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PURPOSE

This policy is intended to provide all school community members with a guide to resolving complaints and grievances in a supportive, confidential and sensitive manner, based upon Biblical principles. It is also intended to provide clear guidelines and expectations for stakeholders regarding complaints or allegations of staff misconduct or reportable conduct.

Within the community of the school there is a great deal of formal and informal communication, and it is not the intention of the school to restrict the relationships that are an important part of the life of the school. However, the words that we say are powerful and can cause considerable damage.

To minimise the potential for damage to the school and the members of the school community, the principles set out in [Matthew 18](#) should be followed – not in a legalistic way, but as a model given by Christ himself for us to follow.

Jesus taught: *“If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they 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 they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church...”* – [Matthew 18:15-17](#)

If we have a grievance or complaint against another member of the school community, the first step is to take it to the person directly and deal with it in a Christ-like manner, remembering that as Christians, we are taught to *“be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love”* ([Ephesians 4:2](#)) and to *“live in harmony with one another”* ([Romans 12:16](#)).

What This Policy Does Not Cover

This policy does not extend to complaints which are whistleblowing disclosures. The procedures for processing whistleblowing complaints are dealt with in the school's [Whistleblower Policy](#). In summary, a whistleblowing disclosure is a disclosure that:

- is made by a Board member, staff member, a person who supplies goods or services to the school, including a volunteer, an employer of a supplier or a relative of any of these people;
- involves alleged misconduct, improper circumstances, or illegal activity; and
- is made to an executive staff member, a Board Member, the school's auditor or a person who the school has authorised to collect such disclosures.

Related Policies

- Complaints about reportable conduct will be addressed in accordance with the school's Child Protection Policy & Procedures.
- Complaints regarding a grievance between staff members about work matters, including work relationships and decisions made by other staff members which impact on their work, will be addressed in accordance with the school's Staff Code of Conduct.
- Complaints regarding unlawful discrimination, harassment or bullying between staff are generally addressed in accordance with the school's Staff Code of Conduct.
- Complaints regarding harassment or bullying between students are generally addressed in accordance with the school's Anti-Bullying & Cyberbullying Policy.

POLICY

This policy is founded on four principles based on living out Matthew 18.

The Four Principles

First Principle - Talk first with the person with whom you have a problem.

"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." - Matthew 18:15

It is vital that Christians should pray about an issue before trying to resolve it, bearing in mind that we must not sin when we get angry "In your anger do not sin': Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry" ([Ephesians 4:26-27](#)), and that we must always be ready to forgive ([Ephesians 4:32](#)) and to accept the responsibility to live at peace with others as far as it is our responsibility ([Romans 12:18](#)).

In the first instance any conflicts should be addressed informally between the two parties involved. The aim is to find out whether the problem you see is a real concern or just a problem of communication. If you then believe the other party is incorrect, you should lovingly correct them and restore the relationship before it suffers any further harm. As indicated in this passage

his should be done in a private manner. If, and only if, this does not result in the conflict being resolved the matter may, after prayerful consideration, be taken to the next stage.

Second Principle - If you can't resolve the problem, take a wiser person with you.

"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." - Matthew 18:16

Prior to involving others in any disagreement, one should be mindful that to do so reduces the likelihood of the matter being resolved without some damage to the relationship with the other person. Although this may be healed over time it is wise to count the cost before embarking on this course of action.

If it is prayerfully considered that the matter needs to be taken before witnesses it is generally appropriate that this be the person most directly responsible for the person against whom the complaint is made within the authority structure of the school. If this does not result in the matter being resolved it is important to again seek the Lord to ensure that the complaint is justified as each stage will, most likely, result in further deterioration of the relationship. If the matter cannot be resolved at a lower level of the authority structure within the school, it should then be referred to the Principal. Referrals to the Principal can be made verbally (phone conversation or meeting) or in writing (letter or email).

In dealing with any issue, the Principal will firstly ensure that the preceding steps have been undertaken and that appropriate opportunities have been given for the accused to respond to any accusations raised against them. In doing so the Principal may make available any documentation or other information pertaining to the problem. The complainant can expect a response to their concern within seven days of the Principal receiving the referral. This response will be both verbal (in the form of a meeting or phone call) and in writing.

Third Principle - Only refer matters to the Board when the prior steps have been tried.

"If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church." - Matthew 18:17a

If the intervention of the Principal does not result in a resolution of the dispute the matter should then be referred to "the church". The school operates as a ministry of Wyong Baptist Church, under which the school derives its authority. The church has delegated this authority for the running of the school to the School Board who, in this case, would act as 'the church'.

In the event that a matter is referred to the School Board, this should be done in writing and addressed to the Board Chair (boardchair@wyongccs.nsw.edu.au). This written communication will be dealt with at the next Board meeting (Board meetings are usually held on the first Tuesday of the month, although this can vary on occasion). Should the Board Chair believe a resolution/response is required earlier than this, a special Board meeting to address the matter may be called.

It is not appropriate for individual Board members to be approached or canvassed on any issue as proceedings of the School Board are confidential and not discussed publicly. Any Board member who is approached directly with a complaint will not enter into discussion on the subject but will merely request that the matter be addressed through the appropriate channels as outlined in this policy.

In reaching a decision on any matters before it, the School Board must consider all the available information and act in the best interest of the school as a whole. This may result in decisions being made for reasons that cannot be fully explained because of the need to maintain confidentiality. While it is intended that a response will generally be made to matters raised with the School Board this will not usually include details of any discussion and may consist only of an acknowledgment that the issue has been raised. A response will be provided to the complainant from the Board Chair or delegate in writing within seven days of the meeting at which it was addressed.

Fourth Principle - Preserve unity as much as it depends on you.

"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

In the event that an issue is raised with the School Board and in the view of the complainant it is not satisfactorily resolved it would be appropriate for that person to review their continuation as a member of the school community. It is not appropriate for issues to be discussed outside the framework that is discussed in this policy. In the event that this occurs the School Board may decide that, after following the procedure set out in this policy, it is in the best interests of the school that the relationship ends.

In the event that the grievance or complaint is against the Principal, the above principles still apply. Firstly, commit the matter to prayer and if appropriate, meet with the Principal to discuss the issue. Should a resolution not be reached, bearing in mind the aforementioned dangers

associated with this action, have a third party join you when you meet. Should the matter remain unresolved it should then be taken to the School Board. This is done in writing and is addressed to the Board Chair. The Board Chair will raise the matter with the Board at the next meeting or earlier if deemed appropriate and a response will be provided to the complainant from the Board Chair or delegate in writing within seven days of the meeting at which it was addressed.

You should not discuss your grievances with other people who are not directly concerned with fixing the problem as set out above. The Body of Christ, which is in effect Christ himself, is hurt when we gossip about problems or when we talk to others about issues that they do not need to know about. It is possible that after an issue is resolved between two people the problem reoccurs, because so many other people have heard about it, and they did not hear how it was resolved. Christians are called to be patient, humble, forgiving and keeping unity as much as they can.

PROCEDURES

The purpose of this section of the document is to provide families with a clear understanding of the communication channels that are in place within the school in relation to the Complaints & Grievance Policy. Our school is continuing to grow and with such large numbers of people involved it is vital that all are aware of communication procedures within the school.

Making Appointments

When parents have an enquiry (such as a clarification, a concern or a complaint) that they wish to discuss with a member of staff, it is always preferable to make an appointment time in advance to ensure the staff member's availability. These can be made by contacting the school office or emailing the teacher directly (please do not ring teachers during class times as teachers are not able to leave their classes. It is also often inconvenient for teachers to discuss issues before the school day commences). Parents are requested not to arrive at the school expecting that staff are available to see them; hence, the recommendation to make an appointment.

Where to Direct Enquiries

(Clarifications, concerns, complaints)

Student Wellbeing Matters: If you have any concerns regarding student wellbeing, you should contact the Class Teacher (Junior School) or the Home Room Teacher (Secondary School) in the first instance. For more serious issues, contact the Learning Leader (Junior School) or the Year

Advisor (Secondary School). These concerns could relate to, but are not limited to, student attendance and punctuality, behavioural management and discipline, the playground or uniform issues.

Additional Needs: If you have any concerns about the provision of support for students with additional needs, you should contact the Director of Learning Enrichment.

Development Issues: If you have any concerns, complaints or suggestions concerning the development of the school as a centre of Christian education you should contact the Principal. Issues could relate to spiritual development of students, performance and development of staff, development of the school curriculum, development of school policies, development of the school, future directions and development of home/school relationships.

Concerns with Other Children: Where parents have concerns with the way their child is being treated by other children or other parents, it is always preferable for a parent to contact the school rather than for the parent to approach another child or parent directly (i.e., class teacher if a class matter, the appropriate Year Advisor, Head of School or Assistant Principal if a broader problem, and the Principal if an even more complicated problem). The relative objectivity of school staff can often promote the resolution of a problem in a more efficient manner than is possible under the alternative subjective situation.

In most cases when parents wish to contact the school, they should contact the member of staff most involved in the matter they wish to raise (e.g., their child's class teacher for a class matter, front office for clarification of school information, the choir teacher for a choir matter, etc.).

However, there are times when parents/carers have concerns that are appropriate to discuss with a member of staff within the Senior Leadership Team.

Senior Leadership

The roles within the Senior Leadership Team are:

- Principal
- Assistant Principal
- Chief Financial Officer
- Director of IT
- Operations Manager
- Director of Learning Enrichment
- Director of People & Compliance
- Head of Junior School
- Head of Junior School Teaching & Learning
- Head of Secondary School Teaching & Learning
- Head of Secondary School Student Wellbeing

MAINTENANCE & REVIEW

The Senior Leadership Team will review this policy regularly to ensure that it meets best practice standards, complies with the applicable legislative and regulatory requirements and meets the needs of the school.