



Creek Street Christian College

Grievance Procedure

Implemented: 2023

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Introduction

The College is a community and as such, there will be times when stakeholders will wish to make suggestions, may have a grievance or raise a concern that needs addressing. The College takes these issues seriously and welcomes such feedback. Only grievances occurring within the College's jurisdiction will be dealt with by the College, College Council or Church Oversight.

This document details principles applicable to and procedures to be followed with respect to the resolution of grievances and disputes and is applicable to College Council members, staff, families, volunteers, contract workers and students.

The College prefers to use a restorative practices framework to resolve grievances and disputes. Restorative practices focus on the quality of relationships between members of the College community. Parents, students and staff have all invested into the College community and long term, significant relationships exist between all members of our community, and are greatly valued.

'Restorative practices' mean we take a relational approach to solving problems, rather than apportioning blame and taking punitive action. 'Restorative practices' means everyone involved reflects on the ways in which their attitudes, beliefs and behaviours may have contributed to the problem. Restorative practices provide accountability by encouraging all parties to repair the harm, where appropriate, which provides restoration, builds relationships and encourages us to learn from the experience which led to the problem.

The College is following the Matthew 18 principle:

"15 Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. 16 But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that "by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established."

This is referred to in this document as Level 1. If after following the Level 1 process, with its emphasis on restorative practices, and the staff member, parent or student is dissatisfied with the outcome, they may move to the Level 2 Grievance Procedure, which involves a formal grievance or dispute, and an investigation.

The College will endeavour to resolve grievances and disputes, as we have a commitment to continuous improvement, and to provide a service which results in high levels of staff, parent and student satisfaction.

College staff, parents and students are able to make enquiries, raise concerns or lodge grievances and have these dealt with impartially, efficiently and with respect and courtesy. When raising concerns and lodging grievances, staff, parents and students are expected to exercise respect and courtesy towards College staff investigating the allegations.

The College will endeavour to ensure grievances are handled promptly, sensitively and in accordance with restorative practices and the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness.

Principles

- The College is open to the concerns of community members, staff, parents and students.
- Grievances will be carefully investigated.
- The College is committed to the positive resolution of problems preferably using Restorative Practices.
- The resolution of disputes should occur at the lowest possible level in the dispute process.
- Matters which cannot be resolved at a particular level should be referred to the next level in the process. Executive staff will recognise when issues need to be referred directly to the Principal.

- Matters should not normally be brought directly to the Principal or other senior staff until the various stages of the grievance process have been followed, or unless the matter is exceptionally serious.
- Individuals raising grievances are able to proceed through the levels in the process and are able to take unresolved concerns to the Principal and then if so desired, to the College Council and to outside authorities, as appropriate.
- People who are the subject of a grievance, who raise a grievance or provide information during an investigation into a grievance, will not be subject to prejudice, intimidation, harassment or any disadvantage because of their involvement.
- Grievances and concerns may initially be lodged verbally or in writing.
- If a grievance is complex or serious, the complainant will be required to restate the grievance in writing.
- A person lodging a complaint must provide his/her name and contact information and details of the grievances.
- Grievances thought to be vexatious, malicious, and trivial or relating to previously finalised issues, are referred immediately to the Principal.
- Grievances will be monitored and their frequency, nature and management evaluated to reduce the occurrence of systemic and recurring problems.
- All people in the College community, including students, parents, educators and support staff, have a right to be treated with respect and courtesy. If complainants are disrespectful or discourteous towards staff, or attempt to intimidate staff members when making a complaint, the interaction will be terminated and the staff member is required to report the matter to their line manager and to the Principal.
- If a staff member is the subject of a grievance, they will usually be informed of the substance of the complaint. The text of the grievance will not necessarily be provided. Grievances against employees must be sufficiently detailed to enable the employee to respond to the allegations against them. A detailed description of the incident/s, the alleged time and place when the incident/s allegedly occurred, and the names of any possible witnesses to the incident/s, must be provided.
- If the Principal is the subject of a grievance, the matter will be referred to the College Council chairperson.
- If a College Council member is the subject of a grievance, the matter will be referred to the College Council chairperson.
- If a College Council chairperson is the subject of a grievance, the matter will be referred to the Church Oversight chairperson.
- If the grievance is of a serious matter, the person involved may be asked to take leave until the process of reconciliation is completed.
- When making a complaint, staff, families and students must be prepared to give their names. Anonymous grievances will not be investigated.

Procedure

Level 1

Staff, parents and students should meet with the person directly involved in the grievance before taking any further action. Depending on age, cultural background and personality, students might require support from a teacher.

If after approaching the person directly involved, the concern is not resolved, an appointment should be made with the staff member's line manager, or the matter must be put in writing to the line manager.

If the matter is not resolved by meeting with the line manager, the student or parent/guardian may request a meeting with the Principal.

Level 2

Staff, parents and students who have followed Level 1, but who are not satisfied with the outcome, can

request a formal investigation into their concerns. An appointment should be made with the College Principal and the grievance needs to be put in writing. All written grievances will be acknowledged in writing, setting out a timeline and procedure for investigating.

Each party must have the opportunity to present his/her version of the facts. Each party must be given fair opportunity to respond to information provided by the other party. All grievances and disputes must be investigated in a fair, professional and impartial manner, with no disadvantage to the complainant. The investigation must be appropriate to the circumstances. Decisions are made on the basis of evidence provided. The outcome of the investigation will be communicated to all parties as soon as possible, providing reasons for any decisions to action taken.

Following an investigation, the College will review policies, procedures and protocols in an endeavour to minimise the likelihood of further occurrences.

Level 3

If parents, students or staff remain dissatisfied after bringing concerns to the College Principal, the matter **may be referred in writing to the College Council:**

The Chair
College Council
91 Creek Street South
Bendigo

The Council will investigate the grievance and report back to the complainant. Issues unresolved at Council level can be referred to the Creek Street Church Oversight.

Discrimination or harassment

The College is committed to applying principles, policies and procedures to the elimination of any form of unlawful discrimination or harassment.

In the 21st Century, diversity has become an exceedingly important consideration for schools. A focus on diversity can increase inclusion and create a fairer and more inclusive community.

The College has a diverse community and is therefore sensitive to the diversity and characteristics of the College community, including, but not limited to gender, race, ethnicity, age, experience, socioeconomic status, ability, sexual orientation, cultural background, religion, skill, political belief or educational background/status.

The College will not tolerate unlawful discrimination or harassment on the basis of above-mentioned diverse needs.

Sexual and physical abuse

Sexual and physical abuse need to be reported to the police. As a courtesy, the College Principal needs to be contacted.

Confidentiality

Parents often seek an assurance of confidentiality before expressing their concerns. If, for example, they wish to discuss a particular member of staff, they may fear their child will suffer in some way because they have complained.

The substance of a grievance needs to be communicated to the person the subject of the complaint. Students and parents will recognise the need for staff to be informed so they can provide information relevant to the investigation. If involved in, or informed of a dispute or grievance, staff members are aware of their obligation to ensure such grievances do not rebound adversely on the student involved.

Responsibilities

The Principal is responsible, with the College Executive Team, for ensuring that this policy and procedures are in place and operational. If there is an issue that is at a standstill in resolution the principal will have the authority to make the final decision.

Complainant

The complainant has the right to:

- receive feedback of the final determination
- be heard and listened to
- have the complaint addressed with procedural fairness
- have the complaint dealt with in a timely manner
- seek legal advice and support
- have a support person present at all meetings
- confidentiality and sensitivity in the resolution of the process.

Respondent

The respondent has the right to:

- present their version of events and reasoning
- be informed of a complaint against them within a reasonable time frame
- seek legal advice and support
- have a support person present during all meetings
- confidentiality and sensitivity in the resolution of the process.

Mediator

The mediator has the right to:

- be treated with respect
- allowed to complete the investigation and restrictive meeting without interference of others

The mediator has the responsibility to:

- approach the process in good faith
- uphold strict confidentiality
- be courteous in dealing with the complainant, contact officer and investigator
- ensure that any support person understands their role in the process.

Support person

The support person is entitled to accompany a complainant/ respondent to any meetings that take place during the grievance process but must not have an active role in the resolution process. It is not the role of the support person to be a spokesperson for the complainant.

Time limit

The College will try to resolve all grievances as quickly as possible. However, the timeframe for resolution of a grievance will depend on the complexity, nature and scope of the grievance.

Record keeping

Refer to the Procedure for Retention of Records.

Frequently asked questions

1. **“I don’t want to complain as such, but there is something bothering me. What should I do?”**
We are all working towards the same purpose or goal – the education and well-being of children

within this community. If you have a concern, it is better to seek to have it resolved with the people immediately involved in the matter. This might be possible from a meeting, either formal or informal.

2. “I am not sure whether to complain or not?”

If you have a concern, you are entitled to raise it with the College. If in doubt, remember we are here to help. Sometimes it is reassuring just to talk your concerns through with someone. If there is still no resolution you might want to seek a resolution through the Complaints Process.

3. Grievances Process

a. “How should I complain?”

Grievances must be in writing. This may be as a letter or an email. Please be as clear as possible about what is troubling you. All written grievances should be directed to the College Chair/Principal and marked “Confidential”.

Your complaint will be acknowledged in writing within two working days and explain how the matter will proceed.

b. “What will happen next?”

- i. The matter will need to be investigated further before responding. You will be given a date by which time you will receive a response. If a detailed exploration of the issues is needed, a letter or report will be sent to you as quickly as possible. This letter will inform you of the outcome of the grievance. It will explain the conclusion, the reasons for it and any action taken or proposed.
- ii. The substance of the grievance will be conveyed to the person against whom the grievance is made.

4. “What happens about confidentiality?”

Your grievance or concern will be treated as confidential and with respect. Knowledge of the issue will remain limited to the Principal and to those directly involved. The Chairperson of the College Council may also need to be informed in some matters. It is a College policy that grievances should not rebound adversely on anyone.

We cannot entirely rule out the need to make third parties outside the College aware of a grievance and possibly also the identities of those involved. This would only happen in a case where the person’s safety is at risk or where it became necessary to refer a matter to the Police. You will be fully informed.

5. “What if I am not satisfied with the outcome?”

We hope you will feel satisfied with the outcome, or at least that your concerns have been heard and fully considered.

If you are not satisfied, the Principal will offer to refer the matter to the Chairperson of the College Council. Alternatively, you may wish to write directly to the Chairperson. The Chairperson will call for a full report from the Principal and will examine matters thoroughly with the Council before responding. The decision of the Council will be conveyed to you.

If you are still not satisfied with the outcome or the way in which the College has handled your complaint, you can contact the VRQA.

Notes – Flow Chart

Families

Parents/Caregivers are only to approach the College Council Chair if complaints are about the Principal.

Staff

Staff concerns need to be addressed by the Principal only. If staff members' concerns are about the Principal, the College Council Chair needs to be approached.

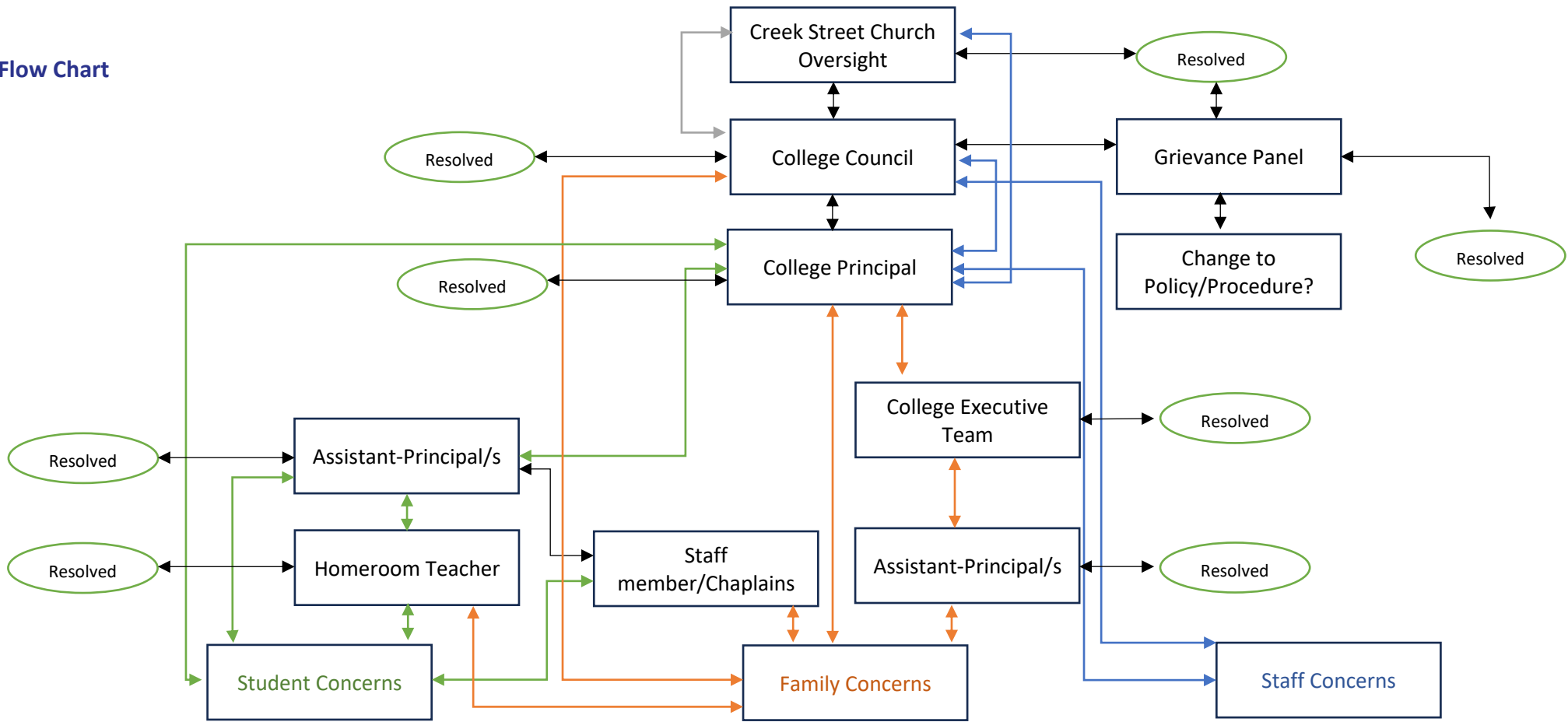
Students

Students are allowed to approach any staff member they feel comfortable to approach.

College Council members

College Council Members can approach the Church oversight if they have any concerns about the Council Chair.

Flow Chart



Key
 Student – Green
 Families – Orange
 Staff – Blue
 College Council Members - Grey