GRIEVANCE POLICY

Date Approved:	17 March 2026
Approved by:	SCC Board

1. INTRODUCTION

Shepparton Christian College is committed to providing a safe place for all stakeholders. We also recognise that from time to time there will be disputes and/or conflict between members of our community. This policy is a recognition of this reality and how formal grievances will be handled.

2. RATIONALE

There will be times when members of Shepparton Christian College community (staff, students or parents) wish to question or bring complaints against behaviours of persons or decisions. We recognise that despite our intentions to live Godly lives, disagreements and conflicts will arise between us.

3. AIMS

This policy exists to provide a clear FORMAL PROCEDURE for parents (and their children) and staff should they wish to make such a complaint about any matter other than a Child Protection complaint (see separate policy) or Industrial complaint (refer to Dispute Resolution contained in relevant Award).

4. BACKGROUND

This policy covers Formal Complaints about any matter other than child protection or industrial matters, brought by parents and staff of the College. Formal Complaints concerning Anti-Discrimination, Sexual Harassment and Bullying are also made using this policy procedure.

a) All members of the College community have a right to work in an environment conducive to their wellbeing and safety.
b) Fairness and impartiality will be accorded to all.
c) Confidentiality will be observed as an important principle of complaint resolution.
d) Complaints need to be handled in a consistent and timely manner.
e) Recordkeeping, reporting, privacy, and employment law obligations will be met when responding to complaints and concerns. For more information, please refer to the Privacy Policy, the Records Management Policy, and/or the Child Safe Responding and Reporting Obligations.

5. IMPLEMENTATION

We seek to resolve such conflicts by following the Lord's teaching (for example, Mathew 18:15-16). If one person has a concern about, or complaint against another person, the first step (with due consideration to timing and place) is to take it to that person directly with the aim of helpfully communicating and resolving the problem. This requires Godly wisdom, Christ-like actions and the fruit of the Spirit. Most complaints will be able to be satisfactorily remedied through INFORMAL communication.

a) The College acknowledges the right of parents (personally or on behalf of students), students and staff, to seek remedy for concerns and problems they have as arising out of behaviour or decisions associated with the College.

b) All formal complaints will be addressed under this policy. Formal complaints must be made in writing as outlined in the appendix to this policy.

c) All parties in a complaint situation have the right to be heard, and all evidence and accusations to be reviewed impartially. Confidentiality will be stressed.

d) All parties in any grievance/complaint have the right to feel safe and must be treated with courtesy and respect. This applies to staff, parents, students and other members of our community. Any person, whose presence at the College is seen in the reasonable view of the Principal to be an unacceptable risk to others, will either be directed to specific areas within the College, or, be asked not to attend the College or any of its associated facilities or activities.

e) Unless otherwise determined by the College Board, the process outlined in Appendix 1 will apply to work through formal complaints.

f) Every reasonable effort will be made by the College and its representatives to ensure that a person who lodges a grievance will not be treated unfairly or victimised because of the grievance nor that anyone dealing with the grievance will be coerced or intimidated.

g) Communication and resolution processes should always be based on the parties acting in good faith, exercising good judgement, being honest and open, focusing on the issue and not the person.

h) Where complaints or grievances are made in circumstances where an alleged crime may have been committed, the Police or similar outside agencies will normally be contacted and formally advised of the complaint or grievance. In some cases (eg. Mandatory Reporting), there is no discretion and the matter must and will be reported to the relevant authorities.

i) Anonymous complaints do not reflect the principles outlined above. Anonymous complaints may not be acted upon.

j) This policy does not apply to complaints where any action that is the subject of the complaint is considered to constitute reasonable management action.

APPENDIX 1 – GRIEVANCE/COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

We seek to resolve such conflicts by following the Lord's teaching (for example, Mathew 18:15-16). If one person has a concern about, or complaint against another person, the first step (with due consideration to timing and place) is to take it to that person directly with the aim of helpfully communicating and resolving the problem. This requires Godly wisdom, Christ-like actions and the fruit of the Spirit. Most complaints will be able to be satisfactorily remedied through INFORMAL communication.

NOTE: if the complaint involves a person closely related to the Principal, the Principal will appoint a suitable delegate to manage the complaint.

If a formal complaint is being pursued, the following aspects apply.

a) The complainant is required to make the complaint in writing to the Principal. In cases where the complaint is regarding the Principal, the relevant documentation is to be delivered in a sealed envelope addressed to the Chairman of the Board of Directors, marked "Confidential – Formal Complaint".

   Complaints must be submitted by individuals.

   Anonymous complaints do not reflect the principles outlined in this policy. Anonymous complaints may not be acted upon.

b) The complaint, and any other documentation, is to be received by the Principal or delegate of the Principal in person or via College reception.

c) The Principal and another senior staff member (with, as necessary, external advice) will decide how best to manage the complaint. This may include:

   - Handling the complaint under a specific College Policy – if applicable.
   - Mediation.
   - Internal investigation by appropriate senior staff.
   - Engaging an external person to investigate the complaint.

d) The Principal will meet the alleged offender (Respondent) to inform him/her of the complaint and share appropriate details and documents.

   - The Principal will invite the Respondent to respond then and there, if he/she wishes or at a later time.
   - If deemed appropriate, the Principal will devise a Formal Complaint Management Plan to address the complaint, and will inform both Complainant and Respondent

e) Both parties are encouraged to have support persons of their choice at all stages of the proceedings.

f) If mediation has been decided upon, a mediator agreeable to both parties will be engaged. This may be a staff member, a Board member or someone from outside of the College.

- The mediation will take place.
- Both parties will be requested to support any outcome.
- Both parties will be requested to sign on the outcome agreed upon.
- The matter will be monitored at set intervals subsequently.

g) If the Principal decides the matter needs to be looked into internally, a senior staff member (ie Business Manager, Primary or Secondary Coordinator) may be delegated to investigate the complaint in question.

- Relevant members of staff will be interviewed.
- The Principal and College senior staff (at the discretion of the Principal) and external adviser, will decide on the outcomes.
- The Principal will put such outcomes in place.

h) Where a formal complaint has been lodged, the following type of evidence may be relevant, or required:

- Supporting evidence provided by a medical practitioner, counsellor, family member, friend or co-worker.
- Supervisor's report and personnel records (eg. sudden increase in sick leave).
- Complaints or information provided by other employees about the behaviour of the alleged person causing the concern.
- Records kept by the person who has the concern.
- Whether the parties presented the evidence in a credible and consistent manner.
- The absence of evidence where it should logically exist.

i) If an investigation by an outside investigator is decided to be appropriate:

- The outside investigator will be engaged as the Complaint Case Manager.
- The investigator will attend the school to interview both parties and relevant witnesses as nominated by complainant, respondent and investigator.
- All interviewed will be required to sign a Confidentiality Protocol for Parties and Witnesses Form (Annexure A).
- All statements taken will be signed as a "true record" of information given.
- The investigator will provide:
    - A report of the investigation and whether or not the complaint is substantiated.
    - Recommendations to the Principal.
- The report is privileged to the Principal and Board. Where deemed appropriate by the Principal and/or Board, the report may be shared with those involved in the issue.
- The Principal and Board will decide on the most appropriate outcomes in view of the report and recommendations.

j) The Principal (or delegate), in writing, will inform the Complainant and the Respondent whether or not the complaints have been substantiated or not, and the outcomes which will follow.

k) The Principal will put in place any outcomes resulting from the investigation of the grievance/complaint. These may include disciplinary outcomes for staff and students. Outcomes may include any combination of the following:

(i) Counselling

(ii) (ii) Disciplinary action against the person complained about (eg. demotion, suspension, probation or dismissal).

(iii) (iii) Official warnings that are noted on the personnel file.

(iv) (iv) Disciplinary action against the person who complained if there is strong evidence that the complaint was vexatious or malicious.

(v) (v) Formal apologies.

Outcomes decided upon will depend on factors such as:

(i) The severity and frequency of the issue causing concern.

(ii) The weight of the evidence.

(iii) The wishes of the person who is making the complaint.

(iv) Whether the person causing the problem could have been expected to know that such behaviour was a breach of policy/unprofessional conduct.

(v) The level of contrition.

(vi) Whether there have been any prior incidents or warnings.

l) Where the Formal Complaint pertains to the Principal, the Board of Directors will address the Complaint, as per the guidelines outlined above.

m) Disciplinary outcomes may apply to anyone who brings a complaint which is considered vexatious, or without any basis.

n) There may be time when a Complainant does not want to continue with any process or investigation. The College reserves the right to continue or instigate an investigation, irrespective of the wishes of the Complainant or other parties.

o) The decision of the Principal and/or Board, marks the end of the Formal Complaints Process offered by the College.

ANNEXURE A

PROTOCOL FOR PARTIES AND WITNESSES

This interview is being conducted by Shepparton Christian College into allegation(s)/complaint(s) and will be carried out based on the principles of Fairness and impartiality, and in good faith.

PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING:

1. True and accurate disclosure and cooperation is essential in establishing the facts.
2. Confidentiality is to be maintained at all times to protect privacy and avoid defamation. Only people required to know the information (Principal, Welfare Officer, Complaints Case Manager) should be told the details of the alleged problem. No discussion about the fact that there has been an interview or what has been said at the interview must occur.
3. The College will regard breaches of confidentiality as serious and may take disciplinary action.
4. You are requested to proceed in a professional/respectful manner and observe appropriate workplace behaviours. No 'victimisation' of anyone must arise during or after the investigation of this complaint.
5. Notes will be taken at the meeting. A copy of these notes will be provided to you within 48 hours of the meeting. These notes (each page) need to be signed by you acknowledging that they are an accurate and true account of the meeting.
6. You can contact your support person/s at any stage of the process. You have been advised of your right to have a support person present at this or any subsequent interview.

Version History:

2026 (This version)
2023
2016
2013
2013 Complaints Resolution Policy
2006 Complaints Resolution Policy