



COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE IN THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

ALL COMPLAINTS MUST BE TREATED WITH CONFIDENTIALITY

Emmanuel Christian Community School is an educational community in which the relationship between the home, church and school is emphasized as a 3 way partnership aimed at developing each students spiritual, moral, academic and physical potential.

The *Education Act 1999* has, as a condition of registration and re-registration, a requirement that a school has a dispute resolution procedure.

What constitutes a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem.

A complaint may be made if a parent or a staff member thinks that the school or other member of the school has, for example:

- Done something wrong;
- Failed to do something that should have been done; or
- Acted unfairly or improperly.

A complaint may be made about the school as a whole, about a specific department in the school or about an individual member of staff.

Procedures need to be flexible to handle both formal complaints and the informal raising of issues. It does not seem helpful to attempt to differentiate between “formal” and “informal” complaints. One can easily become the other. Serious issues may be raised in an informal and friendly way and apparently trivial issues in an adversarial manner. Complaints against members of staff need particularly sensitive handling.

Recording

The School’s Contact officer will report all complaints to the Principal. The school will keep a log of complaints and other parental or staff concerns because:

- It may become the cause of legal action in the future;
- Patterns in the record may indicate a need for action;
- The Principal should be able to check the log and report on it regularly to the Chairman of the Board.

Complaint Register. A complaint Register is to be kept by the School Contact Officer.

The file should contain the following information:

- Date when the issue was raised;
- Name of complainer;
- Name of people involved;
- Brief statement of issue;
- Location of detailed file;
- Member of staff handling the issue; and
- Brief statement of outcome.

Complaints from members of the public will be treated in a similar way to complaints from parents, although most complaints from the public would be referred directly to the Principal, Deputy Principal, the Contact Officer or a Senior member of staff.

Since the partnership in the school community involves the parents it is important that there be a clearly established complaints procedure for the resolution of difficulties and concerns. The guiding principle of any procedure for resolving complaints is found in the scriptural injunctions of Matthew 18:15-16. The scriptural principle outlines the need to first take the concern to the person responsible, and should that prove unsatisfactory to then establish the concern with the aid of witnesses. The final step, should the proceeding steps not resolve the difficulty, being to then take the matter to the “church”. In the setting of a Christian School these principles can be applied in the following manner.

1. A concern or complaint should be expressed by the parent to the person responsible i.e. staff member, principal or parent.
2. Should the matter not be resolved satisfactorily the parent should then obtain the witness of the School Principal or another staff member in the process of seeking a resolution.
3. Should the matter still remain unresolved, the School Principal should be consulted or if it involves him or her, the matter should be passed on to the School Board via the Board Chairman (i).
4. The same procedure applies when it involves a staff-staff complaint. However in this case a School Contact Officer is involved as the contact person instead of the principal.

Emmanuel Christian Community School Contact Procedure Officer is a member of the staff appointed by the Principal and ratified by School Board as the general rule.

As a Christian community, members of the school should seek at all times to dwell together in unity. However, that unity must not be at the expense of truthfulness or the willingness to face and correct behaviour or practice. Ephesians 4:25-27 teaches “Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbour, for we are all members of one body. In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry and do not give the devil a foothold”.

It is important that all participants in the school community know that there is a mechanism for raising the concerns they have. However, at all times the concerns should be dealt with in a manner that, whilst

acknowledging the individual's responsibility to be involved, preserves the unity of the Spirit of God dwelling in His people as a community.

RESOLVING DISPUTES BETWEEN PARENTS AND THE SCHOOL

ALL COMPLAINTS MUST BE TREATED WITH CONFIDENTIALITY

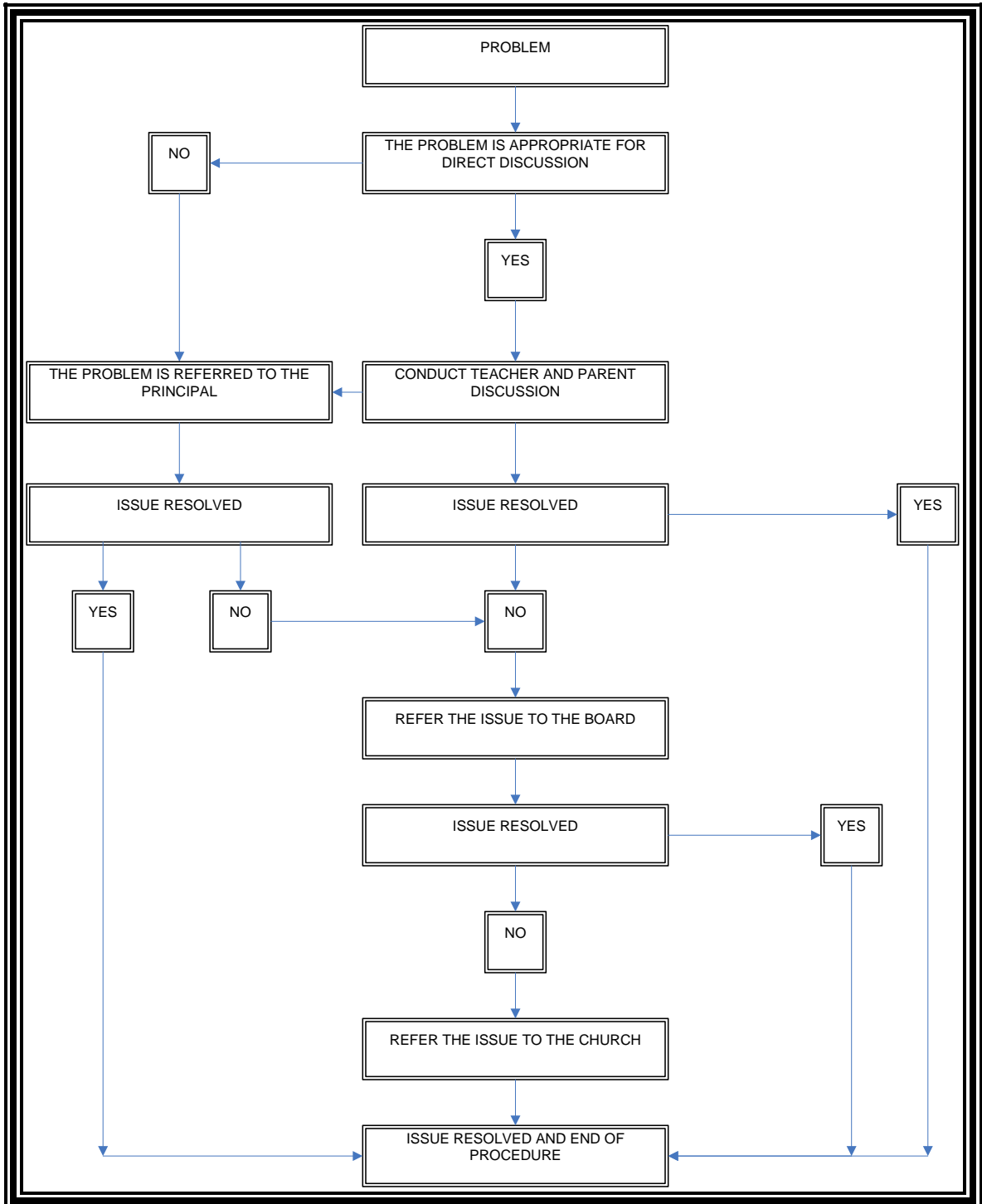
When dealing with confrontation we should keep in mind Proverbs 20:3 "It is to a man's honour to avoid strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel."

Conflict should be avoided whenever possible, but when it exists it should not be ignored. We should confront those involved with the facts and privately work at resolving the problem.

When dealing with confrontation, keep the following points in mind.

1. A conflict provides an excellent opportunity to serve others. Jesus said, "If someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles." (Matthew 5:40-41) Be sensitive to the needs of others instead of demanding your own way.
2. Be committed to resolving the conflict quickly. The longer the conflict continues, the more difficult it is to resolve.
3. Take the initiative in confronting those involved. Don't wait for them to come to you. Jesus touched on this idea when he said, "If your brother wrongs you, go and have it out with him at once." (Matthew 18:15).
4. Even though hostility and anger are present in conflict, avoid angry arguments. "A patient man has great understanding, but a quick tempered man displays folly." (Proverbs 14:29). If we display anger during a confrontation, we stimulate anger in others.
5. The proper way to deal with conflict is to approach it head on, identify the real issues involved, and work your way through them to satisfactory conclusion.
6. Try to resolve the problem privately with only those involved in the conflict. If it is impossible to resolve the conflict with those involved, then seek neutral assistance. The following "Conflict Resolution Flow Chart" will help you to seek for assistance.

FLOW CHART PARENTS/STAFF



RESOLVING DISPUTES/COMPLAINTS BETWEEN STAFF MEMBER AND STAFF MEMBER

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Step by step procedures are described below and the following principles apply in all circumstances. Normally all complaints or disputes between staff, which can not be resolved, are brought to the Contact Officer. A staff member appointed by the Principal is the School Contact Officer. See appendix for explanation of the role of the Contact Officer. The Principal will be the final school based arbiter when the Contact Officer seeks a resolution. If the complaint or dispute concerns the Principal or a family member of the Principal then the complaint or dispute should be taken to the Deputy principal. The deputy Principal will be the school based arbiter when the Contact Officer seeks a resolution.

If staff have not reached a resolution with the decision of the Contact Officer having followed the process of resolving a resolution, the staff member should contact the Principal. At this stage, the staff member must notify the Principal of his or her intentions to do so to make sure that all other avenues have been exhausted.

Making a formal complaint:

- * A complaint must be made in writing to the Contact Officer and should make clear that a complaint (not an inquiry) is being made.
- * The Contact Officer must verify that the complaint is a relevant complaint and note the nature of the complaint and the date of its receipt in a register of complaints.
- * The Contact Officer must refer the complaint to the principal if requested to do so by the complainant or if the complaint relates to a decision of the principal.
- * The Contact Officer may seek advice, hold meetings and obtain information as is necessary to attempt to resolve the complaint with the complainant.
- * If the Contact Officer is unable to resolve the complaint with the complainant within 60 days of receiving the complaint the Contact Officer must refer the complaint to the Principal, together with all the relevant information in connection with the complaint.
The Principal must take action within 90 days of receipt of the complaint.

2.1 Complaint about a staff member by a staff member

- (i) The staff member with a complaint should arrange to meet with the other staff member at a time and place convenient to both so that the issue can be openly discussed and resolved.
- (ii) If the staff members cannot resolve their dispute they should discuss the problem in the presence of the Contact Officer who will endeavour to suggest a way forward.
- (iii) If the staff members have not reached a resolution with the Contact Officer's suggestions/requirements they should request the Principal to be present at another meeting.
- (iv) If the staff members have not reached a resolution with the Principal's suggestions/requirements they should arrange a meeting with the Chairman of the Board. The Chairman, at his/her discretion, may call a meeting of all concerned and act as a mediator or he/she may take the issue to a School Board meeting.

- (iv) A decision by the Emmanuel Christian Community School Board will be the schools final decision.
- (v) If a staff member is not satisfied with the decision of the School Board they may wish to take the matter to an outside agency or seek legal advice. There is an informal and formal way of dealing with contentious issues. The Contact Officer, will explain this procedure as outlined in this policy to the complainant. The formal procedure could lead to the involvement of the Equal Opportunity Office.

2.3. Complaint about the Principal by a staff member.

- (i) The staff should make an appointment to see the Principal. staff are encouraged to be open and honest about any problem.
- (ii) If the staff has not reached a resolution at the meeting they should arrange a second meeting to which they invite the Contact Officer.
- (iii) If after the second meeting the staff believes that the issue has not been resolved they should write to the Chairman of the School Board outlining their complaint. The Chairman, at his/her discretion, may call a meeting of all concerned and act as a mediator or he-she may take the issue to a School Board meeting.
- (iv) A decision by the Emmanuel Christian Community School Board will be the schools final decision.
- (v) If the staff is not satisfied with the decision of the School Board they may wish to take the matter to an outside agency or seek legal advice.

All complaints and disputes should be settled using the guidelines stated at the beginning of this policy statement. The Contact Officer is always available to help settle any complaint or dispute.

The school Contact Officer is appointed by the School Principal and ratified by the School Board on a yearly basis.

The role of the Contact Officer is to:

1. Remind employees about the Biblical guidelines to resolve disputes.
2. Provide information to employees about complaint resolution options within and outside the organisation
3. Ensure employees receive appropriate support to make informed decisions about how to resolve complaints.
4. Provide general information on processes to all staff.

The School Contact Officer

NAME AND POSITION	CONTACT DETAILS	DATE OF APPOINTMENT
PASTOR PAUL PRICE	0413 994 793	October, 2018

Complaints Options:

Self Management	Informal Internal	Formal Internal	External
Individual wants to resolve it themselves. Tell the person that their behaviour is not appropriate.	The Contact officer can mediate a discussion between the two parties together or individually.	Individual wants management to resolve the complaint.	Individual lodges written complaint with independent external agency eg Equal Opportunity Commission.
Individual seeks an undertaking the behaviour will stop.	The Contact officer can organise training.	The Contact Officer can assist complainant to write complaint.	Investigation and conciliation attempted.
The Contact Officer can rehearse the process with the complainant.	The Contact officer who observe inappropriate behaviour must take action.	Complaints will be handled in line with the school's policy and procedure.	Matter referred to the State Administrative Tribunal.

Contact Officer appointment: to be revised yearly
Policy updated: 2011, 2012, 2013 (July), 2014, 2015, 2016, 2018

APPENDIX

ALL COMPLAINTS MUST BE TREATED WITH CONFIDENTIALITY

Minimising disputes / complaints:

The school acknowledges handling a difficult complaint efficiently requires patience and skill to avoid an initial negative situation becoming more negative and degenerating into a dispute.

There are two main elements in a complaint situation that need to be effectively handled to minimize the likelihood of a dispute.

These are:

Dealing with the Complainant's feelings

- Listen – this is the first step in reducing the tension.
- Acknowledge the Complainant's issues.
- Empathise – this relieves tension and so opens channels of communication.
- Do not offer excuses, or argue with the Complainant.
- Commit to a time when you will contact them with a proposed resolution or a likely time we will have a resolution.
- Always contact the Complainant when you said you would even if it is just to assure them we are investigating their claim.
- Commit to a new time of contact.

Dealing with the specifics of the Complaint

- Ask the necessary questions politely, to obtain a detailed response.
- Restate the main issues and seek the Complainant's agreement that you accurately understand the problem.
- Agree on a solution (or plan of action) without appearing to dictate terms in order to avoid the likelihood of re-raising tension.
- Set a timetable and ensure the Complainant is happy with the proposed timing.
- Take action on an agreed solution and ensure that the solution is presented to the Complainant within the timeframe agreed.
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Remedies

Possible remedies

The School's provision of remedies will reflect what is fair and reasonable in the circumstances, complies with its legal obligations and is good industry practice.

In the event that the Complaint is shown to be justified and involves poor service or a technical failure by the School, the following remedies may be considered appropriate (at the School's absolute discretion):

- correction;
- technical assistance;
- provision of additional information;
- referral;
- assistance;
- apology; or
- compensation.

Staff training

The School ensures that its procedures are familiar to all staff and to its representatives in the following manner:

- all new staff are trained in the existence of the policy and the procedures, and compliance with the policy is a factor considered in the performance development review of all staff;
- the procedures and any update are distributed to staff members; and
- the results of the analysis of Complaints are distributed to all relevant staff members.

Biblical Principles

Introduction

Emmanuel Christian Community School is a ministry of the Girrawheen Baptist Church and operates within that framework as a Christian community. In order to operate effectively as a community it is important that all members of the community including parents, staff and students, understand the basis on which the community operates. As a ministry of church the principles upon which the school operates must be grounded in Biblical truth. As a community it must also be remembered that relationships are vitally important.

The policy set out below is based upon the Biblical principles, which form the basis of communications within the school. Some key references include - Matthew 18:15-20 and 21-35; Romans 12:9-21; 1 Corinthians 13:1-8; Ephesians 4:1-4 and 5:21; and Philippians 2:1-5. The policy should also be understood and implemented within the context of the love for one another that should characterise a Christian community (John: 13-34-35).

COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Within the community of the school there is a great deal of formal and informal communication and it is not the intention of the school to restrict the relationships that are an important part of the life of the school. However Scripture warns, 'The tongue has the power of life and death' (Proverbs 18:21 NIV) The words that we say are very powerful and can cause considerable damage. In order to minimise the potential for damage to the school, the members of the school community, and the church accept that the principles set out in Matthew 18 should be followed not in a legalistic way but as a model given by Christ himself for us to follow. Within the context of the school this might generally happen as follows:

First Principle. Talk first with the person with whom you have a problem.

If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. Matthew 18:15

It is vital that Christians should pray about an issue before trying to resolve it bearing in mind that we must not sin when we get angry ' "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry' (Ephesians 4:26 NIV), and that we must always be ready to forgive (Colossians 1:13) and to accept the responsibility to live at peace with others as far as it is our responsibility (Romans 12:18).

In the first instance any conflicts should be addressed informally between the two parties involved. The aim is to find out whether the problem you see is a real concern or just a problem of communication. If you then believe your brother is wrong you should lovingly correct your brother and restore the relationship before it suffers any further harm. As indicated in this passage this should be done in a private manner. If, and only if, this does not result in the conflict being resolved the matter may, after prayerful consideration, be taken to the next stage.

Second principle. If you can't resolve the problem take a wiser person with you.

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. Matthew 18:16

If it is prayerfully considered that the matter needs to be taken before witnesses it is generally appropriate that this be the person most directly responsible for the person against whom the complaint is made within the authority structure of the school. If this does not result in the matter being resolved it is important to again seek the Lord to ensure that the complaint is justified as each stage will, most likely, result in further deterioration of the relationship. If the matter cannot be resolved at the lowest level of the authority structure within the school it should then be formalised and treated as a formal inquiry or complaint.

Third Principle. Only refer matters to the Board when the prior steps have been tried.

If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; Matthew 8:17a

If the processes outlined in this Dispute Resolution Plan do not result in a resolution of the dispute the matter should then be referred to "the church". As indicated above the school operates as a ministry of the Girrawheen Baptist Church under which the school derives its authority. The church has delegated this authority for the running of the school to the School Board who, in this case, would act as 'the church'. The process for involving the Board is outlined in Section 6 above. It is not appropriate for individual Board members to be approached or canvassed on any issue as proceedings of the School Board are confidential and not discussed publicly. Any Board member who is approached directly with a complaint will not enter into discussion on the subject but will merely request that the matter be addressed through the appropriate channels as outlined in this policy.

In reaching a decision on any matters before it the School Board must consider all the available information and act in the best interest of the school as a whole. This may result in decisions being made for reasons that cannot be fully explained because of the need to maintain confidentiality. While it is intended that a response will generally be made to matters raised with the School Board this will not usually include details of any discussion and may consist only of acknowledgment that the issue has been raised.

Fourth Principle. : Preserve unity as much as you on your part can do

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace: Ephesians 4:2-3

You should not discuss your grievances with people not directly concerned with fixing the problem as set out above. The Body of Christ, which is in effect Christ himself is hurt when we gossip about problems. Christians are called to be patient, humble forgiving and keeping unity as much as they can.