INTRODUCTION

From time to time misunderstandings between students and/or between employees or dissatisfaction with the School’s policies, procedures, employees or quality of educational program will arise. This policy seeks to provide a mechanism for dealing with these issues which is consistent with our vision.

VISION

“To be a caring Christian community that supports families by providing a quality Christ-centered education, which develops the whole person for life and eternity.”

RATIONALE

Toongabbie Christian School (TCS) is committed to resolving any grievances that may arise in a formal manner following biblical principles.

In Matthew 18:15-20 there is a God given process which seeks to bring resolution / reconciliation when there is a real or perceived offence. This policy incorporates those principles which:

- Informs a process to follow
- Exhibits procedural fairness
- Is confidential
- Is thorough in uncovering the truth
- Deals with the complainant in love
- In the light of the evidence reaches a just and fair decision, and
- Has the aim of restoring Christian community.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Definitions

The following terms have the following meanings:

- Complainant: A person with a grievance.
- Grievance: A behaviour or action of another person or the School which in the reasonable opinion of the complainant:
  - has, or is likely to have, an unreasonable negative impact on the complainant to undertake their duties: or
  - has, or is likely to have, an unreasonable negative impact on the complainant and their child / family: or
  - has or is likely to have, an unreasonable negative impact on the relationship between the complainant and / or other staff members / school community: or
  - is illegal or inconsistent with the Biblical values and principles underlying the School’s operation.
- Dispute: A grievance that is unsatisfactory pursued or resolved.
- Reportable Conduct: Sexual misconduct, ill-treatment and behaviour causing psychological harm (Section 25A Ombudsman Act 1974 and as amended).

Guidelines

TCS recognises the need to be fair to the Complainant, to the School and others within the School community. We recognise that parties to a Grievance have the right to:

- Be heard:
• Provide and request all relevant material to support the Grievance:
• Be informed of the criteria and processes, including the avenues for further review applied by the School in dealing with Complaints (a copy of the Grievance Resolution Policy);
• Be informed of the School’s decision and the reason for that decision where appropriate subject to legal requirements; and
• Maintain confidentiality.

Additionally, TCS has the right to:
• Amass sufficient detail about the Grievance to enable the school to properly investigate and respond to the Grievance;
• Place all relevant material before the person investigating the Grievance.
• Make an informed decision based on the investigative evidence and communicate this decision to the complainant.

Possible Outcomes

The goal of the process is to seek restoration / reconciliation but TCS’s provision of outcomes will reflect what is fair and on the balance of probabilities seems reasonable in the circumstances based on the investigation.

The following remedies could be provided:
• Agreed solution or
• a School decision involving:
  • Correction;
  • Assistance; or
  • Apology; or
• Dispute unresolved.

Grievance Resolution Processes & Procedures (Refer table next page)

Note: If a Grievance involves possible reportable conduct, reference should be made to the School’s Child Protection Policy.

Step 1 At TCS it is preferable to handle any grievance with careful and prayerful consideration and reflection on the issues involved according to the principles outlined in Matthew 7:3-5, which reflects God’s love and seeks to bring resolution / reconciliation.

If this is not possible, the process outlined in Matthew 18:5-20 is as follows:

Step 2 If there is a concern or a grievance, the second step is for the one who has been offended to talk privately to that person and seek to deal with the matter in a Christ-like fashion, ensuring that all of our actions are driven by motives that would bring honour to God before taking it further. The aim is to determine whether the complainant has a real concern or if there has been a misunderstanding. If, and only if, this does not result in the grievance being resolved the matter may, after prayerful consideration, be taken to step 3.

Step 3 The third step is to take two or three witnesses, so their very word may be established. The complainant is to bring their immediate supervisor/Coordinator to help work through any issues that might have occurred.

If, and only if, this does not result in the conflict being resolved within 14 days the matter may, after prayerful considerations, be taken to step 4.

Step 4 If the situation has not been resolved after 14 days then the Assistant Principal is involved in this step.

If there is still no resolution then the matter will proceed to the next step.

Note:  If the grievance is against the principal the Board is involved after Step 4.

Step 5 If the situation has not been resolved after 14 days then the Principal is involved in this step. If there is still no resolution then the matter will proceed to the next step.
Step 6: The Board Chair will be given all information. The Board will review the process of the investigation. In reaching a decision on any matters before it the School Board will consider all the available information and act in the best interest of the school as a whole. This may result in decisions being made for reasons that cannot be fully explained because of the need to maintain confidentiality. While it is intended that a response will generally be made to matters raised with the School Board this will not usually include details of any discussion and may consist only of acknowledgment that the issue has been raised and the decision.

Dispute Unresolved

In the event that an issue is raised with the School Board and in the view of the complainant is not satisfactorily resolved it would be appropriate for issues to be discussed outside the framework that is discussed in this policy. If this occurs the School Board may decide that, after following the procedure set out in this policy, it is in the best interests of the school that the staff person’s employment or the student’s enrolment is terminated.

The Board may seek legal advice.

The final decision rests with the Board.

The Complainant must be advised in writing of the Board’s decision within 30 days of the Board making its decision.

All decisions must satisfy conditions of appropriate Staff Multi Enterprise Agreement’s and student enrolment conditions.

Grievance Resolution Processes & Procedures

Important Note: If a grievance involves possible reportable conduct reference should be made to the School’s Child Protection Policy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Biblical Basis</th>
<th>Parties Involved (as applicable)</th>
<th>Processes Involved (as applicable)</th>
<th>Possible Outcomes (as applicable)</th>
<th>Indicative timeframe for this stage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.” Matthew 7:3-5</td>
<td>• Complainant</td>
<td>• Careful and prayerful consideration and reflection on the issues involved.</td>
<td>• Decision not to proceed with grievance • Forgiveness for minor wrongs • Greater sense of perspective regarding the issues</td>
<td>As applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>“If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.” Matthew 18:15</td>
<td>• Complainant • Person involved in action or behaviour</td>
<td>• Meeting between parties to clarify issues and understandings</td>
<td>• Resolution of issues • Clarified understanding</td>
<td>As applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>Evidence Collection</td>
<td>Resolution</td>
<td>Timeframe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Three | "But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses."
Matthew 18:16 | Complainant, Person involved in action or behaviour, Immediate Supervisors | Investigation of facts, Meetings and discussions, Obtaining advice | Agreed solution or a School decision possibly involving: Correction, Assistance, Apology | 14 days |
| Four | "But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses."
Matthew 18:16 | Complainant, Person involved in action or behaviour, Assistant Principal (if app.) | Investigation of facts, Meetings and discussions, Obtaining advice | Agreed solution or a School decision possibly involving: Correction, Assistance, Apology | 14 days |
| Note: | | | | If the grievance is against the Principal, the Board is involved after Step 4. | |
| Five | "But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses."
Matthew 18:16 | Complainant, Person involved in action or behaviour, Principal | Investigation of facts, Meetings and discussions, Obtaining advice | Agreed solution or a School decision possibly involving: Correction, Assistance, Apology | 14 days |
| Six | "If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector."
Matthew 18:17 | Complainant, Person involved in action or behaviour, Principal, Board | Review of investigation, Meetings and discussions, Obtaining advice | Agreed solution or a School decision possibly involving: Correction, Assistance, Apology, Dispute unresolved | 30 days |

**Note**
Anonymous complaints involving unsigned letters or unsubstantiated rumours are not pursued.

**Acknowledgements**
V. Danvers, Executive Officer, CSA NSW