



Complaints and Grievance Policy

Policy Objective

Southern Highlands Christian School is committed to providing all members of the school community with a fair process of review in the event of a complaint or grievance including, but not limited to, equity concerns, staff misconduct and reportable conduct, communication and academic fairness. This opportunity is available to all staff, parents and students. The grievance resolution must also comply with relevant industrial agreements and instruments, and must encompass procedural fairness, privacy and a right of reply.

Biblical Basis

The School affirms the dignity and value of all people as made in the image of God; and seeks to conduct all matters in a way that honours God and cares for people. The core business of the School is conducted through relationships, so a high value is placed on maintaining and protecting relationships within the School community. Conflict is to be regarded as a natural occurrence when people work together. It has the potential to promote new ideas, strengthen personal relationships, stimulate individual growth and facilitate more effective solutions to problems. The guiding principle is: *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.* (Eph 4:2-3). In the event of a dispute or conflict within the School, the process shall follow the principles found in Matthew 18. It should start with discussion between the parties, be based upon a desire for resolution and reconciliation, and involve third parties as appropriate.

Policy Statement

1. The School will maintain its policies and procedures with respect for personal dignity of all people; and with regard for the requirements of relevant state and federal legislation.
2. The School is committed to grievance prevention based strategies, which aim to develop an environment and culture that thrives on diversity; promotes compassion and understanding; and reinforces the practice of respectful behaviour towards all people.
3. Concerns are to be taken seriously and all parties are to be heard so that the matter is considered fairly. All steps are to be taken in a true spirit of reconciliation. Honesty, openness, humility and love are called upon when seeking to reconcile disagreements.
4. Complaints are to be dealt with promptly and are not to be allowed to fester. It may be judged that a concern is ill founded and hence it is communication that is the key.
5. Procedures will be maintained for the fair and equitable review of grievances.
6. The process of review is available for all members of staff, parents and students.



SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

7. The grievance review process will be carried out to ensure, as far as possible, a speedy and effective resolution.
8. A person who presents a grievance will not be penalised or victimised in any way for doing so.

Definitions

- **Complaint:** A complaint is an expression of concern that is raised due to a perceived inappropriate action/ communication or an unfair decision. It deals with something considered to be wrong, rather than just an inconvenience.
- **Grievance:** A grievance may be defined as resentment about a perceived unjust act. It may arise from a person feeling hurt about a matter of concern.



Complaints and Grievance Procedure

1. General

The initial procedure for all people concerned that a decision or situation might be unfair, or that it might have been made without full consideration of the facts, is as follows:

- Speak with, or communicate in writing with, the person responsible for the decision, outlining your concern, and requesting a review.
- At any interview which takes place, the complainant may be accompanied by a support person.
- Speak and act respectfully towards each other.
- The facts of the matter should be reviewed, and actions or decisions explained.
- In resolving the matter, the original decision may be confirmed, or a new decision made.
- Should the complainant be unwilling or unable to speak with the person responsible for the original decision, they may choose to have the matter directed to the school executive.
- Should the matter of concern relate to child protection, the procedure will be followed as set out in the Child Protection Policy.
- The complainant will be informed of the outcome of the investigation.

2. Staff Grievance against Staff

In the first place, staff members should speak with the person directly responsible for the decision or action concerning them. In the event that a satisfactory agreement cannot be reached:

- The matter should be referred to the Principal, who may hear the complaint, or decide to form a committee consisting of staff members not previously associated with the matter in hand.
- The decision of the Principal, or the review committee, is normally final.
- The person making the complaint may appeal the decision to the Board in writing if still not satisfied.
- All decisions will be made with reference to any relevant awards and with a desire to achieve a fair and equitable outcome for all.

3. Staff Grievance Against Parents/ Visitors to the School

If a parent causes concern for a staff member through threatening, abusive, offensive or inappropriate language or behaviour:

- The staff member should terminate the conversation.
- The incident must be reported to the Principal.
- At the Principal's discretion, a phone call or letter will address the incident of concern, reminding them of the Code of Conduct expected from parents and visitors to the School.
- A mediated interview with the Head of School or Principal will attempt to arbitrate reconciliation.
- In the event of a resolution being impossible, the offending parent or visitor will be asked to discuss their possible future relationship with the School.

4. Grievance by, or about, the Principal



SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

- If a staff complaint concerns a decision of the Principal, and a satisfactory agreement cannot be reached, it should be referred in writing to the Board.
- A grievance about the Principal is to be made directly to the Board Chairman, who will form a committee of Board Members and other relevant persons, as required, to consider the complaint.
- A grievance from the Principal, which cannot be satisfactorily resolved, is to be made directly to the Board Chairman, who will form a committee of Board Members and other relevant persons, as required, to consider the complaint.
- At this time, implementation of the Grievance clause in the Principal's letter of appointment shall be considered.

5. Parental Grievance

Parents concerned that a decision or action by any member of the school staff is inappropriate, unfair or ill-advised, should first contact the teacher to discuss the matter.

- Should the parent feel that the matter is unresolved, it may then be taken to the relevant HOD or Year Advisor, who may refer it to the relevant Head of School.
- The Principal or Heads of Schools may choose to become involved at any point in the process and form a committee to hear the grievance.
- Those who hear the matter shall do so openly, keeping records of conversations.
- If the parent(s) wish to have a friend or pastor accompany them whilst they express their concern they are free to, so long as that person does not become an advocate, injecting personal opinions into the discussion.
- If a satisfactory agreement cannot be reached with the Principal, the matter should be referred in writing to the Board for review.
- In the event that a grievance is a matter of child protection, the Principal (Head of Agency) shall immediately be informed and the Child Protection Policy enacted.

6. Student Grievance

In the event that a student feels that a decision or action by a teacher is inappropriate, ill-informed or unfair, that student may state their grievance to the teacher or another appropriate person, maintaining a respectful attitude at all times.

- Should the student feel that the matter is unresolved, it may then be taken to the relevant HOD or Year Advisor, who may refer it to the relevant Head of School.
- Should the matter remain unresolved, it will be referred to the Principal, who might choose to form a committee to investigate the matter.
- The decision of the Principal shall normally be final. Parents/ guardians only may appeal to the School Board on behalf of their child.
- In the event that a grievance is a matter of child protection, the Principal (Head of Agency) shall immediately be informed and the Child Protection Policy enacted.

7. Review of Decisions by the Board

- The Board will consider the complaint, decisions and all known facts and may co-opt members of staff or other relevant persons to assist. The decision of the Board is final for Southern Highlands Christian School Ltd.



SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

- The School Board is a point of appeal for parents and guardians of students, not for students directly. Parents may write to the school Board requesting further investigation if their child's matter remains unresolved.

8. The Review Process

To ensure a fair process of review:

- The person facilitating the process cannot have a personal agenda in relation to the parties or the subject matter of the dispute and must be perceived as 'fair' by the parties.
- The parties are individually consulted about their needs and concerns regarding the process.
- Consideration is given to possible unfairness that may arise from differences between the parties in terms of gender, race, disability, workplace hierarchy or positional authority.
- In the event of a complaint being justified, a new decision will be made to reflect the outcome of the review.