



WAVERLEY Christian College

Complaints Handling Guide - Parents

Waverley Christian College is a community made of many individuals, created by God, united in a common understanding that all wisdom and knowledge can be found in Christ alone (Colossians 2). We live in a world redeemed by Christ but acknowledge that we struggle with the ongoing effects of the Fall, and that conflicts and differences of opinions can cause grief and disunity within the school community. As God's redeemed people we are to be peacemakers in this fallen world, called to work for restoration. We strive therefore to follow the example of Jesus and the teachings in the Scriptures, despite the complex nature of a school community often making this challenging.

Waverley Christian College places a high value on sustaining relationships within the College community that are based on compassion, forgiveness, honesty and trust. The College recognizes that from time to time there may be instances where individuals, including parents, students and members of the public disagree or have a concern in relation to the operations of the College.

Where there is conflict or wrongdoing which causes harm to people and relationships, there is an obligation on the College community to set this right so that we can move forward in a positive manner. The purpose of this Guide is to establish principles and framework governing the College's approach to complaints and concerns.

Where you have a complaint or concern, you are encouraged to contact the College in accordance with the guidelines below so that the issue can be dealt with promptly and fairly.

What is a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to the College, related to our services or operations, or the complaints handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.

Our Commitment

Waverley Christian College is committed to handling complaints effectively and efficiently. To manage complaints effectively, we have established a Complaints Handling Program in line with both the international complaints handling standard (ISO 10002:2014 Quality management – Customer satisfaction – Guidelines for complaints handling in organizations), and the Australian/New Zealand complaints handling standard (AS/NZS 10002:2014 Guidelines for complaint management in organizations).

Our program includes the establishment of a complaints management system which allows the College to effectively capture, manage and report on complaints. Informal and formal complaints are logged by staff members in our complaints management system to enable complaints to be managed and resolved effectively and efficiently.



WAVERLEY Christian College

Child Safety Complaints or Concerns

The College treats child safety seriously and encourages anyone in our community to make us aware of any incident, allegation or concern associated with the safety of the children or young people in our care.

In particular,

- All students should feel safe to speak to any staff member to raise any concerns about their safety or any other concerns that they have
- If a student does not know who to approach, they should start with one of our Student Wellbeing Coordinators
- In addition, students can access our Child Safety Help sheet for assistance, or talk to their class or homegroup teacher

All complaints related to child safety will be handled through our [Child Safety Responding and Reporting Policy](#). Please refer to this policy to ensure that the College can act quickly and effectively to the concern.

Informal Complaints

Most issues causing concern in schools can be handled in an informal manner. In many cases, these issues can be resolved through informal discussions with appropriate staff members by telephone, email or in person.

If your complaint or concern relates to the conduct of a particular person, we would encourage you to approach the person directly in the first instance. For example, raise classroom or subject matters with the classroom or subject teacher.

In contacting the person, it would be helpful to:

- identify the conduct that is causing you concern;
- identify how the conduct has had an impact on you; and
- if necessary, explain how you would like the matter to be resolved.

However, where you have attempted to approach the person directly but your complaint has not been satisfactorily resolved, you are encouraged to take the matter, initially, to a more senior member of staff, for example a Coordinator, Head of Department or Manager.

Formal Complaints

If the matter has not been resolved to your satisfaction via the informal complaints process, or if you would like to make a formal complaint, you can do so by writing to the relevant Head of School or member of the Senior Management Team. Vexatious or frivolous complaints will be treated as being outside this policy.

Formal complaints will be managed as follows:



WAVERLEY Christian College

Our Formal Complaints Handling Process

Step 1 – When a formal complaint is received, the College will nominate a senior member of staff to handle your complaint or concern, following principles of procedural fairness. In the case of complaints against the Principal, the investigation will be conducted in conjunction with the Chair of the College Council.

Step 2 – Formal complaints are logged through our complaints management system. Your complaint will be recorded and you will receive an acknowledgement in writing within five business days. It is our policy, where possible, to resolve complaints within 14 business days, excluding school holidays.

Step 3 – The senior member of staff will review the complaint or concern, seek further information from you or other individual(s) involved where necessary and determine the appropriate course of action.

The senior member of staff may implement various methods available to address the complaints. The methods used will vary depending on the circumstances of the complaint or concern, and may include facilitating a meeting between the parties in an attempt to resolve the issue and move forward.

Step 4 – Having considered the relevant information, the senior member of staff will make a determination and provide you with a written response. The matter will be closed if this response is accepted.

Step 5 – If the initial response is not acceptable the matter will be referred for internal review by the Principal or the Principal's delegate, who may seek additional information or submissions from the relevant parties. The Principal or their delegate will aim to resolve the dispute within 14 business days, excluding school holidays from the date that the review process is initiated. The matter will be closed if the response of the Principal or Principal's delegate is accepted.

Step 6 – If the matter remains unresolved, the complainant may pursue external resolution alternatives.

Overseas Students

The complaints handling process for Overseas Students is set out in the Overseas Student Information booklet.

If an overseas student isn't satisfied with the outcome of College's internal complaints handling process, they may lodge an external appeal through the Overseas Students Ombudsman (OSO) which investigates complaints about problems that overseas students or intending overseas students may have with private education and training in Australia. The services of the OSO are free.

The contact details for OSO are as follows:

Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au

Call: 1300 362 072 within Australia. Outside Australia call +61 2 6276 0111.

Enquiries: 9:00am to 5:00pm Monday to Friday, Australian Eastern Standard Time (Australian Eastern Daylight Time when daylight savings is in effect)

Postal: Commonwealth Ombudsman, GPO Box 442 Canberra ACT 2601.

Website: <http://www.oso.gov.au/>

Waverley Christian College agrees to be bound to the OSO's recommendations, and will ensure that any recommendations made are implemented within 30 days of receipt of the report.



WAVERLEY Christian College

Confidentiality

Your concern or complaint will be treated respectfully and, as far as possible, in a confidential manner.

Confidentiality applies with respect to both information relating to the person making the complaint, and, if relevant to a person against whom a complaint is made. The College will attempt to contain knowledge of the concern or complaint directly to those involved; however, it may be necessary for those handling the complaint to contact third parties to determine what occurred or to afford fairness to those against whom a complaint or concern is made. Information that is shared by the College will be done so for the purpose of attempting to resolve the complaints or concern as efficiently and fairly as possible.

You are encouraged to give your name when making a complaint. It is the College's policy that complaints made by parents should not rebound adversely on their children. If you insist in remaining anonymous, it is the Principal's discretion as to what action, if any, should be taken depending on the nature of the complaint. Allegations regarding child safety will be followed up according to the College's Child Protection Program.

Personally identifiable information about a complainant will only be made available for the purpose of addressing the complaint and (unless the complainant consents) will be actively protected from disclosure. In matters where a child's safety is at risk or it becomes necessary to refer matters to the police or other relevant authority, the College may need to make third parties outside the College aware of the complaint and also the identity of those involved.

Any action taken under staff disciplinary procedures as a result of complaints will be handled confidentially within the College.



APPENDIX: PRINCIPLES FOR POSITIVE RESOLUTION

To achieve the best possible outcome the school's response to conflict is shaped by the following principles:

- Striving to be peace-makers – seek a positive resolution
- Keeping the matter confidential – as appropriate, talk to those concerned
- Keeping the circle small – discourage gossip and involving others unnecessarily
- Being straightforward – be honest about the situation
- Being self-evaluating – always ask where have I faulted?
- Being forgiving – seek restoration and move forward

The following *PeaceMaking Responses* as developed and promoted by PeaceMaker Ministries provide clear guidelines on responding to conflict biblically and should be adopted by the College community in responding to conflict:

PEACEMAKING RESPONSES

Personal Peacemaking

There are three Biblical ways to resolve conflicts personally and privately, just between one party and another:

Overlook an offence

Many disputes are so insignificant that they should be resolved by quietly overlooking an offence. "A person's wisdom yields patience; it is to one's glory to overlook an offence" (Proverbs 19:11). Overlooking an offence is a form of forgiveness, and involves a deliberate decision not to talk about it, dwell on it, or let it grow into pent-up bitterness or anger.

Reconciliation

If an offence is too serious to overlook or has damaged our relationship, we need to resolve personal or relational issues through confession, loving correction, and forgiveness. "If your brother or sister has something against you...go and be reconciled" (Matthew, 5:23-24). "Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit restore that person gently" (Galatians 6:1). "Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Colossians 3:13b).

Negotiation

Even if we successfully resolve relational issues, we may still need to work through material issues related to money, property, or other rights. This should be done through a cooperative bargaining process in which each person seeks to reach a settlement that satisfies the legitimate needs of each. "Not looking to our own interests but each of you to the interests of the others" (Philippians 2:4).

Assisted Peacemaking

When a dispute cannot be resolved personally, God calls us to seek assistance from other believers.

Mediation

If two people cannot reach an agreement in private, they should ask one or more objective outside people to meet with them to help them communicate more effectively and explore possible solutions. "If they will not listen [to you], take one or two others along" (Matt. 18:16). The mediators may ask questions and give advice, but the parties retain the responsibility of making the final decision on how to resolve their differences.

Arbitration

When you and an opponent cannot come to a voluntary agreement on a material issue, you may appoint one or more arbitrators to listen to your arguments and render a binding decision to settle the issue. "If you have disputes about such matters, do you ask for a ruling from those whose way of life is scorned in the church" (1 Cor. 6:4).

Accountability

If a person who professes to be a Christian wanders from the Lord by refusing to be reconciled and do what is right, Jesus commands church leaders to lovingly intervene to hold him or her accountable to Scripture and to promote repentance, justice, and forgiveness. "If a person owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will they not ... go to look for the one that wandered off? ... If they still refuse to listen ..., tell it to the church" (Matt. 18:12,17).