a parting of enrolment may be the best option available.
5. It is desirable for Christians to live at peace with all people and to accept the decision of the God given authority over the school.

A Model for Conflict Resolution

Stages in the model

1. Recognising there is a conflict - getting both parties to agree that the conflict exists.
2. Identifying the issues involved in the conflict.
3. Establishing a desire to resolve the conflict.
4. Stage 1 of resolution - the parties only.
5. Stage 2 of resolution - the parties and a mediator.
6. Stage 3 of resolution – The Principal and school executive

RECOGNISING THERE IS A CONFLICT

- Morale is low (disappointment, lack of interest, bitterness).
- Relationships are cautious, cool or tense.
- A person is reluctant to be involved.
- A person complains about an action/incident.
- A person is repeatedly critical of another/or of the college.

If one or more of the above circumstances exists, either of the offended parties should be given the opportunity to declare that there is a problem. This should be done in a non-blaming, non-judgemental way.

If nothing comes of this first exchange, a challenge may be issued, highlighting the impact of the person's attitudes/actions/body language on others. ("I don't know if you're aware of it, but your actions/body language towards x makes it hard to continue a positive relationship.")

Identify who the parties (singular or corporate) are.

Ask the offended party if there is any objection to the issue being frankly honestly raised with respect to the other party or, in the case of a group, its key representative.

If permission is gained to have a meeting then approach the other party at an unpressured time and in an unthreatening context to talk over the issue. The approach should be made in non-accusative language. Outlining the grievances without raising voices and endeavouring to listen to each aggrieved party's point of view

IDENTIFYING THE ISSUES

At the first meeting, it is important to ascertain

- (a) if one or more parties are offended
- (b) identifying what the issues are for each party

Possibilities include:-

- an action taken
- a statement made
- an attitude perceived
- a personal manner/style
- an assumption made
- a policy adopted
- a presumption made
- an insensitivity towards.

Both/all parties should be given the opportunity to declare their issues and each should make a written record of all issues nominated to ensure all are covered. This may entail an agreed scribe to be present – in the school context usually one of the office secretaries

ESTABLISHING A DESIRE TO RESOLVE THE CONFLICT

It is one thing to acknowledge that there is a state of conflict existing between parties, but it is important as a separate step to get both parties to express a desire to see the conflict resolved in some way. If either of the parties is antagonistic to meeting with a view to resolving the conflict, that antagonism becomes the prior issue that must be addressed by a mediator before the two parties meet each other.

In ascertaining that there is a genuine desire on the part of both parties to work towards resolution, it is important that their desire be expressed unencumbered by any threat or humiliation.

STAGE 1 RESOLUTION

The most basic of all attempts at resolution should involve only the parties in conflict.

The steps in the process should be as follows:

The offended party or parties should begin by outlining how the conflict is thought to have arisen and why offence has been taken. This statement should be uninterrupted.

The other party should then have the right to express the other side of the story to ensure that all details relevant to the issue are aired. This statement should also be uninterrupted.

Following opening statements, the points at issue should be fine-tuned by a process of respectful questions and answers by both parties - each being careful not to pressure/intimidate/ dominate the other.

Where the issue is clear and apologies can be given and received, this should follow.

Any remedial action/reconciliation/ restitution required should then be offered by the offending party and follow up contact arranged. In the case where a parent has offended the school or feel they have been offended by the school then an apology may be offered and received

Where an issue is clear but agreement cannot be reached after a reasonable time of reciprocal speaking and listening, the aggrieved parties should agree to submit to the decision of the school Principal after his further deliberation.

Where an issue in dispute is subject to existing policy, the matter will be reported to the Board. At this point the offended parties may make a written statement to the Board.

Where appropriate, both parties should be free to pray at the close of each session.

STAGE 2 RESOLUTION

Where a Stage 1 resolution has broken down or the aggrieved parties are are not satisfied with the Principal's decision after deliberation the following may occur:

The rest of the procedure would follow the same pattern as the first six steps of the Stage 1 process.

Where an issue is clear but agreement cannot be reached after a reasonable time the offended party should be invited to make a submission in writing to the Board and the mediator should submit a written report on the progress made and the issues still in dispute.

The Board may then either debate/change existing policy or propose that the matter be referred back to the executive for final deliberations with the Principal

Where, appropriate, all parties should be free to pray at the close of each session.

STAGE 3 RESOLUTION

Where an issue is clear but agreement cannot be reached after a reasonable time, the full school executive will meet privately to recommend appropriate action to be taken for the good of the school community.

FOLLOW UP

Where agreement has been reached in one or other of the stages, or the Board has directed the parties to take action to resolve the conflict, the offended parties and/or the mediator - Principal and/or the CEO of the Board should follow the matter up to ensure that actions have taken place and progress is being made towards a restoration of relationships.

Where necessary encouragement/prompting may be necessary to ensure that progress continues.

THE MEDIATION PANEL

Persons nominated to act or be called to act on to mediate, should have the following qualifications:

- be mature Christians
- be reasonably familiar with the structures of the college
- be confident
- be a good listener

- have the ability to set people at ease
- be astute and perceptive
- be competent in communicating
- be sensitive and empathic
- be capable of objectivity when required
- values justice/fairness
- capable of making tough decisions for the good of the school community
- capable of being assertive/direct

RECORD OF GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE - Checklist
Aggrieved Party
Date Grievance Declared
Step 1 - Define the Grievance
Step 2 – Details Checked
Step 3 – Grievance Declared to the Principal or CEO
Step 4 – Panel Appointed – Names:
Step 5 – Time and a Venue set
Step 6 – Hearing of the Grievance – Responses:
Step 7 – Deliberation by Principal and School Executive – Preparation of Proposals
Step 8 – Action – Resolution – Recommendation - in writing to all key parties involved in the process
In the event of a stalemate - Final Adjudication will be given by the Principal – all parties notified
Date of Recommendation / Final Adjudication

CONFLICT RESOLUTION – Checklist
Mediation Panel – Names:
1. Recognising there is a conflict - getting both parties to agree that the conflict exists Date: Parties
2. Identifying the issues involved in the conflict. Summary:
3. Establishing a desire to resolve the conflict. Yes/No – which parties etc
4. Stage 1 of resolution - the parties only Date of Meeting:
5. Stage 2 of resolution - the parties and a mediator. Submission to the Board
6. Stage 3 of resolution – The Principal and school executive Executive decide on appropriate action:
Follow Up – Principal / CEO Date:

FOLLOWING PROCESS

- A stakeholder can raise a complaint via email or in writing marked ‘confidential’ by contacting either of the following
 - The Principal – Kevin.Bell@thelakescc.nsw.edu.au
 - The Principal – The Lakes Christian College – Locked Bag1001, Cranebrook, NSW, 2749

- The CEO – Mr J. Lyndon – John.Lyndon@ccmschools.edu.au
- The CEO – Mr J. Lyndon – 68 Laughlin St, Kingston, Qld. 4114

The complaint will be acknowledged in writing or email outlining who is the contact for the complainant

- The school will consider the complaint to determine how the matter will be addressed
- Once the complaint has been finalised the school will inform the complainant that it has been finalised (note - disclosure of information may be subject to the provisions of relevant legislation e.g. the Ombudsman Act and privacy legislation)
- Confidentiality of all parties will be paramount