



POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

Complaints and Grievances (Parents)

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1. OVERVIEW

First created:	20 November 2014
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Owner:	Compliance Officer
Stakeholders:	Board, staff, parents
Child Safety:	National Principles 1-4, 6, 9-10

Rehoboth Christian College seeks to provide a learning environment in which all students are protected from harm and places the highest possible priority upon the safety and nurture of young people. The College expects all stakeholders to espouse this approach and to be aware of the Child Safe Framework, accessible from the College website.

- a) We are committed to the fair resolution of complaints and to developing a culture based on mutual trust and respect, with procedures for resolving issues in a manner that is honouring to our Lord Jesus Christ and His Word. This policy provides a process for parents with students enrolled at Rehoboth to raise a concern or complaint.
 - b) We acknowledge that parents may sometimes have a complaint about a decision, behaviour, act, or omission that they feel is unacceptable. While most issues can be resolved through direct discussion with the parties involved, there may be instances in which this is not possible.
 - c) All formal grievance processes within Rehoboth follow a three-level framework which models the Biblical process outlined in [Matthew 18](#).
- a) This policy will be used in respect of all complaints raised by parents **except in respect of:**
- i. **Child protection allegations** where separate policy and procedures applies; and
 - ii. **Student discipline** where separate policy and procedures applies;
 - iii. **Sexual harassment** where separate policy and procedures applies.



2. DEFINITIONS

- a) **Complaint** means an expression of dissatisfaction made to us about our services, decisions, actions, or conduct of our staff, or about the complaint management process itself. A complaint should contain sufficient detail to enable it to be addressed and recorded.
- b) **Complainant** means anyone who makes a complaint. Complaints may be made anonymously.
- c) **Complaints and Breaches Register** means the official record we keep of any complaints.
- d) **Resolution** means an outcome of a complaint that is satisfactory to both parties.
- e) The **role of the Director General** as referenced in the [Guide to the Registration Standards and Other Requirements for Non-Government Schools \(January 2020\)](#) as:

‘The Director General of the Department of Education is responsible for ensuring that the school observes the registration standards, including the standard about its complaints handling system. Any student, parent or community member is entitled to contact the Director General with concerns about how the school has dealt with a complaint. Information is available on the Department of Education website. While the Director General may consider whether the school has breached the registration standards, she does not have power to intervene in a complaint or override the school’s decision.

3. UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

We are 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 to reduce the occurrence of systemic and recurring problems.
- h) In all matters, the safety and wellbeing 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 vexatious or malicious.
- k) Complaints will be addressed promptly, and complainants will be advised if the matter cannot be finalised within one month.
- l) All persons in the Rehoboth 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 are to be done through the Principal or the CEO. The CEO is to be informed of all referrals made to external authorities.

4. CONFIDENTIALITY

- a) As far as is practicable, we will ensure the privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality of the complainant(s) and staff member(s) involved in accordance with our Privacy Policy. Those involved in the process may waive their right to privacy and confidentiality if they choose to involve someone else in the process.
- b) Confidentiality and privacy are subject to reporting obligations. Where this is necessary, the required information will be provided to the reporting body. Information may also be disclosed where there is a legal requirement or grounds to do so.
- c) Anonymous complaints are accepted in accordance with the Australian Privacy Principles and the National Principals for Child Safe Organisations. These are assessed, investigated, and resolved as completely as possible using the information provided.
- d) In many cases, there are practical limitations as to how we can provide support to anonymous Complainants, ask for clarification, further information, or notify Complainants of any resolution. The College representative responsible for investigating the anonymous complaint will determine the extent to which the complaint will be investigated.



5. GENERAL PROCEDURES

- a) Where appropriate, complainants will be encouraged to communicate their complaint or grievance in a manner that will make the terms or basis of the complaint or grievance 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. COMPLAINTS PROCESS

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 contact the appropriate 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 or her to consult their Principal, Deputy Principal, or Head of Department.
- c) Complaints made directly to the Principal, Deputy Principal, Head of Department, or CEO will usually be referred to the relevant teacher first to attempt informal resolution.
- d) The complainant should make a record of all concerns and complaints according to the criteria described above.
- e) We will endeavour to resolve any informal complaints within ten working days. However, if the complaint is raised during school holidays, we will make all reasonable attempts to resolve the matter as soon as possible once the new school term has commenced (usually within ten working days).
- f) Should the matter be resolved, we will take action to prevent similar situations in the future (e.g. improved communication, procedural Improvements, professional development, etc.).
- g) Should the matter not be resolved informally, or where the teacher and the complainant fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then the complainant will be advised to escalate their complaint to Stage 2.

6.2 Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- a) If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then complainants should communicate the matter to their Principal, in which the complaint should be expressed clearly and courteously. The complainant should also identify how they wish the matter to be resolved.
- b) The Principal will act as a mediator or appoint a mediator (who may be internal or external) to resolve the complaint within seven days.
- c) In most cases, the Principal will meet or speak with the complainant concerned to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.



- d) The Principal will make reasonable attempts to speak to or meet with the complainant within ten working days of the formal complaint being received. However, if the complaint is received during school holidays or within two working days of their commencement, the Principal will make reasonable attempts to speak to or meet with parents as soon as possible once the the new term has commenced (usually within ten working days).
- e) It may be necessary for the Deputy Principal, Head of Department, or teacher(s) as appropriate to carry out further investigations.
- f) The Principal will keep a written record of all meetings and interviews held concerning the complaint.
- g) Once the Principal is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made. Complainants will be informed of the Principal's decision in writing, giving reasons for the decision. The written decision should be provided no later than ten working days after speaking or meeting with parents to discuss the matter, pursuant to paragraph 5.2(e) above. The Principal may also arrange to meet with the complainant to explain the decision.
- h) We will keep a written record of all formal complaints, including records of meetings and interviews held concerning the complaint, and the Principal's decision. This record will be kept in accordance with the College's policy for retention of records. Refer to our [Records Management Policy](#) for more details.
- i) Where the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcomes of Stage 2, he or she has the opportunity to escalate their complaint to Stage 3.

6.3 Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- a) If the complainant seeks to invoke Stage 3 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 Stage, be known as an **appeal**.
- c) Complainants must lodge their appeal in writing and within ten working days of the date of the Stage 2 decision being communicated to them. The complainant should provide a list of their complaints which they believe to have been unsatisfactorily resolved by Stage, along with the remedies sought in respect of each. The Independent Complaints Panel is only obliged to consider the complaint(s) lodged in this initial



submission. However, it may use its discretion to consider other matters it deems relevant or related that may subsequently arise.

- d) Where the College receives the appeal, it will be referred to the CEO within five working days.
- e) The CEO provides an independent source of advice on procedures for all parties.
- f) Once the CEO has received an appeal, he or she will acknowledge the appeal in writing within five working days and inform the complainant of the steps involved in Stage 3.
- g) The CEO will endeavour to convene an Independent Complaints Panel hearing as soon as possible to consider the matter, normally no later than twenty business days after receipt of the complainant's written notice that they wish to invoke Stage 3, and dependent upon the availability of the Panel members.
- h) The Independent Complaints Panel will comprise:
 - i. one school Principal, appointed by Christian Education National (CEN) or Christian Schools Australia (CSA), independent of the management and running of Rehoboth Christian College, who will chair the Panel;
 - ii. a Board member of the Association for Christian Education who has not previously been involved in the complaint; and
 - iii. an approved pastor or minister of a local Protestant church.
- i) The following are entitled to attend a hearing, submit written representations, and address the Independent Complaints Panel:
 - i. the complainant and/or their representative;
 - ii. the Principal and/or one representative; and
 - iii. any other interested person whom the Independent Complaints Panel considers to have a reasonable and just interest in the appeal and whose contribution would assist the Panel in its decision-making.
- j) Where the Independent 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 have the opportunity to submit written evidence to the Independent Complaints Panel in support of their position, including:
 - i. documents in support of complaint(s);
 - ii. chronology and key dates relating to complaint(s); and
 - iii. 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 members of the Independent Complaints Panel, 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 Independent Complaints Panel hearing.
- l) It is for the Independent Complaints 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 Independent Complaints Panel will resolve the complainant's matter immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Independent Complaints Panel will decide how the investigation should be carried out.
- m) After due consideration of all the facts it considers relevant, the Independent Complaints 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 Independent Complaints Panel is final.** The decision reached by the Independent Complaints Panel will be communicated to the complainant within ten working days.
- n) Within thirty days after the final recommendations, the Senior 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.

7. SUPPORT SERVICES

- a) The Department for Child Protection is the State Government department responsible for issues specifically related to the protection of children, including the handling of abuse and neglect cases. Its [website](#) contains some excellent material for professionals, and parents and friends.
- b) For sexual abuse reports, the Mandatory Reporting Service must be contacted through one of the following means:

By phone 1800 708 704
By email mrs@dcp.wa.gov.au
By fax 1800 610 614
By post PO Box 8146
PERTH BUSINESS CENTRE WA 6849

This unit is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for make a report or to raise concerns.

Details regarding mandatory reporting can be obtained through the mandatory reporting website.



To contact DCP for assistance with a specific case that does not involve sexual abuse, the school will need to speak to the Duty Officer at the local office, available during office hours. All offices are listed in the White Pages or on the website.

c) After hours:

Child Abuse Services WA

By phone 9223 1111 / 1800 199 008

Crisis Care (24 hour phone service for people in crisis and needing urgent help)

By phone 9223 1111 / 1800 199 008

WA Police Service Child Abuse Investigation Unit

For urgent matters 000

If you are a victim 131 444

Reporting child abuse to the 9492 5444

Child Protection Squad child.abuse.investigation@police.wa.gov.au

Crime Stoppers 1800 333 000

Or visit your local Police Station

WA Police Cyber Predator Team

By phone 9492 5444

To lodge complaints www.police.wa.gov.au

d) Other sources of information:

www.acma.gov.au

www.constablecare.org.au

www.cybersmartkids.com.au

www.netalert.net.au

www.virtualglobaltaskforce.com

These websites contain information on cyber predators for parents, teachers, and students to use.

e) **The National Association of the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN)**

NAPCAN is an Australian organisation that seeks to resource and network child welfare professionals and practitioners working to prevent child abuse and neglect from happening before it starts, through the provision of parenting brochures, training, support networks and information. www.napcan.org.au



f) **Protective Behaviours WA Inc. – 9356 0514 / pbwainc@hotmail.com**

This is a preventative life skills program that assists people of all ages to develop the skills to help them deal with difficult or hostile situations. The program has a voluntary committee made up of representatives from government and non-government agencies as well as interested members of the community. AISWA is a group member of Protective Behaviours and is able to purchase resources at a discount for interested schools.

g) **Prime Corporate Psychology Services – 9492 8900 / 1800 674 188**

This is a support service available for staff at schools who may experience personal issues resulting from making a report. They offer an employee assistance program including counselling, management and referrals.

h) The following services and organisations can provide help, advice, and support to the College, parents, or children who are affected by abuse and to prevent abuse from recurring:

Department for Child Protection (see above for contact information)

Parenting Line

By phone 9272 1466 / 1800 654 432

Family Helpline – 9223 1100 / 1800 643 000

This is a free confidential telephone counselling and information service for families with relationship difficulties.

Men’s Domestic Violence Helpline – 9223 1199 / 1800 000 599

This service provides free telephone, referral, and counselling for men to help them change their violent behaviour toward female partners.

Women’s Domestic Violence Helpline – 9223 1188 / 1800 007 339

This service provides free 24 hour telephone support and counselling for women experiencing family and domestic violence.

Child Health and Community Health Services

Refer to the White Pages for contact details of local Child Health Centres

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services – 1800 220 400

24-hour mental health advice line



Perth Children's Hospital – 6456 2222

State Child Development Centre – 9481 2203

Disability Services Commission – 9426 9200 / 1800 998 214

Kids Helpline – 1800 551 800

This is a free and confidential telephone counselling service for 5 to 25 year olds in Australia available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Sexual Assault Resource Centre Counselling Line

This service offers free, 24-hour emergency services for people aged 13 or over who have been sexually assaulted or sexually abused recently (within the last two weeks).

Lifeline Australia – 13 11 14

This service operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and can provide information about other support services, if required.

- i) The following sites can provide a wide range of background information on child abuse for schools that are interested:

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/nch/afsapubs.html>

This site lists recent publications relating to information on child abuse that have been updated on the web site of the National Child Protection Clearinghouse.

<http://www.aic.gov.au/publications>

This is the Australian Institute of Criminology site and has links to the criminal aspect of child abuse.

8. FLOWCHART

