



Safe and Supportive Environment Grievance Policy and Procedures (Parents)

| | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Prepared by | Principal |
| Date Edited | March 2023 |
| Date ratified by the Board: | |
| Monitored by | Principal |
| Review by | Principal |
| Date for review | 2024 |
| Status | |
| Policy Pertains to: | All parents |
| File Details: | RANGS 3.6, 3.6.1, 3.6.2, 3.7.1 |

Version History

| Version | Date | Notes |
|---------|---------------|---|
| 1.0 | December 2004 | Initial policy |
| 1.1 | February 2006 | Reviewed by Principal |
| 1.2 | December 2012 | Reviewed by Principal |
| 1.3 | March 2016 | Edited by Principal / Approved by Board |
| 1.4 | March 2018 | Edited by Principal / Approved by Board |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 1. Aim | 3 |
| 2. Core Purpose Statement | 3 |
| 3. Biblical Context | 3 |
| 4. Definitions | 3 |
| 5. Scope Of This Policy | 4 |
| 6. Principles Of Managing Grievances | 4 |
| 7. Role Of The Principal | 5 |
| 8. Role Of The Executive Principal And College Board | 6 |
| 9. Disciplinary Action | 6 |
| 10. Appeals And Possible Outcomes | 7 |
| 11. Conflict Between Two Families | 8 |
| 12. Conflict Between Parents And Teacher Involving A Student | 8 |
| 13. Confidentiality And Victimisation | 8 |
| 14. Policy Review | 9 |
| Appendix One: Considerations In Responding To Grievances | 10 |

1. Aim

The aim of this policy is to guide the College's approach in managing concerns and complaints that arise as grievances by parents. This policy also provides a sound process for effective and cordial relationships between staff and parents. As we live in a fallen world, problems can and do arise. As a Christian educational community, we have opportunities to see conflicts worked through where truth and honesty are paramount and there is a desire to see relationships restored and reconciled.

We are a community moulding and shaping young people and all relationships are fundamental, foundational and are crucial to our mandate. Indeed, without healthy relationships it will be difficult to see how we could fulfil our mission. Education includes learning to live in community. If we claim to be caring, we will care about resolving conflict for all involved. This should be an environment where there is the culture for growth, forgiveness and love.

2. Core Purpose Statement

The purpose of GCC is to nurture learners in a Christ-centred community who thrive in a changing world.

3. Biblical Context

This policy is based upon Biblical principles. Some key references include – Matthew 18:15–35; Romans 12:9-21; 1 Corinthians 13:1-8; Ephesians 4:1-4 and 5:21 and Philippians 2:1-5. The policy should also be understood and implemented within the context of the love for one another that should characterise a Christian community (John 13: 34-35).

"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;" (Matthew 18:15-17 NIV).

"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." (Ephesians 4:2-3 NIV).

GCC believes that staff should exhibit the qualities of a Godly character and the lifestyle of a person committed to being a disciple of Christ (see GCC Code of Conduct). Grievances may arise when a member of staff fails to conduct him or herself in accordance with these qualities and standards. The Scriptures call us to hold each other to account for our behaviour while guarding our own and to be a witness to the world through this.

4. Definitions

Grievance: The term "grievance" in this Policy is used to encompass the concepts of a complaint and disputes as defined in *AS/NZS 10002-2014*. These terms are defined in that standard as follows:

Complaint: An expression of dissatisfaction made to an organisation, related to its products [or services], or the complaints-handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.

Disputes: Unresolved complaints escalated internally or externally or both.

This definition does not incorporate general negative feedback, which may not require a resolution or formal follow-up. While this type of feedback is valuable, the Policy does not apply to feedback of this nature.

Victimisation: To single out for punishment or unfair treatment; management will take all steps necessary to ensure that parents or their children are not victimised for coming forward with grievances – victimisation will lead to disciplinary action.

Procedural Fairness: Procedural fairness generally requires:

- a hearing appropriate to the circumstances;
- lack of bias;
- evidence to support a decision; and
- inquiry into matters in dispute.

Senior Management: Principal, Head of School and Business Manager

5. Table Of Responsibilities

This policy is to be read in conjunction with related Greenacre Christian College policies if stated in this policy.

| <i>Responsibilities</i> | <i>Evidence of Compliance</i> |
|--|--|
| Principal, Business Manager, Heads of School | |
| Ensure the development of this policy within the College | Policy published on website; Policy procedures followed |
| Ensure procedures are maintained that enable compliance with this policy | Investigation follows correct procedures |
| Operate within his/her delegated authority | |
| Heads of Department | |
| Operate within his/her delegated authority | |
| All staff | |
| Operate within delegated authority | |

6. Scope Of This Policy

If a complaint contains an allegation of abuse or any inappropriate behaviour towards children or a “reportable allegation” reference must be made to the College’s Child Protection Policy and the allegation dealt with in accordance with that policy.

Where other processes do not apply the approach set out in this Policy will apply subject to any modification necessary to meet other statutory obligations. Employees who are also parents may, in their capacity as parents, make a complaint under this Policy.

7. Principles Of Managing Grievances

- 1 Grievances should be treated seriously and sensitively, having due regard to procedural fairness. In following the Biblical model and where this is possible for both parties, without causing harm to either party. There should be an attempt to meet “one on one” as outlined in Matthew 18, however this Policy accepts that this is not always possible.
- 2 If it is not possible for the aggrieved person to follow the “one on one” process, they then approach:

| <i>If the issue is with:</i> | <i>Approach:</i> |
|--|--|
| A teacher or administrator | Their Co-ordinator/Year Advisor or direct supervisor |
| A Co-ordinator/Year Advisor or direct supervisor | The relevant Head of School or Business Manager |
| A Head of School | The Principal - principal@gcc.nsw.edu.au |
| The Business Manager | The Principal - principal@gcc.nsw.edu.au |
| The Principal | The Melos Executive Principal - phillip.nash@melosfoundation.com.au |
| The Melos Executive Principal | The Melos Board Chair (melosfoundation.com.au) |

- 3 The person(s) subject of the grievance is entitled to know the details of the grievance against them in a timely manner, including the name of the person with the grievance, the specific details of the grievance, and be given the opportunity to respond verbally, prior to any action being taken in response to the grievance.
- 4 Other than the “one on one” discussion with the person, both the aggrieved person and the person subject of the grievance is advised to have a support person with them. The role of the support person is to provide support and not to act as an advocate.
- 5 Any person present at a meeting is free to take notes. The person(s) subject to the grievance is not required to sign a record of interview and may present alternate perspectives that were recorded by their support person. It may however, assist in the resolution of grievances if agreement is reached in relation to the matters discussed.
- 6 The investigative meetings, when concluded, will present a written record of the investigation to the Principal (or Board Chair). This written record will include conclusions and recommendations and an agreed action plan (including instructions, any strategies to overcome the problem and the period of time in which those strategies are expected to lead to a resolution of the problem).
- 7 Any investigation must also be conducted in a timely manner, with reporting back to all concerned and recommendations followed through considering the constraints of the process. What constitutes “a timely manner” will vary due to the nature of the grievance.
- 8 At the conclusion of the investigation, the Principal (or Melos Executive Principal or Board Chair) will assess the validity and integrity of the allegations and the investigation and determine a resolution. Where a warning, censure or reprimand is issued by the Principal, this will be confirmed in writing, and a copy placed in the file of the staff member(s) subject to the grievance.
- 9 In relation to staff, if the matter is serious enough for the employer to consider disciplinary action that may result in a demotion, or dismissal, the staff member will be told of the possibility of this course of action and given an opportunity to respond.
- 10 Where the grievance is found to be vexatious or based on misinformation etc, any records pertaining to the grievance will be kept as follows: Person subject to grievance – all records placed in a sealed envelope in the person’s file to ensure that the reports are not relied on in future; person with grievance – all records relating to the grievance will be kept on file.

- 11 All endeavours will be made by all parties to keep the issue confidential. This means confidential not only within the school where the matter arose, but the wider community. This is primarily to ensure that the dignity of the staff member, staff at the school, participants in an investigation, and of any person making a grievance or raising a concern, is maintained at all times.
- 12 At the conclusion of the investigation a determination regarding a plan of action is to be written and given to both parties stating a clear time-line for the agreed plan of action, which will include how and by whom regular support will be given and review undertaken.
- 13 Victimization of a person for making a grievance or allegation (a student, a parent or a member of the public) is unacceptable.
- 14 All members of our community are expected to work in unity and act professionally so there is a safe environment where grievances can be heard sensitively and compassionately.
- 15 All staff, parents, students will be offered the use of an interpreter if needed.

8. Role Of The Principal

The Principal is expected to fairly represent all the interests of the College community. The Principal is available to take representation from any stakeholder within the community or agencies and/or groups in the wider community. The Principal is not solely an advocate for any particular group or stakeholder.

In the case of a formal grievance involving an investigation, the role of the Principal or delegated representative will generally be that of the decision maker rather than the investigator. The Principal will make a determination as to who will investigate and the parent/s will be informed at the commencement of the investigation. At the conclusion of the investigation, the Principal is to review the preliminary findings and make a final determination.

In some other less formal matters the Principal's role may include:

- seeking information from all relevant parties;
- attempting to instigate productive dialogue; and
- ruling on the matter which may include written findings.

The written report and all information referring to the investigation is to be kept on file in the office of the EA to the Principal. Where appropriate and with the agreement of the Principal, matters that are usually kept confidential in the College Counsellor's office will be there.

9. Role Of The Executive Principal And College Board

As the College Board has delegated the responsibility of the running of the College to the Principal, they only rarely become involved in grievance matters that require their direct intervention.

If the grievance is raised against the Principal, the Melos Executive Principal will firstly consult with a Head of School and Business Manager. Unless, after consultation the Melos Executive Principal determined the grievance to be totally without merit or that it cannot be resolved satisfactorily at a "one on one" meeting with the Principal, the Melos Executive Principal will raise the matter at the next appropriate Board meeting. The Board will determine how to address the grievance after seeking any appropriate external advice.

Melos Executive Principal is rarely involved in the day to day running of GCC. In the case of a grievance being raised against the Melos Executive Principal, the Board Chair will firstly consult with the GCC Principal and Melos Executive Business Manager. Unless, after consultation the Board Chair determined the

grievance to be totally without merit or that it cannot be resolved satisfactorily at a "one on one" meeting with the Melos Executive Principal, the Board Chair will raise the matter at the next appropriate Board meeting. The Board will determine how to address the grievance after seeking any appropriate external advice.

10. Disciplinary Action

If the person/s investigating the grievance decide that there has been a breach of one of the College policies or procedures, one of the options available is disciplinary action.

The level of discipline will depend on such things as:

- The seriousness of the breach;
- Awareness of intention;
- Extenuating circumstances surrounding the situation;
- Whether the person has been officially warned or disciplined before about this type of breach.

Discipline could involve one or more of the following:

- A written apology;
- Counselling;
- An official warning;
- Loss of promotion rights or wage/salary increases for a specified period;
- Demotion or change to role and/or responsibilities;
- Dismissal.

A record of the grievance and the resulting disciplinary action will be placed on the personnel file of the staff member who is disciplined. The grievance investigators will also send all their notes and a copy of the record of the grievance to the Principal.

In addition, if they believe the original grievance investigator mishandled the grievance in a way that breaches this grievance procedure, they may recommend disciplinary action against that person. All records, including allegations, investigation reports, interview and file notes will be securely kept by the Principal. =

11. Appeals And Possible Outcomes

This Policy recognises that there are times when the complainant may not be satisfied with the outcome. It is nonetheless the aim of this policy that the aggrieved person recognises fairness and equity in the process which has been followed.

If a person who raises a grievance is dissatisfied with the College's response, they have the right to ask for a review of the response by:

| <i>If the issue was raised with:</i> | <i>Approach:</i> |
|---|--|
| A teacher or administrator | Their Co-ordinator/Year Advisor or direct supervisor |
| A Co-ordinator/Year Advisor | The relevant Head of School |
| A Head of School | The Principal |
| The Business Manager | The Principal |
| The Principal | The Melos Executive Principal |
| The Melos Executive Principal | The Board Chair |
| The Board Chair | The Board |

Access to any member of the Board including the Chairman, is through a member of the Senior Management team.

Such a request should be made in writing and outline the reasons why it is considered the response should be reviewed.

The applicable reviewer will generally review the matter in relation to whether this policy has been followed and the principles herein adhered to.

The applicable reviewer may however, “rehear” the grievance, where they consider that the response was not capable of being reached in good faith by the initial process. This may involve going through the same steps as the person who handled the original grievance. However, they may decide to interview more witnesses if they think that will support the achievement of a better outcome. They may confirm the original decision or overturn it.

12. Conflict Between Two Families

Where there is conflict between two or more College families, this is not normally a matter for involvement of the College.

The Principal will only intervene where the issue directly involves school hours and events (ie it is school related) and which directly impacts the College (eg phone, social media, email). We would prefer to see parents resolve their normal differences as they would in any community situation.

13. Conflict Between Parents And Teacher Involving A Student

While a grievance is being addressed, it is important that the College continues to operate as normally as possible.

A student cannot refuse to attend a particular teacher’s class or refuse to co-operate with a teacher simply as a result of a grievance being raised against the teacher by the student’s parents. The student must obey all reasonable instructions. Where a student fails to comply with the authority of the College or the individual teacher, they may be withdrawn from either the respective class or all lessons, in consultation with the relevant Head of School and Principal until the matter is resolved (internal suspension). In the case of ongoing problems or more serious matters, the Principal may suspend the student from school. Any action taken will take into account the possible strained relationships and what is best for the student and teacher.

This also applies to situations where a parent refuses to comply with normal operational procedures, including issues such as uniform, detentions, attendance etc for their child.

A parent does not have the authority to withdraw or refuse to allow a student to attend class/classes without the prior approval of the Principal. If a parent withdraws a student without prior approval from the Principal, the student will not be permitted to attend any classes until the matter is effectively resolved.

14. Confidentiality And Victimisation

The parties to a grievance are required at all stages of this policy and procedure, to maintain confidentiality in relation to the concern or complaint. The parties must not disclose by any form of communication, either the fact or the substance of the matter to anyone other than an advocate, staff representative, or a qualified counsellor.

A person must not victimise or otherwise subject another person to detrimental action as a consequence of that person raising, providing information about, or otherwise being involved in the resolution of a grievance under these procedures.

Any breach of either the confidentiality or non-victimisation requirements will be treated seriously by the College and may result in disciplinary action. Any such breach will be referred for investigation and handling in accordance with the relevant misconduct procedure.

At the same time, a teacher who is under investigation over a parent grievance, must treat the child/ren of the aggrieved parent with fairness and justice. Action would be taken against the teacher if they behaved poorly towards the child/ren during the investigation.

15. Policy Review

From time to time the College may make changes to this policy to improve the effectiveness of its operation. These changes will be advised to all stakeholders.

Appendix One: Considerations In Responding To Grievances

Those to whom a grievance is brought should:

- Listen to the person with the grievance – asking them to clearly explain what the grievance is, if they have sought to solve the grievance, how do they want it resolved?
- If the grievance is brought to the attention of a member of staff and is potentially reportable conduct, it needs to be referred to the Principal immediately. The matter can be presented in writing, verbally, anonymously or from a person not associated with the College. The decision of whether a matter meets the reportable conduct threshold is made by the Principal.
- Likewise, if it becomes obvious at any stage that the grievance is more significant than the person hearing the grievance expected, it is to be taken to a more appropriate person.
- Subject to the situation, ask the person with the grievance to remain where they are while you obtain the other person's perception of events. Were there any witnesses to the events (record their names, record other relevant information).
- Decision time:
 - Do I need to talk to witnesses?
 - Is the grievance genuine?
 - Should it be proceeded with?
 - Can it be resolved in accordance with the person with the grievance's desires?
- Decide how the grievance may best be resolved and discuss the solution with the person with the grievance. This could include joint agreement. Many grievances will be able to be settled by joint agreement between the people involved in the grievance. No records or notes will go on anyone's personnel file. The person who handled the grievance will write a confidential report which will be stored on file.
- The person with a grievance may come to a personal crossroad at this point; forcing them to go on or they may wish to withdraw their grievance.
- It is essential the possible outcomes are made clear.
- It is considered that the grievance must be resolved, the school will continue to resolution. However, if there is not enough proof to work out where the truth lies, no disciplinary action will be taken. Instead, it may be decided to:
 - Monitor more closely the people involved;
 - Consider wider staff training on the particular policy or standard involved.
- The person who handled the grievance will write a confidential report which will be kept on file.
- Act on the decision made, advise all parties involved as to the outcome and course of action, and most provide the reasons for the decision. Advise those involved of any other internal or external avenues that may be available to them.
- Present the decision regarding the resolution to the appropriate party and the timeframe expected for the action to occur.
- Implement the decision and monitor the outcome.
- If the situation is not resolved to the satisfaction of the parties concerned, move to the next stage in the process.
- Document your involvement in the outcome.