

## Bethany Christian School Complaint Policy



Publication Date	February 2020
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Related legislation/applicable section of legislation	Children’s Protection Act (SA) 1993 Section 22 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 State Government Funding Deed 2015
Related policies, procedures, guidelines, standards, frameworks	AISSA Parent Complaint Policy 2008 AISSA “Handling Complaints” document 2015 National Safe Schools Framework 2006 Collection Notice (Standard) 2016 Whistle-blower Policy 2020
Policy officer (position)	Debbie Clifford
Policy officer (phone)	8283 0000
Policy sponsor (position)	Deputy Principal
Executive director responsible (position and office)	Debbie Clifford – Deputy Principal
Applies to	Whole school, School Council
Key words	Complaints, grievance, confidentiality, resolution
Status	Active
Approved by	Principal
Version	1.3

Date	Version	Revision Description
4/8/15	1.2	Terminology revision. “Grievance” is now known as “complaint” in accordance to the 2015 Funding Deed.
1/12/16	1.3	Reviewed and updated; Collection Notice added
21/6/18	1.4	Updated terminology
7/2/20	1.5	Reviewed and updated

### **Statement**

At Bethany Christian School we emphasise that positive, clear and effective processes for resolving complaints between the student body, staff and school community members assists in the building of strong relationships, dispels anxiety, and ultimately provides students with an enhanced learning environment.

*We will treat your complaint with respect and sensitivity. However you should not assume that your communications with us, or any documents you may supply to us, will necessarily be kept confidential. Although we endeavour to deal with complaints with appropriate discretion, we reserve our right to disclose details of the matter to other persons who in our opinion need to know them, in order to facilitate the resolution of the complaint.<sup>1</sup>*

### **Scope:**

This policy applies to the grievances, otherwise referred to as ‘complaints’, against Bethany Christian School as a whole, a specific faculty, an individual staff member or a student. Within this policy, it is generally held that conflict that occurs between parents are outside of the scope of this policy. Bethany Christian School staff complaints will be incorporated in this policy.

<sup>1</sup> Statement directly taken from AISSA “Handling Complaints” document, page 13

## **Aims**

- To provide clear, positive and fair processes that allow complaints to be aired and resolved in a timely and professional manner.

## **Definition of a complaint:**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived situation or outcome. The dissatisfaction may be based on a perception that the school has:

- Been at fault or done something wrong;
- Failed to do something it should have; or
- Acted unfairly or inappropriately

## **Bethany Christian School's Commitment:**

Bethany Christian School is committed to;

- Demonstrating the Christ-centred values of the school in promoting valued and respected relationships
- Providing a learning and working environment that is safe and fair
- Minimalizing the possibility of dissatisfaction or conflict that might give rise to a serious complaint
- Supporting the right of every member of the school community to have their complaint lodged, listened to, addressed fairly and dealt with within
  - a reasonable timeframe
- Adhering to its moral and legal obligations, such as Mandatory Notification
- Complying with all relevant statutory and legal requirement which include, but are not limited to, privacy laws, child protection laws and Family Court orders.
- Training school staff to handle complaints and help support complaint resolution in line with this policy
- Ensure adequate support is provided to the person or persons during the process of resolving a complaint

## **Implementation:**

Bethany Christian School prides itself on clear, consultative and open communication. While we accept our responsibility to consult, and to communicate both clearly and effectively with the community, community members also have an obligation to read notices and newsletters, to attend meetings, and to seek clarification when required.

There may, however, still be times when members of the community disagree or are confused about the things that we are doing.

It is essential that the established process as outlined below is followed to resolve complaints:

- Try to establish the facts as clearly possible, be wary of third hand information or gossip.
- If the matter involves your child or an issue of everyday class operation, make an appointment to see their classroom teacher, detailing the reasons for the appointment. Should the issue relate to an incident outside of the classroom, an appointment should be made with the relevant staff member directly involved.
- An appointment will only be made with the Principal to discuss issues involving school policy, operations beyond your child's classroom, concerns about staff, or complaints that are probably not easily resolved if the classroom teacher (or staff member involved), or Deputy Principal/School Leadership Team member has not been able to find a resolution for the issue.

- A copy of this 'Complaint Policy' will be found in the student diary and on the Bethany Christian School website.
- Parents & Friends Association (P&F) and the School Council are in agreeance that they will not become a conduit for community complaints, will not become involved in confidential or personal issues, and will generally refer specific complaints through the Complaints Policy procedure.
- All persons who have a complaints are welcome to be accompanied by another person, in a support role, at appointments to resolve complaints.
- **Neither the Minister for Education SA or the Department for Education has any power to directly intervene in any complaints relating to the operations of a Non-Government School.** <sup>2</sup>
- All formal discussions and processes involving complaints will be documented.
- The Principal and Deputy Principal will exercise his/her judgement as to whether or not they will act upon anonymous complaints. Generally they will not.
- The Principal may provide community members with appropriate departmental contact names and numbers if complaints are not resolved.

#### **Complaint Resolution Process:**

- Parents who wish to make a complaint must contact the relevant staff member which whom they have the complaint and make an appointment during a mutually convenient time to discuss the conflict.
- Only if the parent or staff member are unable to come to a resolution of the complaint will the matter be referred to the Deputy Principal.
- Should the parent have a complaint against another student within the school, they must **NEVER** approach the student to resolve the conflict. This is a serious breach of the Child Protection Policy and the school will be obliged to will take further action.
- Every individual has the right to feel safe and respected. A meeting between parties will be terminated where necessary to ensure this respect, wellbeing and safety of all involved parties.
- Each complaint will be acted upon with due diligence and in accordance to the immediacy of the complaint. If necessary, a complaint may be referred to higher authorities, such as the Principal or the Governing School Council, in due process.
- An enrolment contract may be withdrawn if after all options of resolution have been exhausted.
- The School Leadership will be involved in any complaint that involves SAPOL, DCP or an illegal act.

#### **Formal Complaints:**

- Formal complaints can be made in writing and addressed to Deputy Principal after the complaint resolution process has failed to resolve the issue.

#### **Legal Obligations:**

- The legal obligations relating to child abuse and neglect may limit the school's ability to undertake a comprehensive investigation. This particularly applies to the mandatory reporting requirements outlined in the Children's Protection Act (SA) 1993.
- The involvement by SAPOL, Families SA or the Department for Child Protection (DCP) may also limit the nature and scope of the school's investigations.
- Bethany Christian School staff will always fully cooperate with SAPOL or other Government investigations.

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<sup>2</sup> Please refer to the AISSA Parent Complaint Policy, 2008

### Bethany Christian School Standard Collection Notice

1. Bethany Christian School collects personal information, including sensitive information, about students and parents or guardians before and during the course of a student's enrolment at the School. The primary purpose of collecting this information is to enable the School to provide schooling and educational services for your child. Allied to this, information will also be used for enrolment and administrative purposes.
2. Some of the information we collect is to satisfy the School's legal obligations, particularly to enable the School to discharge its duty of care.
3. Laws governing or relating to the operation of schools require that certain information is collected. These include relevant Public Health and Child Protection laws.
4. Health information about students is 'sensitive information' within the terms of the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs) under the *Privacy Act*. We may ask you to provide medical information and reports about your child from time to time.
5. The School, as required, either by law or as appropriate for proper discharge of our duties, will disclose personal and sensitive information to others for administrative and educational purposes. This includes disclosure to other schools, government departments, medical practitioners and people providing services to the School, including specialist visiting teachers, sports coaches and volunteers and counsellors.
6. Personal information collected from students is regularly disclosed to their parents or guardians. On occasions, information regarding academic and sporting achievements, student activities and similar news is published in School newsletters, magazines and on our website. Photographs of student activities such as sporting events, School camps and School excursions may be taken for publication in School newsletters and magazines and on our website. The School will obtain separate permissions from the student's parent or guardian prior to publication of photographs through the School Enrolment Form.
7. The School may store personal information in 'the cloud' which may mean that it resides on servers which are situated outside off Australia.
8. Parents or students may seek access to personal information collected about them by contacting the School. There will, however, be occasions when access is denied. Such occasions would include where access would have an unreasonable impact on the privacy of others, where access may result in a breach of the School's duty of care to the student, or where students have provided information in confidence.
9. The School Privacy Policy also sets out how you may register a complaint about a breach of privacy and how the School will deal with such a complaint.
10. The School also, from time to time, engages in fundraising activities. Information received from you may be used to make an appeal to you. It may also be disclosed to organizations that assist in the School's fundraising activities solely for that purpose. We shall not disclose your personal information to third parties for their own marketing purposes without your consent.
11. If you provide the School with the personal information of others, such as doctors or emergency contacts, we encourage you to inform them that you are disclosing that information to the School and why, that they can access that information if they wish and that the School does not usually disclose the information to third parties.