

# Herrick Presbyterian Covenant School

## Grievance Policy and Procedures

### **What is a Grievance?**

A grievance is an unresolved problem. OR

It is a complaint raised in the face of a perceived unfair or inappropriate action or decision.

### **Why have a grievance procedure?**

Whilst not all problems can be resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned, a procedure will ensure that the problem is addressed appropriately. The ultimate aim of a grievance procedure is to produce a solution which is acceptable to the individuals or parties involved.

## GRIEVANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

HPCS has developed a set of procedures to work through unresolved situations, or where an action or decision is considered to be unfair or inappropriate. This is the reality of sin and our inability to live in perfect harmony with one another. However, through God's grace and forgiveness, and by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we strive to reconcile differences and resolve all conflict amicably.

To this end we are guided by the Scriptures.

- *Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.(Matt 18:15,16)*
- *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.(Eph 4:29)*
- *And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.(Eph 4:32)*

Within the grievance process the power of prayer should never be underestimated. As a practicing Christian community HPCS enlists the Holy Spirit's guidance through each step.

### **General Statements**

- It is essential that before the process begins all parties participating are familiar with the process and with the Christian principles underpinning it.
- Informal resolution of a grievance is encouraged and is always the preferred option. This is reached when the outcome is satisfactory to all. The formal process is set in motion where the informal process reaches an unsatisfactory outcome.
- The grievance procedure may not result in a change to, or reversal of, a decision or action. Sometimes the only achievable outcome may be the bearing with one another in love. Sometimes it may be an understanding to follow or improve guidelines or procedures in the future.

### ***General Guidelines***

The process of raising and resolving a grievance, through both informal and formal procedures, should embody the following guidelines.

- Potential conflict should be dealt with and discussed as early as possible and people be encouraged to put the best construction on things.
- The focus needs to be on the issues, rather than the people.
- Those involved in a conflict come together as God's people in prayer. Prayer, repentance and forgiveness sets a basis for further discussion.
- Ensure that the appropriate person represents the conflict. It is the responsibility of Christian community leaders to contain issues to the appropriate people, and to see that others understand this.
- It must again be emphasised that there needs to be clarity as to the precise roles and responsibilities of people involved.
- All input/contributions are to be listened to respectfully and attentively by others in the process - i.e.. participants in the process require a sense of 'having been heard'.
- Communication should be open and honest, focusing on the issue and not the person. This includes listening carefully and respectfully while the other person is talking, and exercising responsibility and mutual respect: respect by staff for parents' special relationships with their children; respect by parents for staff as professionals.
- When an issue is discussed in the student's hearing, it is important that the student understands that you have confidence that the issue will be resolved confidentially at the school level. Criticism of the school or teachers does not support the child's education as it undermines trust and confidence.
- Confidentiality must be maintained through all stages of the process.
- Constructive conflict helps everyone learn, grow and change for the better. Where both parties agree to seek a positive resolution, positive outcomes are likely to result.
- The School welcomes the airing of a grievance in a responsible and constructive manner.
- Mediation may be requested and is offered at any stage of the process.

## **Parent Grievance Procedure**

1. Have a concern? Unresolved issue? Complaint?

- Check you have all the facts
- Arrange a meeting with the staff member to discuss the concern/issue/complaint.
- Aim for resolution.
- Document the issue.
- Communicate ongoing progress – if applicable
- ***Issue resolved satisfactorily*** OR

***Issue unresolved?***

2. Request a meeting with the staff member and the Principal/ Pastor of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Winnaleah

- Agree on outcomes and monitoring.
- Document the issue.
- ***Issue resolved satisfactorily*** OR

***Issue unresolved?***

3. Request assistance of the Principal/ Pastor of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Winnaleah

- Document the issue.
- Agree on outcomes and monitoring
- ***Issue resolved satisfactorily*** OR

***Issue unresolved?***

4. All interested parties provide a written report to the School Board outlining perceptions, procedures followed to date and action/s taken.

- Board considers action, e.g.. Agree to disagree

5. If matters still remain unresolved you have the right to seek arbitration through the courts, ombudsman, legal representation and other government commissions. These might entail some financial cost to you.

- Mediation may be requested and is offered at any stage of the process.

## **Staff Grievance Procedure**

In any organisation conflict of a personal or professional nature may arise. Staff need at all times to seek to resolve conflict at the lowest level possible and not contribute to it by gossip. The functions and gifts of each member will vary but the desire to work for the glory of God and the good of His people ought to be the same. The weight given to any particular grievance is not to be determined by anyone's position in the school. Responsibilities are to be carried out in love and with a spirit of willingness to forgive so that the community is built up.

### **Specific Guidelines**

In the event of an unresolved dispute, the following specific procedure shall be followed with the process ending at the point of resolution. Resolution is aimed at achieving consensus or a working agreement. Rules of absolute confidentiality apply at all steps.

1. Have a concern?
  - Check you have all the facts available
  - At a mutually convenient time, meet with the person(s) concerned and discuss.
  - Document.
  - Agreed resolution OR Agree to disagree
  - **Issue settled** OR

#### ***Still concerned? Issue still not resolved?***

2. Both parties meet with a senior staff member, e.g.. Principal
  - Document the issue.
  - Agree on outcomes and monitoring
  - Agreed resolution OR Agree to disagree
  - **Issue settled** OR

#### ***Issue still not resolved?***

3. Principal and staff member provide a written report to the School Board outlining perceptions, procedures followed to date and actions taken.
  - Board considers action.

4. If matters still remain unresolved you have the right to seek arbitration through the courts, ombudsman, legal representation and other government commissions. These might entail some financial cost to you.

- Mediation may be requested and is offered at any stage of the process.

# Students' Grievance Procedure

## Student - Student/Teacher

- Step 1      **Talk with the person** concerned. Say what the problem is. Say how you feel. Say what you would like him/her to do about it. *If this is too difficult, take a friend with you OR speak to a trusted adult such as the School Principal.*
- Step 2      Listen to his / her side of the story
- Step 3      Think seriously about whether there is any wrong on your side.
- Step 4      Try to reach an agreement with the person where both of you feel OK about the outcome.
- Step 5      If you still have a concern, go to someone in authority for assistance.

## Hints:

- Don't talk about the person to others – talk directly to the person.
- It is better not to talk while you are angry or in public.
- Remember to pray for the right words to say, for understanding and for the issue to be resolved.

## Student - assessment

*All students have the right to question the assessment that the teacher has made of their work in assignments and tests. If you are not satisfied that the assessment was correct and accurate, you should:*

1. Approach the teacher and ask for clarification.
  2. Ask for a reassessment of the work by the teacher
  3. Still not satisfied?
  4. Ask the teacher to have another teacher reassess the work
  5. Accept the decision
- Mediation may be requested and is offered at any stage of the process.

## Staff/School Board Conflict

### General Guidelines

1. Prayer. Those involved in a conflict come together as God's people in prayer. Prayer, repentance and forgiveness sets a basis for further discussion.
2. Ensure that the conflict is represented by the appropriate person. It is the responsibility of Christian community leaders to contain issues to the appropriate people, and to see that others understand this.
3. It must again be emphasised that there needs to be clarity as to the precise roles and responsibilities of the people involved.
4. Mediation may be requested and is offered at any stage of the process. The mediator, agreeable to all, shall be appointed in consultation with the Session of The Evangelical Church of Australia, Winnaleah.

## **Members of the Community Grievance Procedure**

At Herrick Presbyterian Covenant School, we believe that our relationship with the local community is a very important part of our Christian life and love of our neighbour. We recognise that our students, staff and parents need to be an effective and contributing part of that community. Should there be complaints or concerns from members of the public we, as a school community, are committed to work with the complainant to resolve these problems as promptly and effectively as we can.

### ***What to do if you have a problem:***

1. Try to identify the problem clearly before taking any action. If there is more than one problem, list them to ensure that the extent of the problem is clear to the school.
2. Decide whether the problem is a concern, enquiry or complaint. This will help in finding a solution.
3. Make an appointment to meet with the school. The meeting should be with the school principal if he/she is available.
4. If you still do not feel that the matter has been resolved, if your complaint is serious or involves the Principal, telephone or send your complaint in writing to the Chairman of the School Board of Management. The Chairman will then contact you and make arrangements for you to discuss your grievance.
5. If matters still remain unresolved you have the right to seek arbitration through the courts, ombudsman, legal representation and other government commissions. These might entail some financial cost to you.

### ***When you decide to make a complaint:***

1. If a complaint is made against a person, that person will be informed of the nature and content of the complaint and have the right to respond.
2. Discussions of complaints are confidential.
3. Complaints may be made verbally or in writing
4. All complaints, the actions taken to resolve them and outcomes of those actions will be fully documented.
5. A person who has made a complaint may withdraw it at any time. If the complaint is in writing, the withdrawal should also be in writing.
6. No one will be victimised as a result of taking out a formal grievance.
7. Mediation may be requested and is offered at any stage of the process.