



# Student Friendly Complaints Policy



Purpose	Policy outlines the procedure students can go through to make complaints
Delegation	Principal/Leadership Team
First Written	21st March 2019
Date Approved	10th June 2020
Approved by	Board Chair on behalf of Governing Board
Review Dates	
Review Cycle	Yearly

# Student Friendly Complaints Policy



## 1. Rationale

- 1.1. Bethel Christian School is committed to a partnership with all stakeholders including in the area of conflict and complaints management.
- 1.2. The WA Registration Standards (Standard 11.1) require that the School has a child-friendly complaints handling policy and procedures.
- 1.3. WA Commissioner for Children and Young People Guide outlines the following: The School has developed this policy in light of the elements of a child-friendly complaints system outlined in the *WA Commissioner for Children and Young People* guide, "[Are you Listening? Guidelines for making complaints systems accessible and responsive to children and young people](#)":
  - 1.3.1. Focus on children and young people;
  - 1.3.2. Visibility around the School – so children know that complaints are welcome and there are different ways of making a complaint;
  - 1.3.3. Accessibility and awareness of the different ways of how to make a complaint, through simple and clear information;
  - 1.3.4. Responsiveness and prompt action;
  - 1.3.5. Confidentiality; and
  - 1.3.6. Accountability and continuous improvement.

## 2. Bethel Christian School Process

- 2.1. Bethel Christian School uses strategies to publicise our complaints handling processes for students that include a range of methods which are effective in communicating with our students. These include:
  - 2.1.1. In-person information sessions;
  - 2.1.2. Clearly positioned information on our public website;
  - 2.1.3. Student Complaint Flowcharts displayed around the School that are colourful, clear, simple and child friendly; and
  - 2.1.4. Link to child friendly complaint form on CANVAS.
- 2.2. We ensure that students are made aware of their right to make a complaint by means and in language which take into account their age, language background and other relevant factors. We do this through:
  - 2.2.1. Classroom information sessions;
  - 2.2.2. Announcement at assemblies;

- 2.2.3. Discussions with the Chaplains;
  - 2.2.4. Student Complaint Flowchart displayed around the School; and
  - 2.2.5. Modified complaint form with easy to understand instructions.
- 2.3. The School involves strategies to publicise our complaints process and possible outcomes in publications which are developmentally suitable for and appealing to the students of the School, including by illustrations or other visual material such as posters and the student flowchart, and by:
- 2.3.1. Inviting comments;
  - 2.3.2. Simple steps and clear layout;
  - 2.3.3. Using minimal messaging;
  - 2.3.4. Using familiar language to what is discussed in class;
  - 2.3.5. Using relevant technology for students at our School; and
  - 2.3.6. Online surveys.
- 2.4. We use the Top tips for making a complaint poster produced by the *WA Commissioner for Children and Young People* in multiple locations around the School;
- 2.5. Our strategies take into account the different ages and cultural backgrounds of our students;
- 2.6. The School ensures our students know how to make a complaint, who they can make a complaint to and the methods in which they can make a complaint. We use the following approaches to ensure our complaints handling procedures are accessible:
- 2.6.1. Student Complaint Flowchart with clear step-by-step instructions on how to deal with and make a complaint, and how to proceed until the complaint is resolved;
  - 2.6.2. Making information available on our public website;
  - 2.6.3. Ensuring information is available in different languages and formats; and
  - 2.6.4. Facilitating making a complaint through the Child Friendly Complaint form on our website, dedicated email address – [care@bethel.wa.edu.au](mailto:care@bethel.wa.edu.au);
- 2.7. It is the School's policy that:
- 2.7.1. Students can choose how to make a complaint, including by speaking to someone face-to-face;
  - 2.7.2. The School creates opportunities for students to give feedback and discuss their experiences;
  - 2.7.3. The School enables an advocate to complain on behalf of a student and, when that occurs, makes sure the student can participate directly to the extent he or she wishes; and
  - 2.7.4. Students are provided with an appropriately trained advocate (School Chaplains), independent from the complaint investigation and management process, when they do not have one.

### 3. What makes a complaint process student friendly?

- 3.1. The WA Commissioner for Children and Young People guide, "*Are you Listening? Guidelines for making complaints systems accessible and responsive to children and young people*" consulted with children and young people and asked how they knew that they were being taken seriously by adults, and their responses included:
  - "They listen to you and don't ignore you"
  - "They are paying attention."
  - "They acknowledge you."
  - "They look at you."
  - "[They] take your phone number."
  - "[They] say they'll get back to you" and
  - "They listen, are understanding and respectful."
- 3.2. The children and young people in consultation said that the complaints processes should:
  - 3.2.1. Be accessible and visible to them;
  - 3.2.2. Take them seriously;
  - 3.2.3. Be flexible and as responsive as possible;
  - 3.2.4. Be face-to-face wherever possible;
  - 3.2.5. Support peers and advocates of children and young people who may struggle or hesitate to make a complaint themselves;
  - 3.2.6. Be respectful and understanding;
  - 3.2.7. Be willing to listen;
  - 3.2.8. Be willing to take action; and
  - 3.2.9. Consider confidentiality and avoid breaches of trust.

### 4. Responsibilities

- 4.1. Bethel Christian School acknowledges that it is important to ensure our complaints management system is responsive to our students and all staff are trained to identify, respond quickly and actively listen to, all complaints;
- 4.2. It is the School's policy that:
  - 4.2.1. A student's complaint is promptly acknowledged. Depending on the nature and severity of a complaint, acknowledgement can be verbal (less serious) or in writing (more serious);
  - 4.2.2. Timelines for investigating and responding to complaints are established and communicated;
  - 4.2.3. Staff handling students' complaints, and those reviewing the outcome of a complaint, have training in working with children;

- 4.2.4. Understanding, helpfulness and responsiveness is demonstrated towards student complainants;
  - 4.2.5. Students' understanding of information provided about the complaints process is checked; and
  - 4.2.6. Student complainants are given choices about how they wish to be kept informed about the progress of their complaint.
- 4.3. Generally, it is only more serious complaints that require formal acknowledgment, investigation and responses; and
- 4.4. Often during the acknowledgement phase the complainant may be provided with a document that provides an overview of the school's complaints handling process in order to clearly establish expectations at an early stage of the process.

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## 5. Child Wellbeing

- 5.1. Bethel Christian School views the wellbeing of our students as one of the highest priorities at all times and endeavours to support child wellbeing throughout all aspects of their schooling;
- 5.2. In all circumstances where a complaint relates to the wellbeing of a child or young person, the School uses our Child Protection Program to refer the complaint to the appropriate authorities and mandatory reporting requirements;
- 5.3. The Guide defines child wellbeing to include the:
- 5.3.1. Care of a child;
  - 5.3.2. Physical, emotional, psychological and educational development of a child;
  - 5.3.3. Physical, emotional and psychological health of a child; and
  - 5.3.4. Safety of a child.

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## 6. Complaints Managers

- 6.1.1. We have appointed Mr Joseph Kennedy (Deputy Principal) and Mim Butler (Principal) as our designated Complaints Managers;
- 6.1.2. Our Complaints Managers are responsible for:
- 6.1.2.1. Ensuring that all staff are educated about our Complaints Handling Program;
  - 6.1.2.2. Investigating and, where necessary, escalating complaints when requested by the complainant;
  - 6.1.2.3. Liaising with complainants and Complaints Officers;
  - 6.1.2.4. Maintaining accurate records in the Complaints Register;
  - 6.1.2.5. Regularly reporting to the Leadership Team about complaints;

- 6.1.2.6. Ensuring systemic complaints are identified and rectified; and
- 6.1.2.7. Monitoring the effectiveness of, and continually improving, our Complaints Handling Program.

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## 7. Pastoral Care

- 7.1. Bethel Christian School acknowledges that in some cases, students may not wish to engage with our complaints handling policies and procedures to make a complaint;
- 7.2. We encourage all students to contact our internal and external pastoral care services if they require assistance, guidance or support to make a complaint; and
- 7.3. Students are aware of their ability to contact the *WA Commissioner for Children and Young People* if they wish to make a complaint outside the School's complaints handling policy and procedures.

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## 8. Record Keeping

- 8.1. The School ensures that all student complaints are recorded accurately and thoroughly to ensure that any concerns or complaints are dealt with appropriately and resolved fully;
- 8.2. Records are kept of every complaint and include:
  - 8.2.1. Records of the description of the complaint;
  - 8.2.2. Supporting documents if any;
  - 8.2.3. Immediate action or response taken;
  - 8.2.4. Records relating to the investigation including any witness statements or conversations with other persons involved; and
  - 8.2.5. Records of the outcome of the complaint and investigation.

### Supporting Documents:

*Child Protection Program - Complispace*

*Duty of Care Policy*

*Complaints and Disputes Policy and Procedures*

*Peacewise Principles*