



Complaints and Grievances Policy

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Complaints and Grievances Policy and Procedures

Rationale

COAST Christian School is open to the concerns of parents, caregivers and students and any complaints or grievances will be received in a positive manner and will be taken seriously.

The purpose of this Policy is to provide a student or parent/caregiver with the opportunity to access procedures to facilitate the resolution of a dispute or complaint. These internal procedures are a conciliatory and non-legal process.

Policy

At COAST Christian School we recognise that parents, students, staff and community members may experience disappointment or disapproval with the services provided. We seek to engage with such situations with the clear intent of reaching mutual understanding amongst the parties involved and for the purposes of improving the services provided at the School.

Principles

- Resolution of issues of concern and preservation of relationship should be the intent of all communication regarding a concern of a parent/caregiver or student.
- Parents and Caregivers have a recognised right to seek access to information about and clarification of circumstances relating to the education and welfare of children in their care.
- The School retains full responsibility for protecting members of the community, including staff, from circumstances that might be harmful to the individual's well-being or reputation.
- Concerns of parents/caregivers should be communicated to the school according to the accompanying procedures. Guidelines have been set in place to protect both staff and parents from unnecessarily escalating issues of concern whilst ensuring that matters of concern for a parent are heard openly and responded to appropriately.
- An initial complaint or grievance does not constitute a formal complaint.
- When processing any parent/caregiver concern all parties are to show the utmost respect for the privacy of students, parents and staff. No other communication about the matter should be entered into with those not involved.
- All communication by staff and by parents/caregivers should be characterized by courtesy and respect.
- Staff are designated with hierarchical responsibility for resolving parental grievances in a manner that is in keeping with School policy and procedure.

- All issues of parent/caregiver grievance should be resolved at the lowest level of hierarchical responsibility as is possible to the mutual satisfaction of the School and the parents.
- A record of communication should be kept for all formal interviews.
- A formal written communication of the resolution of the grievance should be distributed to those involved in the process.
- Concerns relating to the Principal should be directed to the Board Chair.

Some complaints, because of the seriousness of their nature, should be referred immediately to the Principal – e.g. complaints about behaviour which places others at risk of serious harm.

Parents must not approach the children of other families with a school-related complaint. It is also not advised to take up a school-related issue with another parent. This is often a sensitive area and, to protect all the parties concerned, it is advisable to work through the relevant teacher or the Principal. (See Code of Conduct for Parents/Guardians/Visitors).

Making a Complaint

STEP 1: When you have a concern, please tell us – the sooner, the better.

The first step is to contact the COAST CHRISTIAN SCHOOL staff member who is most closely associated with the details of the complaint. You can do this by phone, email or by arranging an appointment at a mutually convenient time through the School office.

COAST Christian School requests that there is, initially, an attempt to informally resolve the issue. Most problems can be solved when you talk first to the staff member directly involved.

STEP 2: If the matter is unresolved, you should contact the Principal by phone or by email to provide information regarding the matter and the fact that the matter is unresolved. This is best done as soon as practicable following Step 1.

The Principal will consult with you and with the staff member to collect relevant information regarding the matter. It may be necessary for a mediation meeting to be held with all parties. The aim of this meeting would be to achieve a resolution to the complaint or grievance.

STEP 3: If the matter cannot be resolved with the Principal through mediation and/or informal resolution the complainant should formally notify the School in writing of the nature and details of the complaint, stating the outcome you are seeking. This is the first step of the COAST CHRISTIAN SCHOOL formal complaints process.

The Principal will acknowledge receipt of the formal complaint within 5 working days of its receipt.

The formal complaints process will commence within 10 working days of the acknowledgement of the complaint.

Throughout the process the Principal will inform the complainant what the next step will be and a timeframe for any action to be taken.

The Principal will gather all the necessary facts about the complaint while keeping in mind the principles of natural justice of all parties concerned.

The Principal may choose to interview students without parents or staff members being present.

The formal complaints process can include:

- Collecting and analysing information relevant to the matter
- Working collaboratively with all people involved
- Finding the facts relating to the matter
- Identifying any contributing factors to the matter
- Documenting the investigation report or outcome
- Recording and retaining records of the complaint for either internal or external review.

The complainant must co-operate with the investigation or a decision cannot be reached and the formal complaints process will be terminated. This will be communicated to the complainant, in writing, by the Principal.

STEP 4: When all information has been considered, a conclusion will be reached based on reasonable evidence provided in Step 3. The Principal will advise, in writing, the complainant, and any person to whom the complaint relates, the outcome of the investigation.

If the complaints procedure finds in favour of the parent/caregiver, COAST CHRISTIAN SCHOOL will implement the decision and any corrective and preventative action required as soon as is practicable.

STEP 5: THE APPEALS PROCESS

It may not always be possible to resolve an issue to the complete satisfaction of the complainant. If the complainant is unhappy with the outcome of the process, they are encouraged to formally appeal to the COAST CHRISTIAN SCHOOL Complaints and Grievances Committee. This appeal must be in writing, advising the Committee of the reasons for the dissatisfaction.

This is to be done within 20 school days (4 school term weeks) of the complainant's receipt of the Principal's response in Step 4.

Please address your letter:

The Chairman: Complaints and Grievances Committee
COAST Christian School
PO BOX 6064
KINCUMBER NSW 2251

Upon receipt of this letter, the School office staff will record its receipt and ensure that the Committee Chair receives the letter of appeal as soon as possible.

The Committee Chair will acknowledge, in writing, receipt of the letter of appeal within 5 working days of its receipt.

The Committee Chair may consult with the Principal and the complainant to gain a better understanding of the complaint and to determine if the above complaints process has been followed.

The Committee Chair will provide a written response to the complainant within 30 school days (6 school term weeks) of this acknowledgement. A copy of this communication will also be provided to the Principal.