



# Bethel Christian School

## Complaints, Appeals and Grievances Policy

### School Vision Statement

To see young men and women and their families brought into a full relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

### School Mission Statement

To educate young men and women, within a Christian environment, so that they can realise their God-given academic, social, physical and spiritual potential.

### Biblical Principles that Define our Staffing Policy

All issues should be dealt with in the context of Matthew 18:15. All members of the community are encouraged to remember that we are the loved creation of God and his workmanship. It is a journey that we are on and God is the author and finisher of our faith through Jesus. With this in mind all interaction should be respectful and considerate of one another (John 13:24). It is the endeavour of the school community to reflect the Lordship of Christ to the world (James 4:13-17; Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:22 – 4:1; Micah 6:8).

### Implementation of Biblical Principles

The above-mentioned biblical principles underpin the following procedures for:

- The manner in which people interact within the school community
- The manner in which Complaints, Appeals and Grievances are dealt with within the school community

### Links to National Quality Standards and Relevant Legislation

Links to National Quality Standards and Relevant Legislation:

7.1.2 Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service

7.2 Effective leadership builds and promotes a positive organisational culture and professional learning community

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2014: 168,173,176

### Policy Statement

Bethel Christian School Limited is committed to providing an environment, which promotes the health and wellbeing of all members of the school community. However, it is recognised that from time to time there will be occasions when issues arise between members of the community, i.e. staff, students, parents and the wider community. The Complaints, Appeals and Grievance Policy seeks to ensure that complaints arising from situations of conflict and disharmony among members of the school community are addressed in a fair and transparent manner to bring a favourable resolution. Parents, students and staff members have a right to raise concerns, questions or bring complaints – held against behaviours, practices, decisions or individuals – and to expect these matters to be addressed appropriately with objectivity and sensitivity. Our school, as part of its obligation in relation to its duty of care to students and staff members, strives for procedural fairness and natural justice for all. Our school is committed to maintaining its bond of biblical community. Disharmony within the school community is intended to be resolved through employing biblical principles and due process.

NB: For the remainder of this document Bethel Christian School Limited will be referred to as Bethel Christian School

### Procedure for Minor Complaints, Appeals and Grievance

1. All matters of relatively minor concern should be initially directed to the person the grievance is with. If the issue is between a classroom teacher and a student or parent, an appointment should be made through the front office.
2. The Chaplain can be called upon to mediate where necessary.
3. Matters which are considered to be of a more serious nature should be referred directly to the Principal or a School Coordinator. Appointments should be made through the front office so that adequate time can be allocated. All concerns will be treated fairly and sensitively.

4. Where there are perceived issues between parents or students, the school should be made aware of the situation. This will allow for mediation to occur in order to strive for an outcome which is fair and sensitive to all involved.
5. Issues which arise between teaching staff should be first dealt with between the teachers themselves. If this does not appear to resolve the situation, mediation through either the Chaplain or the Principal can be arranged. Should this issue be of a serious nature, a Board panel or sub-committee may be formed.
6. Should an issue arise between the Principal and another staff member or member of the wider school community, attempts should be made to resolve the situation. If this is not possible, through failure to resolve or the serious nature of the dispute, a Board panel or sub-committee may be formed.
7. It is requested of all members of the school community that issues which do arise are not discussed openly with other parties in order to promote peace throughout the community.
8. Matters of a relatively minor concern should, in the first instance, be directed to the classroom teacher through the front office, in the case of Primary students, or the PCG Teacher, in the case of the High School students. Matters, which parents consider as more serious, should be referred directly to the Principal or School Coordinator. Whilst an open-door policy is in place to access the Principal or School Coordinators, it is advisable to make an appointment through the front office if a longer period of time is required.
9. Where there are perceived issues arising between one parent and another parent, resulting from an issue between students, parents should leave the matter for the school to address. Phone calls between parents are discouraged, so as not to exacerbate the problem.
10. Issues of concern relating to parents and the school should not be discussed publicly until the appropriate school personnel are aware of the matter and only discussed publicly where essential.
11. Students should be encouraged to discuss issues with the staff member concerned. A respectful demeanour is to be shown by the student, at all times. If the matter cannot be resolved, the student should invite another staff member to assist with a resolution. This may be the student's PCG teacher, a teacher who they trust, a Coordinator, or the Chaplain.
12. Should conflict persist, the Principal may be called upon to arbitrate.

## Procedure for Formal Complaints and Reportable Allegations

Definitions	
Formal Complaint	An official statement which expresses dissatisfaction with a particular situation.
Reportable Allegation	A reportable allegation is an allegation that an employee has engaged in conduct that may be reportable conduct.
Reportable Conduct	The Children's Guardian Act 2019 defines reportable conduct as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A sexual offence,</li> <li>▪ Sexual misconduct,</li> <li>▪ Ill-treatment of a child,</li> <li>▪ Neglect of a child,</li> <li>▪ An assault against a child,</li> <li>▪ An offence under s 43B (failure to protect) or s 316A (failure to report) of the Crimes Act 1900 and</li> <li>▪ Behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child.</li> </ul>
Reportable Conviction	A finding of reportable conduct is a sustained finding, which requires evidence supporting that the conduct occurred on the balance of probabilities and a reportable conviction (including a finding of guilt without the court proceeding to a conviction, in NSW or elsewhere, of an offence involving reportable conduct).

1. The following principles and procedures will be employed when dealing with formal conflict, or matters of Reportable Conduct.
  - 1.1. Allegations are to be stated clearly in writing, and addressed, as follows:
    - 1.1.1. If a matter is brought against the Principal, then the complaint must be addressed to the School Board.
    - 1.1.2. If a matter is brought against a staff member, then the complaint must be addressed to the Principal.
2. If a complaint is brought to the Principal against a staff member, and fails to be resolved, then the Principal and affected staff member(s) must elect to refer the matter to either:
  - 2.1. The School Board, or,

2.2. An appointed Agent who acts independently of the School Board.

2.2.1. Should the appointed Agent be unsuccessful in resolving the conflict, then the matter is to be heard by the School Board.

- 2.2.1.1. Affected party(s) must be made aware of allegations by the Principal, the nominated Agent, or the School Board.
- 2.2.1.2. There is a presumption of innocence until guilt is determined.
- 2.2.1.3. Strict confidentiality needs to be maintained at all times.
- 2.2.1.4. Chairman of the Board will be made aware of the nature of the grievance in serious matters. Other agencies e.g. AIS, Police, Ombudsman, WorkCover, will be informed, if appropriate. The school administration will cooperate fully with government departments and other agencies in the resolution of grievances.
- 2.2.1.5. An opportunity for response by the affected party(s) is granted.
- 2.2.1.6. Evidence will be collected impartially.
- 2.2.1.7. Processes will take into consideration school policies and appropriate government legislation.
- 2.2.1.8. Witnesses are permitted to be present at formal meetings.
- 2.2.1.9. Minutes must be kept of all formal meetings.
- 2.2.1.10. Conclusions will be made as quickly as possible after weighing up all evidence.
- 2.2.1.11. Affected party(s) will be made aware of the result of the investigation as soon as possible.
- 2.2.1.12. At any stage in the conflict – resolution process, staff member(s) may seek the school Chaplain’s support for prayer regarding the matter.

## Procedure for Complaints, Appeals and Grievance for POS

Bethel Christian School will maintain and adhere to the Complaints, Appeals and Grievance Policy, providing students and other community members with the means to make complaints and appeal decisions in a manner which is independent, accessible and free of charge. Private Overseas Students wishing to make a complaint using the internal complaints and appeals process are requested to follow the following procedures. The process of handling a complaint or appeal, should be commenced within 10 working days of it being made and the assessment of the complaint or appeal should be in a professional, fair and transparent manner. The outcome should be provided in writing to the student, including the reasons for the outcome. The agreement, and the availability of the Complaints, Appeals and Grievance Processes, does not remove the right of the student to take action under Australia’s consumer protection laws. All written records relating to complaints and appeals should be maintained in student and staff files. If the overseas student is not successful in the internal process, they should be advised of their right to an external process at minimal or no cost and provided details of the appropriate external appeals body, within 10 working days (Overseas Student Ombudsman). If the internal or any external complaints process results in a decision or recommendation in favour of the student, Bethel Christian School Limited will immediately implement the decision, recommendation and/or take the preventative or corrective action required by the decision and advise the student of that action.

In the event of a dispute between yourself as parent(s)/legal guardian(s) or as a student and Bethel Christian School, procedures are in place to assist in resolution.

- Issues relating to conduct, discipline and attendance
  - Students must comply with the code of conduct of the school or disciplinary action may be taken, as per the rules within the Discipline Policy. If there is a dispute of the management of behaviour, being considered unfair or unreasonable, the matter may be referred to the relevant classroom teacher or PCG teacher. An unresolved matter may ultimately be referred to the Principal for determination. Independent external mediation may also be sought should a matter be deemed unresolvable within the school.
- Issues relating to provision of service and academic programs
  - In the event of a complaint concerning the quality of service or teaching provided at Bethel Christian School, the matter may be reported to a person in position of authority within the school such as a Coordinator or the Principal. This complaint may either be dealt with by that person, or referred onto a more relevant person for resolution. This decision will be conveyed in writing to all involved and the decision of the Principal will be final. Independent external mediation may also be sought should a matter be deemed unresolvable within the school.
- Issues relating to welfare of a student

- In the event of a concern regarding a student’s welfare, the matter may be referred to the staff member whom the student or parent(s)/legal guardian(s) feel that they are most comfortable in addressing, such as the classroom teacher, a Coordinator, the Student Support Officer or the School Chaplain. An issue may ultimately be referred to the Principal for resolution. The student may also be referred to a professional in the area of mental or physical health as deemed appropriate.
- Issues relating to contractual agreement and financial status
  - Any issues relating to fees should be addressed to the Business Manager. If the situation is not resolved, the matter can be referred to the Board in writing. If the matter is still not resolved, the matter may be referred to the Overseas Students Ombudsman and Australia’s consumer protection laws.
- Independent Internal Mediation will be made up of a mediation panel of three members, one nominated by the school, one nominated by the student’s parent(s) or legal guardian(s) and one by mutual agreement. This process does not circumscribe the student’s right to pursue other legal remedies such that be deemed necessary.

All reasonable measures will be taken to finalise this process as soon as practical. Bethel Christian School will maintain the student’s enrolment whilst the appeal or complaints process is being carried out. The complainant or appellant will receive the outcome, including reasons for the outcome in writing from the Principal. Should a Private Overseas Student wish to access an external complaints and appeals process in such situations like appealing the decision of a default, they should be referred to the Overseas Students Ombudsman. All correspondence and documented evidence including the written notification of the outcome of the complaint/appeal and any corrective or preventative action taken by Bethel Christian School will be kept in the student’s file. This agreement, and the availability of the complaints and appeals processes, does not remove the right of the student to take action under Australia’s consumer protection laws.

**Process for Student Default**

Student default in relation to their enrolled course if:

- The student visa is refused or cancelled
- The course starts on the agreed date in the agreed location and the student does not start on that day (and has previously not withdrawn)
- The student withdraws from the course (either before or after the agreed start date)
- Bethel Christian School refuses to provide, or continue to provide the course at the location due to any of the following:
  - Failure to pay for the course
  - Breach of conditions of visa
  - Misbehaviour of the student (NB: students should be afforded access to the complaints/appeals process)

Students should always inform Bethel Christian School in writing of any changes to their enrolment or start date as soon as possible. If a student does not agree with the decision by Bethel Christian School to default their enrolment, they are entitled to appeal the decision through the internal appeals process. Should this not resolve the matter, an external process is available through the Overseas Students Ombudsman.

Students have 20 school days to access the Complaints and Appeals Process. A copy of the policy can be obtained from the office or by request to the Principal.

Once the appeals process is complete and if a student is deemed in default, Bethel Christian School must notify the TPS Director and PRISMS (DoE) of the breach within 5 days. Bethel Christian School has 28 days as per the provider obligation period to finalise student default obligations as per the written agreement. There is a further 7 days (after the obligation period) to report outcomes via PRISMS.

**Role Allocations**

Who	What	When	Notification Method
Principal or office	Provide the Complaints, Appeals and Grievances Policy.	Upon request	Policy may be posted or emailed if applicable.
Principal or appointed delegate	Commence complaints, appeals and grievances process i.e. gathering evidence, arranging meetings	Within 10 working days of the formal lodgement of the complaint or appeal.	In writing or verbally (with record of conversation).

		(Or timeframe set for specific area)	
Principal or School Board	Notify the complainant or appellant of result of a Complaint, Appeal or Grievance.	As soon as possible	In Writing to the complainant or appellant. Online via PRISMS (if related to a student enrolment)
School Chaplain	Provide support and Prayer	Upon request	Verbally

Policies and Procedures are communicated to staff in meetings. The Complaints, Appeals and Grievance policy is available to staff on the school drive and parents/community members through the school website.

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