



## **GRIEVANCE - PARENT CONCERN POLICY**

### **Purpose**

This policy aims to provide an efficient, fair and accessible framework for resolving concerns and ensures that the concern handling process is transparent, consistently applied and accountable.

The process for addressing concerns is based on a restorative approach.

### **Scope**

This policy applies to parents and care-givers of Good Shepherd Lutheran School.

### **Definitions**

**Concern:** matters that may be raised via a conversation, email or phone call to a staff member that needs to be dealt with by a staff member, member of leadership or the principal.

**Restorative Practice:** a process by which the healing of relationship between members of the school community is at the centre of the process.

**Resolution:** where the concern is withdrawn or a course of action is agreed upon so that the concern can be closed.

### **Policy Statement**

“Lutheran schools seek to be places of physical, social and psychological safety for all where legal requirements are fulfilled, and where caring, cooperative and respectful relationships contribute to supportive communities that reflect the values of the gospel of Jesus Christ and where there is a focus on love, justice, compassion, forgiveness, service, humility, courage, hope, quality, appreciation and restoration” (LEA Valuing Safe Communities, 2008).

Good Shepherd is committed to working in open, active partnership with parents and care givers to resolve any concerns regarding the wellbeing, relationships, sense of belonging or academic progress within the school life of the students. The following principles apply:

- The safety and wellbeing of all within the community is of prime importance.
- All those involved have the right to be treated with respect and dignity.
- All communications and conversations will be handled with due discretion and sensitivity.
- Concerns will be considered in a timely and impartial manner.

### **Procedures & Implementation Responsibilities**

See Appendix 1 – Problem solving protocol for school parents

### **References/Related Policies**

St John's Lutheran School Parent Concern Policy 2015

LEA Valuing Safe Communities 2008

### **Forms**

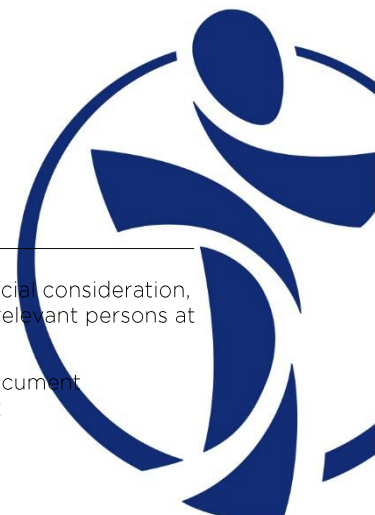
None

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GOOD SHEPHERD LUTHERAN SCHOOL PARA VISTA

Any person charged with implementation of this policy may, in circumstances which require special consideration, waiver from the procedures set out in this policy so as to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all relevant persons at the time of implementation, whilst ensuring the spirit of this Policy is not compromised.

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# PROBLEM SOLVING PROTOCOL FOR SCHOOL PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

## School values in practice

Some of the best opportunities we have to foster and promote our school values and grow our community, are during times of adversity, challenge or high emotion. In reality, when life gets tough or issues compound, we often find it most difficult to behave in ways that positively reflect what we value - that's human nature. This protocol provides parents with a simple structure, that when implemented to tackle challenges and problems, will lead to appropriate outcomes and serve to maintain and strengthen relationships.

*'Whenever we tolerate unresolved conflict in friendships, families, schools or churches, whenever gossip and slander go unchallenged, whenever ministry leaders attack other Christians in a spirit of arrogance or want to spread negativity about those who disagree with them - God is dishonoured.'*  
John Ortberg

John Ortberg in his book "Everybody's normal until you get to know them" also wrote,

*All day, everyday in numerous ways, in our homes, our friendships, and communities, we are, in our words and actions, either moving the world a little closer to God's picture of peace, or we are moving it a little further away.*

Put simply, we each have responsibility as members of the Good Shepherd community to:

- look for and acknowledge the love of God in all situations, and
- build others up.

This responsibility is more than a vague goal or ideal. Whilst we will fail from time to time it is expected that all members at all times will strive to adhere to these responsibilities.

Issues or concerns that you may have regarding the functions of or relationships within the school community are most effectively dealt with if they are raised in the following ways.

## PROCEDURE

*If a fellow believer hurts you, go and tell him—work it out between the two of you. If he listens, you've made a friend. If he won't listen, take one or two others along so that the presence of witnesses will keep things honest, and try again. If he still won't listen, tell the church. If he won't listen to the church, you'll have to start over from scratch, confront him with the need for repentance, and offer again God's forgiving love.*

Matthew 18:15-17

Reflecting this guide in scripture, all personal matters such as concerns regarding student, parent or staff relationships should be raised directly with the school through the class teacher or principal in a confidential manner.

The following guidelines will assist you to problem solve effectively.

**Step 1:** Stop and prayerfully reflect on the situation

**Step 2:** Make an appointment to talk to the person with whom you have a concern or with whom is closely related to your concern. This may be the classroom teacher, principal or other school staff (eg. OSHC or Canteen). Give forward notice of the subject you wish to discuss as this will facilitate preparation and ensure the issue is directed to the appropriate person. A scheduled appointment ensures the individual is free to give you his/her full attention. Approaching a teacher in the busyness of morning or afternoon routines is often not confidential and rarely is it possible for the teacher to focus without distraction on the issue.

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**Step 3:** Meet with the staff member, demonstrate respect and use appropriate problem solving and/or conflict resolution strategies to formulate positive action for future.

It is recommended you take time to:

- Identify the facts: Take turns to speak the facts known about the problem. When each is speaking the other must listen without interjection.
- Explore why the facts present a problem:
- Share feelings: How has the problem affected you personally?
- Make a plan: Jointly commit to some future action and goals within the guidelines of school policy, acknowledging school values.
- Follow up: Schedule an evaluation meeting to measure progress and to ensure both parties remain accountable to the action plan.

If you consider that the issue you have raised is not being resolved appropriately, it is important that you state this to the person at the conclusion of the meeting.

**Step 4:** If the issues are not resolved, make an appointment with the Principal or Deputy Principal. Let him/her know what subject you wish to discuss as this will facilitate the process.

**Step 5:** Meet with the principal or deputy principal. Results of this meeting may include the following:

- Data is collected and the situation is monitored
- Further discussions and problem solving with those involved
- External/professional support for the child or family may be sought/recommended

If you consider that the issue you have raised is not being resolved appropriately:

**Step 6:** The grievance becomes a formal complaint and will be recorded in the complaints register. Write to the principal or deputy principal outlining your ongoing concerns. If the matter relates to either the principal or deputy, it is appropriate to communicate with the chair of school council. The Lutheran Schools Association complaints procedure will then be actioned.

## Completing the process

The problem solving protocol will likely be completed at any point between steps 3 and 6 above. In ceasing to progress through the outlined steps, it is reasonable for the school to assume that the issue has been satisfactorily resolved. For serious matters steps may be skipped.

## Codes of conduct

It is vital that problem solving be handled with sensitivity, and although at times you may wish to seek support from friends or an advocate, it is critical to do this with discretion. The use of social media as the forum to air any form of grievance relating to school, is viewed by the school as a serious breach of 'contract' and failure to support the school's vision and values.

Whilst constructive criticism, appropriately shared and in line with this policy is welcomed, denigration or defamation of the school, staff or leadership, serves only to undermine trust and confidence.

In the event that a parent/caregiver persists in airing grievances in an inappropriate manner, the parent(s) will be required to attend a meeting with the principal and/or chair of council. Due to the importance that Good Shepherd Lutheran School places on the building and maintenance of positive community relationships, repeated deviation from this protocol may result in the termination of enrolment.

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