

	<h1 style="color: #4F81BD;">Whitsunday Christian College</h1>	Last Updated: August 2021
	<h2 style="color: black;">Suggestions, Concerns and Complaints</h2>	Version: 3

Parents have a responsibility to support the wellbeing of the College. Our College is a non-for-profit learning community made up of supportive families seeking quality schooling within the Christian faith tradition. As such, families that are willing to commit to the College as outlined below should formally contribute:

- Educationally, in being an active partner in the education of their children.
- Financially, in the timely payment of fees and levies.
- Socially, in helping build up our College community for the benefit of our children and young people, by speaking positively and helping out occasionally as time permits.
- Respectfully, ensuring our ethos and purpose is promoted and maintaining positive relationships by speaking with staff members about issues and concerns through the correct channels.
- Prayerfully, in praying for their children, class, teachers and school if they share a common faith position or alternatively hold their child, class, teachers and school in their thoughts positively.
- Additionally, parents may wish to help out on a regular basis as a volunteer.

Because of this community approach, Whitsunday Christian College welcomes suggestions and comments from parents through the correct channels and in the spirit of partnership. Staff members value suggestions, concerns and complaints that may be raised as a way of improving the College. The Bible warns against gossip and encourages people to speak directly to the relevant person; therefore, parents who use the following systems in a positive manner help their own child's situation and improve the College generally.

**Please remember the following:**

- Despite well-established routines and systems, because the College is made up of many people, incidents will inevitably happen from time to time. Usually there are many sides to an incident.
- Teachers and other staff members make a multitude of decisions every day. Occasionally errors of judgment occur, particularly with the benefit of hindsight.
- Our College strives to ensure your child's education is personalised but we cannot afford to have an individual teacher for every child.
- Teachers and other staff members are people with feelings. They come to work each day with the intent to achieve the best outcomes for your children and to do their best.
- While each staff member is responsible for his or her work, our systems are designed to equip and support staff members to carry out their roles.
- Parents need to check that their own personal/ family issues or other troubles are not the source of their complaints.

**How do I as a parent make a suggestion?**

Feedback from parents is an important part of College life. Informally, parents may simply chat with relevant staff members or speak with a member of Administration who can note your suggestion on our record system. Parents who have detailed suggestions or are seeking a reply are welcome to send emails to [mail@whitsunday.qld.edu.au](mailto:mail@whitsunday.qld.edu.au); these will be added to our record system. Please add a subject line, for example, 'Feedback: buses'.

## How do I as a parent raise an issue or concern that affects my child generally or specifically?

Despite the efforts we undertake to communicate with families; concerns and issues arise from time to time between home and school when working with children and young people. Often the need is to clarify something we have said, handled, missed, overlooked or just not explained well enough.

The proven best method is to speak directly with the relevant staff member as early as possible. Through direct communication we have an opportunity to share our stories, establish mutual respect, and build community.

We request you follow the complaints process as outlined below in order to ensure your concerns are addressed as effectively as possible.



## The Complaints Process

### Stage 1: Initial Complaint

You will be directed to speak with one of our Administration Officers. This is our system as other staff members are normally teaching, supervising students, completing duties or involved in meetings.

Working through one of our Administration team also makes it easier for parents who are at work and need to organise a suitable time to speak on the phone.

This is the same for all written, emailed or text-based complaints; as all complaints, no matter who they are addressed to, are directed to one of our Administration Officers (eg emailed or letters).

The College will collect the main information regarding the complaint from you. It is important that you remember to:

- Be clear about the issue you want to discuss.
- Focus on the things that are genuinely affecting you or your child.

- Remain calm and remember you may not have all the facts relating to the issue.
- Consider what would be an acceptable outcome for you and your child.

Depending on the nature of the complaint the College may:

- Resolve your issue immediately.
- Contact you back after finding out more information.
- Arrange the appropriate staff member to contact you at an agreed suitable time.
- Make arrangements for your complaint to be fully documented due to its serious or complex nature (see Stage 2).

It is our experience that most issues can be dealt with at Stage 1. For those that can't and for those of a more serious or complex nature please see Stage 2.

## **Stage 2: Review of fully documented complaint by supervising staff member**

If the complaint is not resolved to the satisfaction of the parties concerned, the Administration Officer will ask you, and help you if you wish, to fully document your complaint and attempts at resolving the matter, in detail, so that it can be reviewed by a supervising staff member.

The Administration Officer will arrange a suitable time for the supervising staff member to discuss the matter with you.

The supervisor's role is to review the matter, consider College policy and make determinations regarding the matter.

It is our experience that nearly all issues will be dealt with by the end of Stage 2. For those that can't and for those of a very serious nature please see Stage 3.

## **Stage 3: Review of the matter by the Assistant Principal – Primary/Secondary.**

The Assistant Principal (Primary/Secondary) will speak with you to discuss the complaint. The Assistant Principal (Primary/Secondary) will need time to review the situation and will inform you of their timeline (and any adjustments to it).

The Assistant Principal (Primary/Secondary) will communicate their decision to you.

## **Stage 4: Appeal review by members of the Leadership Team.**

If you remain unsatisfied with the outcome to the extent that you do not believe that the matter has been dealt with, you may document your dissatisfaction and ask the Leadership Team to review the processes and decisions taken. The Leadership Team includes: the specific Assistant Principal and Principal.

If after all stages have been exhausted within the College but the complainant wants to appeal the final decision of the Leadership Team, then we will work with the complainant to raise the matter with the Board of Directors.

## **Additional Information**

Please remember that:

- Students, staff, volunteers, parents and other family members have responsibilities in making the educational partnership a successful one.
- The majority of issues arise between home and school when working with children and young people because of communication problems. While the College works hard to ensure our

communication is clear, the need to clarify something that has been said, handled, missed, overlooked or just not explained well enough, still happens from time to time.

- People, including our community members, do not always achieve their best in every situation.
- The College will act in the best interests of the student and all students generally. This may mean we do not always act in accordance with individual requests.

You have agreed (as per the enrolment conditions) to:

- Communicate directly with the appropriate staff member in a cordial manner if you have an issue that directly concerns your child or your enrolment arrangement.
- Follow the established and documented methods available in the College if you have an issue or complaint.

We will work through our process with you to:

- Gather enough detail to be clear about your complaint.
- Acknowledge your complaint.
- Inform you of the process we will follow to consider your complaint.
- Provide you with feedback regarding your complaint.

Please also note:

- We cannot entirely rule out the need to make authorised third parties outside the College (eg police, contracted parties, government authorities) aware of the complaint and possibly also the identity of those involved, where this is required by law or other contract requirements.
- While information relating to specific complaints will be kept confidentially on file, we would point out that anonymous complaints might not be pursued. All complaints are recorded along with outcomes.
- Staff disciplinary action, that needed to be taken as a result of complaints, would be handled confidentially within the College.
- Privacy matters may be involved and these would be pointed out in any response.
- The College has well established policies in line with its ethos and charter to operate effectively. Parents select to send their children to the College because of the ethos and charter of the school and agree, at the time of entering into a contract, to support the policies and procedures of the College. In this manner we work as a community to bring about and preserve the ethos of the College.

Whitsunday Christian College community members are expected to follow the established and documented methods available in the College if they have an issue or complaint. The complaints process sets out clearly how complaints are to be raised and addressed. This means Whitsunday Christian College community members who use non-authorised methods will have their relationship with the College reviewed if such actions are deemed by the College Management Team to have brought the College or community members into disrepute, involved breaches of privacy, or to have made false allegations against community members or the College.

- Non-authorised methods would include the inappropriate use of social media, traditional media, and making complaints to other staff members, parents or volunteers at Whitsunday Christian College.
- Non-authorised methods would also include where Whitsunday Christian College community members threaten legal, media, or outside authority action, or attempt other avenues rather than following the complaints process before genuinely seeking a resolution that restores a positive educational partnership between the parties.

The College will not tolerate threatening or actual abusive behaviour against any of its community members. There is no room for threats, negative targeted comments, or basically nasty actions against anyone. Apart from any civil or criminal consequence of such action, such behaviour would mean that our enrolment contract with you would be subject to review or cancellation.