

Guidelines for Resolving Concerns and Complaints at your School

PREAMBLE

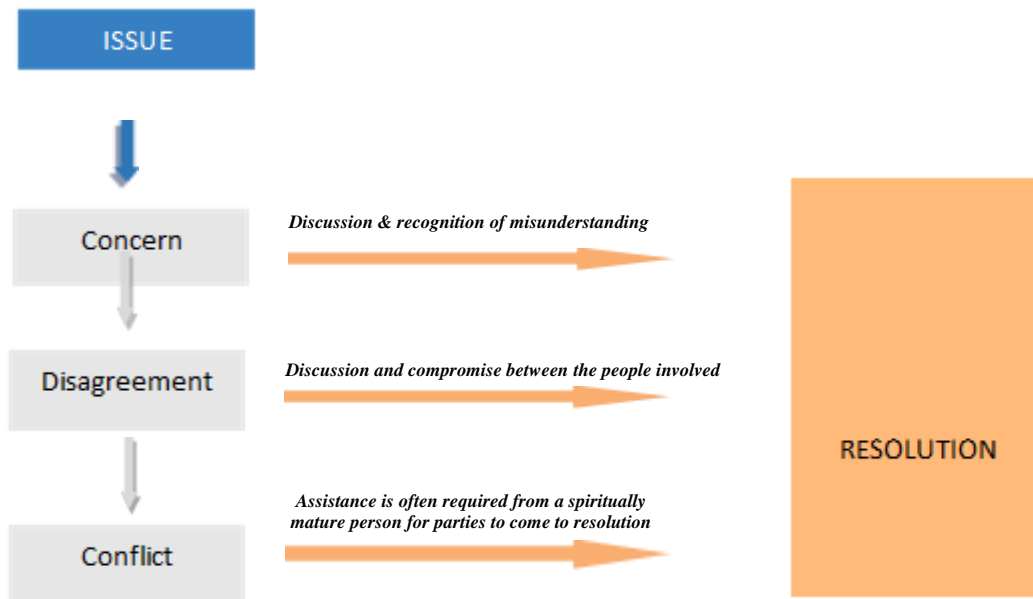
Who these Guidelines apply to

Everyone involved in the NT Christian Schools community

SUMMARY

Building positive relationships and a strong, safe and respectful community along with ongoing improvement and refinement of our practices is highly valued to help us achieve the vision of NT Christian Schools. In every community from time to time people may have concerns about how an issue is being addressed. Upon being raised, these concerns may be found to be misunderstandings and be easily resolved, or they may become a point of disagreement between the people involved. Where a disagreement is not comfortably resolved, it may at times become a point of conflict, where assistance from another person may be required in order to help bring about resolution.

The manner in which concerns, disagreements and conflicts are managed can mean the difference between harmony and tension in a community. This guideline sets out for parents, students, employees and others involved within the NT Christian Schools community, the way to deal with any concerns, disagreements and conflicts that may arise, to promote their resolution by measures based on consultation and co-operation consistent with biblical principles and practices.



1. Guiding principles

1.1 At NT Christian Schools we strive to maintain unity and the bond of peace through open communication and respect for one another. This assists the building of strong relationships, dispels anxiety, and ultimately provides students with an enhanced learning environment.

1.2 Students, parents and members of the community are entitled to seek a resolution of their complaints or concerns. These guidelines aim to provide a clear process for the management of complaints against NT Christian Schools as a whole, an individual NT Christian Schools Campus or entity, an individual staff member or a student.

1.3 NT Christian Schools is committed to treating each complaint with respect and sensitivity. 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.

1.4 NT Christian Schools is committed to:

- Demonstrating the Christ centred values of NT Christian Schools in promoting and valuing healthy and respectful relationships.
- Providing a learning and working environment that is safe and fair.

- Addressing dissatisfaction and conflict effectively and quickly in the hope of preventing issues escalating to a more 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 time frame.
- Adhering to its moral and legal obligations, such as Mandatory Notification.
- Complying with all relevant statutory and legal requirements which include, but are not limited to, privacy laws, child protection laws and Family Court orders.
- Ensuring adequate support is provided to the person or persons during the process of resolving a complaint.

2. Complaint Process

2.1 Making an Informal Complaint

Many complaints may be minor in nature or readily resolve and often arise from genuine misunderstandings and/or issues relating to inadequate communication. In most cases, such complaints ought to be satisfactorily resolved quickly and informally by a meeting or telephone call held between the parties involved.

NT Christian Schools supports the complainant, wherever possible and as soon as possible after a matter becomes a concern, to seek to resolve a complaint in an informal and amicable manner. This is best done through direct communication or discussion between the parties themselves (i.e., the parent and the teacher).

Many matters of parental concern can be resolved through an informal process. The school is committed to allowing parents to be heard and to have their concerns noted. An informal complaint is usually appropriate where:

- the allegations are of a less serious nature;
- the parent does not wish to have formal action taken; and
- the student's interests are best served by keeping the process informal and "low level".

Although parents have the absolute right to make a formal complaint at any time, the school expects that it should only be necessary for more formal procedures (identified below) to be invoked when the matter is of a very serious nature and/or cannot be resolved by the parties themselves through informal means.

Informal Complaints relating to educational programs, student wellbeing or student experiences should be made to the classroom teacher (for Early Years and Junior School students) or the Home Room Teacher (for Middle School and Senior College students). Informal complaints regarding staff interaction with students should be directed to the Assistant Principal/School Leadership Team member.

2.2 Notifying a Formal Complaint

A complaint may be made in person, via telephone, or in writing. The formal complaint notification is to include:

- Name and contact details of the Complainant.
- Dates and times of any specific incident(s) relevant to the complaint.
- Names of any students or staff relevant to the complaint.
- The outcome that is being sought as resolution of the complaint.

Unless the Complaint relates specifically to the Principal, the staff member receiving the complaint will provide a copy of the information to the Principal. Formal Complaints should be addressed as follows:

- Complaints relating to educational programs, student wellbeing or student experiences: to the Assistant Principal/School Leadership Team.
- Complaints relating to the conduct or behaviour of teaching staff: to the Assistant Principal/School Leadership Team member.
- Complaints relating to the conduct or behaviour of staff other than teaching staff: to the Principal/Office Manager.
- Complaints of a highly sensitive or serious nature: to the Principal.
- Complaints regarding the Assistant Principal/School Leadership Team/Office Manager: to the Principal.
- Complaints regarding the Principal: to the NT Christian Schools CEO.

To provide a considered response to any complaint, staff will undertake an investigation of the complaint in accordance with NT Christian Schools policies and procedures. Depending on the issues raised in the complaint, further information may need to be gathered in order to properly understand the issues raised. This process may also involve speaking to others to obtain details about the situation or the concerns raised.

2.3 Resolution

NT Christian Schools is committed to ensuring procedural fairness when determining an appropriate resolution to a complaint and will, wherever possible:

- provide any person likely to be affected by a resolution with an opportunity to present their position;
- ensure that the decision maker remains unbiased; and

- determine a resolution based upon any logically probative evidence available.

3. 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 requirement outlined in the *Care and Protection of Children Act 2007*.

The involvement by NT Police, the Department of Children and Families may also limit the nature and scope of the school's investigations. NT Christian Schools staff will always fully cooperate with NT Police or other Government investigations.

4. Disciplinary Procedure

The procedures outlined are intended only as a guide to the disciplinary procedure which may be implemented by NT Christian Schools. In every case, NT Christian Schools will determine the actual disciplinary procedure to be adopted in its discretion and in consideration of the circumstances of the case as a whole. Nothing in this Guideline prevents NT Christian Schools from issuing a final warning at any stage of the process. Similarly, nothing in this Guideline prevents NT Christian Schools from dismissing an employee at any stage of the procedure set out in this Guideline if NT Christian Schools deems this action is warranted, for example in circumstances involving an employee committing serious or wilful misconduct.

SOURCES INFORMING THESE GUIDELINES

PeaceWise – Peacemaking Principles www.peacewise.org.au

Care and Protection of Children Act 2007 (NT)

National Safe Schools Framework

NT Christian Schools Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy