

Grievance (Parent) Policy

Rationale

1. Principles and Scriptural Context

Lutheran Schools are Christ-centred where individuals should feel safe to express their points of view openly, honestly, constructively and in a spirit of love. St Paul's analogy of the church as a human body (1 Cor 12:12-27) serves well as a picture of all members actively working together for the common good.

From time to time concerns regarding educational, behavioural or school environment issues may arise. For this reason, Unity College has developed a set of procedures to work through unresolved situations, or where action or a decision is considered to be unfair or inappropriate. This is the reality of sin and our inability to live in perfect harmony with one another. However, through God's grace and forgiveness, and by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we strive to reconcile differences and resolve all conflict amicably.

To this end we are guided by the Scriptures:

- ***"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his faults, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses." (Matt 18:15, 16)***
- ***"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen." (Eph 4:29)***
- ***"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you." (Eph 4:32)***

Within the grievance process the power of prayer should never be underestimated. As a practising Christian community Unity College enlists the Holy Spirit's guidance through each step.

2. General Statements

- The grievance procedure provides guidelines for raising an unresolved issue or complaint and having it considered seriously. It is essential, therefore, that before the process begins all parties participating are familiar with the process and with the Christian principles underpinning it.

- It is recognised that individuals in the school community are at different stages in their faith journeys and that this could affect their readiness and/or willingness to engage in prayer throughout.
- Informal resolution of a grievance is encouraged and is always the preferred option. This is reached when the outcome is satisfactory to all. The formal process is set in motion where the informal process reaches an unsatisfactory outcome.
- The grievance procedure may not result in a change to, or reversal of, a decision or action. Sometimes the only achievable outcome may be the enactment of forgiveness. Sometimes it may be an understanding to follow or improve guidelines or procedures in the future.

Implementation

- Raising the issue directly, and as soon as possible, with the person concerned is encouraged.
- Communication should be open and honest, focusing on the issue and not the person. This includes listening carefully and respectfully while the other person is talking, and exercising responsibility and mutual respect: respect by staff for parents' special relationship with their children; respect by parents for staff as professionals.
- When an issue is discussed, it is important that the issue will be resolved confidentially at the school level. Criticism of the school and teachers does not support the child's education as it undermines trust and confidence.
- Confidentiality must be maintained through all stages of the process.
- Accurate records of all issues and proceedings should be maintained.
- Constructive conflict helps everyone learn, grow and change for the better. Where both parties agree to seek a positive resolution, positive outcomes are likely to result.
- If there is the case where a parent feels uncomfortable meeting with the appropriate school staff member, then a mutually agreed mediator should be sought. Example: year level coordinator, school pastor or agreed professional.
- In the event that a parent persists in airing grievances in an inappropriate manner, the parent(s) will be required to attend a meeting with the Principal and Head of School. Consultation by the Principal and Head of School for the benefit of maintaining confidence, trust and confidentiality, will occur and this policy will be highlighted as an expectation for all.
- Due to the importance that Unity College places on the building and maintenance of positive community relationships, repeated deviation from policy may result in the termination of enrolment from Unity College.

Procedure

The following guidelines may assist you if you have a concern.

1. Make an appointment to talk to the person with whom you have a concern, or with whom is closely related to your concern. Let him/her know what subject you wish to discuss as this will facilitate the process. This makes the most productive use of the time available – when the teacher is free to give you his/her full attention.
2. Meet with the staff member and use appropriate Problem Solving and/or Conflict Resolution strategies to formulate positive action for the future.

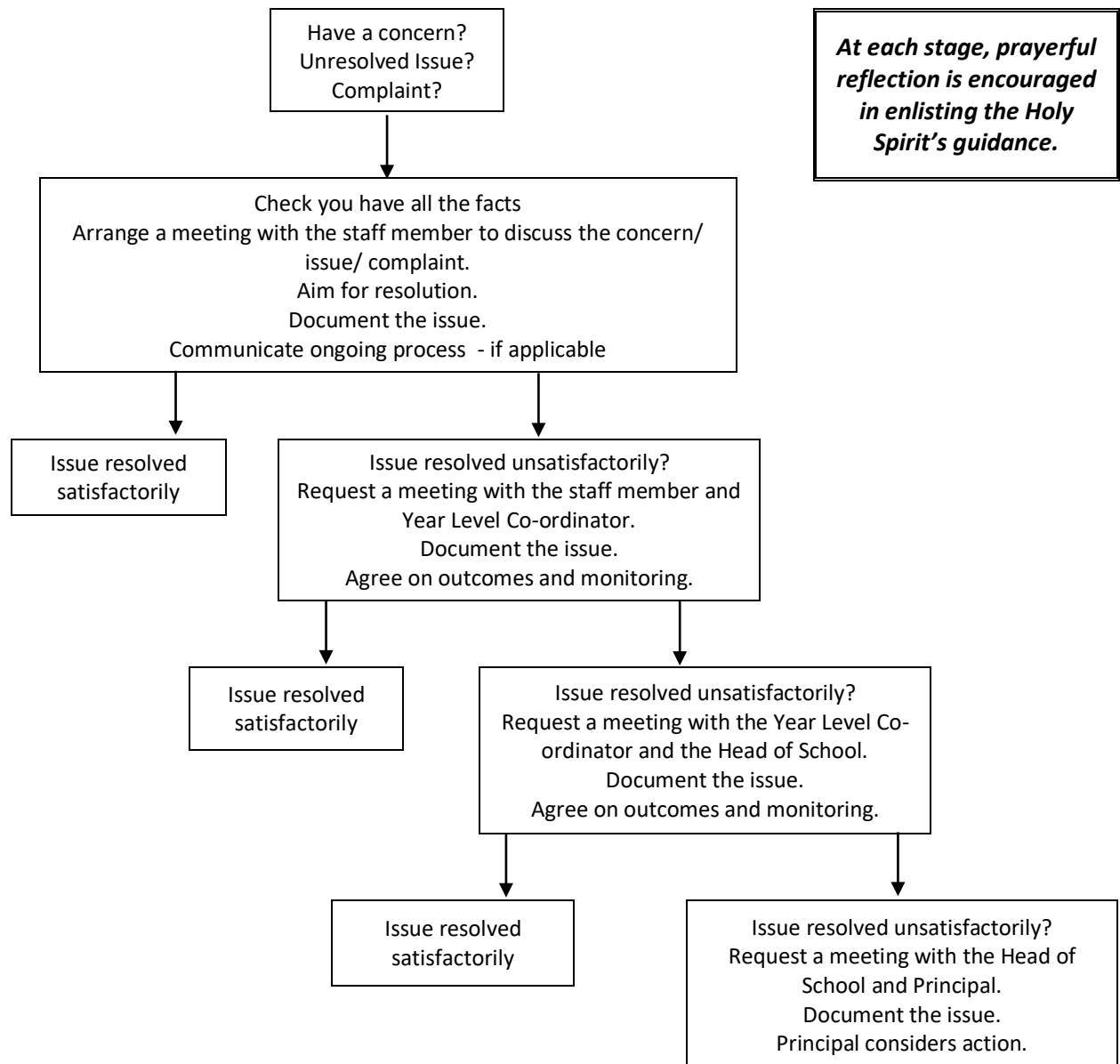
That is:

- a. Identify the facts.
- b. Explore why the facts present a problem.
- c. Share feelings.
- d. Jointly commit to some future action and goals within the guidelines of school policy, procedure and by observing school values.

If you consider that the issue you have raised is still unresolved, it is important that you state this to the person at the conclusion of the meeting.

3. If the issues are not resolved, make an appointment with the Year Level Co-ordinator. Let him/her know what subject you wish to discuss as this will facilitate the process.
4. Meet with the Year Level Co-ordinator. Results of this meeting may include the following:
 - The situation is monitored;
 - Further discussions with the people involved (eg. teacher, Head of School).
 - If the issues are not resolved, make an appointment with the Head of School. Let him/her know what subject you wish to discuss, as this will facilitate the process.
5. Meet with the Head of School. Results of this meeting may include the following:
 - the situation is monitored;
 - further discussions with the people involved (eg. teacher, Head of School);
 - outside support for the child or family may be sought.
6. If you are still dissatisfied with the outcome of the meeting, phone or write to the Head of School to air your concerns. Following this communication, if the Head of School does not receive further information it is reasonable to assume that the issue has been resolved.
7. If after steps 1-7 you are still dissatisfied, make an appointment with the Principal who will mediate on the situation. The expectation of the Principal will be that the above steps have previously been followed.

Flowchart of Grievance Procedure



Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three year review cycle.