



POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

Complaints and Grievances – Parents and Students

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1. POLICY STATEMENT

Rehoboth Christian College is committed to the fair resolution of complaints by those within its scope. The College is also committed to developing an educational and organisational culture based on mutual trust and respect and procedures to resolving issues in a manner that is honouring to our Lord Jesus Christ and His Word.

We acknowledge that students and parents may sometimes have a complaint about a decision, behaviour, act or omission that they feel is unacceptable. Whilst most issues can be resolved through direct discussion with the parties, there may be instances in which this is not possible.

All formal Grievance Processes within Rehoboth Christian College follow a three level framework which models the Biblical process outlined in Matthew 18.

2. SCOPE OF THE POLICY

This policy provides a process for those receiving services from the College to raise a complaint.

This policy and procedure is for the benefit of parents and students, and will be relied upon in respect of **all complaints** by parents and pupils made against the College **except in respect of:**

- a) **Child protection allegations** where a separate policy and procedure applies; and
- b) **Student discipline** where a separate policy and procedure applies;
- c) **Sexual harassment** where a separate policy and procedure applies.

3. UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

Rehoboth Christian College is committed to the following principles to ensure complaints are addressed appropriately:

- a) Complaints will be investigated in a fair and impartial manner;
- b) Resolution at the local level is preferred, wherever it is appropriate to do so;
- c) A person facing a complaint is entitled to know detailed information about the substance of the complaint and to have the opportunity to respond;



- d) Procedural fairness is afforded to all parties;
- e) Confidentiality will be observed;
- f) The complaints management process will be conducted in a manner that is respectful of all parties;
- g) Complaints are monitored and their management evaluated so as to reduce the occurrence of systemic and recurring problems;
- h) In all matters, the educational well-being of students is the first priority;
- i) Persons making a complaint will **not** be victimised;
- j) It is expected that complaints are made in good faith and are not vexations or malicious;
- k) Complaints will be addressed in a timely manner and complainants will be advised if the matter cannot be finalised within one month;
- l) All persons in the Rehoboth College community including students, parents, administrators, teachers and support staff, have a right to be treated with respect and courtesy;
- m) Complaints are to be referred where required to an external authority such as the Department for Community Development or the Western Australian Police Service for advice or immediate action. All referrals of this nature are to be done through the Principal of the relevant College or the CEO of the Association. The CEO is to be informed of all referrals made to external authorities.

4. DEFINITIONS

Complaint: An expression of dissatisfaction about the provision of education or the conduct of any Rehoboth staff member employed by the Association. A complaint must contain sufficient detail to enable it to be addressed and recorded.

Complainant: Parent/guardian or person involved with the school in a fulltime, part-time or voluntary capacity.

Resolution: An outcome of a complaint that is satisfactory to both parties.



5. PROCEDURES

- a) Complainants will be encouraged to put their complaints in writing, in order to make the terms or basis of any complaint as clear as possible.
- b) Those involved with a complaint will have the opportunity to present their point of view.
- c) Complaints will be investigated according to the steps outlined below.
- d) All complaints will be treated seriously and investigated.
- e) A record of all complaints will be maintained and a report provided to the Leadership Team, on the number and nature of any complaints received since the previous report excluding identifying details. The record should contain the following:
 - i. date when the issue was raised;
 - ii. name of complainant;
 - iii. brief statement of issue;
 - iv. location of detailed file;
 - v. member of staff handling the issue; and
 - vi. brief statement of outcome.
- f) A complaint may be made about the College as a whole, about a specific department in the College or about an individual member of staff.
- g) Confidential files on all complaints should be maintained and kept together and cross-referenced with other files as necessary. The files should contain simple but clear notes of all conversations with parents about any source of dissatisfaction. This applies to friendly chats and to telephone conversations, as misunderstandings easily arise. There should be a clear statement of what is concerning the complainant/s.
- h) All complainants are requested to follow the steps outlined below. (Note: Parents are asked not to write to the Board of the Association without first having tried to solve the matter either informally or formally as outlined in the Steps below).



6. STEPS

6.1 Stage 1 – Informal resolution

- a) It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- b) If parents have a complaint they need to first make contact with their son or daughter's teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved to the parent's satisfaction. If the teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult their Head of Department, the Deputy or the Principal.
- c) Complaints made directly to the Head of Department, Deputy, Principal or CEO will usually be referred to the relevant teacher to first attempt informal resolution.
- d) The parent/student will make a written record of all concerns and complaints according to the criteria described above.
- e) The College will endeavour to resolve any informal complaints within ten (10) working days of them being raised, except where they are raised in the College holidays where the College will use all reasonable endeavours to resolve them as soon as possible after commencement of the new school term (usually within ten 10 working days).
- f) Should the matter be resolved, action shall be taken by the College to prevent the situation being repeated. Such action may include: Improved Communication; Procedural Improvements; Professional Development, etc.
- g) Should the matter not be resolved, as referred to in paragraph 5 above, or in the event that the teacher and the parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage Two of this procedure.

6.2 Stage 2 – Formal resolution

- a) If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then parents should put their complaint in writing to the Principal, in which the complaint should be expressed clearly and courteously. Parents should also identify how they wish their complaint to be resolved.
- b) The written complaint is tabled with the Principal of the College who will act as a mediator or appoint a mediator (may be internal or external) to resolve the complaint within seven days.



- c) In most cases, the Principal will meet or speak with the parents concerned to discuss the matter. If possible a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- d) The Principal will use reasonable endeavours to speak to or meet parents, within ten working days of the formal complaint being received, except where the complaint is received in school holidays or within two working days of their commencement where the Principal will use reasonable endeavours to speak or meet with parents as soon as possible after the commencement of the new College term (usually within ten working days).
- e) It may be necessary for one of the Deputies or teacher/s, as appropriate, to carry out further investigations.
- f) The Principal will keep a written record of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- g) Once the Principal is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made. Parents will be informed of this decision in writing, giving reasons for the decision. The written decision should be provided no later than ten (10) working days after speaking or meeting with parents to discuss the matter (pursuant to paragraph 4 above). The Principal may also arrange to meet with parents to explain the decision.
- h) The College will keep a written record of all formal complaints, including records of meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint, and the College's decision, which record will be kept for one year after the student leaves the College.
- i) Where the parent is dissatisfied with the outcomes of the College's response to their formal complaint, the parents have the opportunity to have their complaint considered according to Stage Three, outlined below.

6.3 Stage 3 – Panel hearing

- a) If the parents seek to invoke Stage Three following failure to reach an earlier resolution and where dissatisfied with the Principal's decision in respect of their formal complaint, the complainant may address the CEO, in writing, requesting that their complaint be further considered by an independent Complaints Panel set up for this purpose.
- b) This request for further assessment of the complaint will, for the purposes of this Procedure, be known as an "appeal".



- c) Parents must lodge their appeal in writing and within ten working days of the date of the College's decision made in accordance with Stage 2 of the Procedure. The parents should provide a list of their complaints made against the College and which they believe to have been resolved unsatisfactorily by the Stage 2 Procedure, along with the remedies sought in respect of each. The Complaints Panel is only obliged to consider the complaint(s) lodged in this "initial submission" although they may use their discretion to consider other relevant and related matters that may subsequently arise.
- d) Where the appeal is received by the College it will, within five working days, refer the matter to the CEO.
- e) The CEO provides an independent source of advice on procedures for all parties.
- f) Once an appeal has been received by the CEO, he/she will acknowledge the appeal in writing within five working days, and inform the parent of the steps involved in the Complaints Procedure.
- g) The CEO will then endeavour to convene an independent Complaints Panel hearing as soon as possible to consider the matter, normally no later than twenty (20) College days after receipt by the College of parent's written notice that they wish to invoke the Stage Three Procedure, dependent upon the availability of the Panel members.
- h) The independent Complaints Panel will consist of the CEO, Board member who has not previously been involved in the complaint, one professional educator independent of the management and running of the College, and an approved pastor or minister of a church.
- i) The following are entitled to attend a hearing, submit written representations and address the Panel:
 - i. The parents (or, if aged over 18, a student) and/or representative;
 - ii. The Principal of the College and/or one representative; and
 - iii. Any other interested person whom the Complaints Panel considers to have a reasonable and just interest in the appeal and whose contribution would assist the Panel in their decision-making.
- j) Where the Complaints Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. In such cases all parties will be given the opportunity to submit written evidence to the Panel in support of their position, including:
 - a. Documents in support of complaint(s);
 - b. Chronology and key dates relating to complaint(s); and
 - c. A written submission setting out the complaint(s) in more detail.



- k) Evidence will initially be sent to the CEO, who will then circulate the documentation to all parties, including Panel members, along with an order of proceedings. All written documentation must be received by the CEO no later than ten working days in advance of the hearing. The CEO will distribute the written evidence to the relevant parties no later than five working days in advance of the Panel hearing.

- l) It is for the Panel to decide how to conduct the proceedings of the appeal, which should be reasonably informal so that all parties can present their case effectively. If possible, the Panel will resolve the complainant's matter immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.

- m) After due consideration of all the facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision, and may make recommendations, which it shall complete with ten working days of the hearing. **The decision reached by the Complaints Panel is final.** The decision reached by the panel will be communicated to the complainant within ten working days.

- n) Within thirty days after the final recommendations the Leadership Team of the College will review and evaluate the actions and procedures of the complaint and make recommendations for change and alterations where necessary.

6.4 Student complaints

If a student has a complaint against the College or a staff member in the College they are firstly to speak to their parent(s) or guardian(s). Then on advice of their parents follow the same procedures listed above in the informal and formal processes and if informal procedures fail then the official complaint is to be lodged with the Principal of the College.

See attachment: Parent Contact Form – Policy and Procedures Attachments and Forms.

7. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FLOWCHARTS

