



## GRIEVANCE POLICY

### PREAMBLE

As a community of Christians we should seek to consider every aspect of our relationships in the light of the Word of God. We remind ourselves that our school community is a body, made up of many parts, as illustrated in 1 Corinthians 12.

Scripture recognizes the fact that there will be divisions, dissensions and disputes even among Christians living in a fallen world. This is clearly illustrated in the Corinthian church, for example in 1 Corinthians 1:10 and following. This of course does not excuse us for sinful behaviour and we are to strive to “live in harmony with each other, making every effort to live in peace with all men”. Hebrews 12:14.

We are not to be quarrelsome people; instead the Bible teaches us that, where necessary, we are to approach our opponents with a spirit of gentleness, remembering that quarrelling only causes disunity within the body.

Paul’s words in Philippians 2 stand as a constant reminder that we are to have the same mind in our relationships as that of Christ Jesus, who humbled himself, even to death on the cross. The person who considers others better than himself (verse 3) and looks after one another’s interests (verse 4) is not likely to be divisive and argumentative.

Nevertheless, there may arise differences which call for clarification. In Matthew 18:15-17 Jesus directs us to speak first to a fellow Christian with whom we are in disagreement. Within our school community we should always seek to speak directly to any person with whom we have a difference, then if necessary, take the matter to the appropriate member of the school community who may be able to assist in resolving the concern.

The following procedure will be helpful in dealing with such matters, remembering that the principles of Christian grace and forbearance should apply at every step along the way.

### AIM

Within the school community, it is our desire that we actively promote mutual respect, harmony and Christian unity.

### DEVELOPING POSITIVE BEHAVIOURS BASED ON THE KEY VALUES

In order to continue to develop and sustain a positive environment at Horizon Christian School we have identified three key values that need to underpin and shape all motives and behaviours within the School. It is important that the whole School community reflects this at all times to the wider community around us, being “Salt and Light” to the wider community. The three Key Values promoted at HCS are Respect, Honesty and Service:

#### Respect

- Valuing and respecting diversity and difference
- Listening and respecting others’ views
- Being aware of the impact of people’s personal lives on their work/study
- Disagreeing constructively



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- Respecting others' time, resources and families
- Respecting confidentiality
- Speaking respectfully to and about other members of the school community
- Respecting School policy and procedures

### **Honesty**

- Giving constructive and accurate feedback
- Being professional in record keeping and legal obligations
- Listening honestly and openly
- Being accountable to one another as professionals, parents and students
- Being prepared to admit mistakes, and forgive others' mistakes
- Speaking openly with colleagues, parents and students

### **Service**

- Desiring to serve God and therefore others in all actions
- Being supportive of the Mission Statement and of HCS through action and service
- Striving to be a servant to HCS staff, students and their families
- Providing support for others in other Christian Schools and the wider community
- Growing our relationship with God, developing and using skills, knowledge and gifts to the best of one's ability in service to God and His body

### **A BIBLICAL MODEL FOR RESPONDING TO CONFLICT**

Jesus taught: "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. 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. If he refuses to listen to them take it to the Church, and if he refuses to listen even to the Church, treat him as you would a pagan." (Matthew 18:15-17)

If a member of the school community has a concern about, or complaint against another believer within the school community, the first step is to take it to the person directly and deal with it in a Christ-like manner. If the matter is still not resolved, other believers are to be called upon to assist in finding a resolution to the issue.

Paul, in 1 Corinthians 6, gives another sobering warning: "If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints? Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge the trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge the angels? How much more the things of this life! Therefore if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the Church! I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? But instead one brother goes to law against another – and this in front of unbelievers! The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?"



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Christians are called upon to resolve disagreements amongst themselves and to “*Live in harmony with one another*” whenever possible (Romans 12:14).

### PRINCIPLES OF POSITIVE RESOLUTION AT HORIZON CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

At HCS, the following principles should shape our response to conflict:

- Strive to be peace-makers – seek a positive resolution
- Keep the matter confidential – as appropriate, talk to those concerned
- Keep the circle small – discourage gossip and involving others unnecessarily
- Be straightforward – be honest about the situation
- Be self-evaluating – always ask where have I faulted?
- Be forgiving – seek restoration and move forward

The following *PeaceMaking Principles* as developed and promoted by PeaceMaker Ministries (2004) provide clear guidelines on responding to conflict biblically and should be adopted by the HCS community in responding to conflict:

#### Peacemaking Responses:

##### Personal Peacemaking

There are three Biblical ways to resolve conflicts personally and privately, just between you and the other party:

##### 1. Overlook an offence

Many disputes are so insignificant that they should be resolved by quietly overlooking an offence. “*A man’s wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense*” Proverbs 19:11. Overlooking an offence is a form of forgiveness, and involves a deliberate decision not to talk about it, dwell on it, or let it grow into pent-up bitterness or anger.

##### 2. Reconciliation

If an offence is too serious to overlook or has damaged a relationship, we need to resolve personal or relational issues through confession, loving correction, and forgiveness. “*If your brother has something against you...go and be reconciled*” Matthew, 5:23-24. “*Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently*” Galatians 6:1. “*Forgive as the Lord forgave you*” Colossians 3:13

##### 3. Negotiation

Even if we successfully resolve relational issues, we may still need to work through material issues related to money, property, or other rights. This should be done through a cooperative bargaining process in which you and the other person seek to reach a settlement that satisfies the legitimate needs of each side. “*Each of you should look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others*” Philippians 2:4

##### Assisted Peacemaking

When a dispute cannot be resolved personally, God calls us to seek assistance from other believers.

##### 1. Mediation

If two people cannot reach an agreement in private, they should ask one or more objective outside people to meet with them to help them communicate more effectively and explore possible solutions. “*If he will not listen (to you), take one or two others along*” Matthew 18:16. The mediators may ask questions and give advice, but they have no authority to force you to accept particular situation.

## 2. Arbitration

When you and an opponent cannot come to a voluntary agreement on a material issue, you may appoint one or more arbitrators to listen to your arguments and render a binding decision to settle the issue. *“If you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even among men of little account in the church”* 1 Corinthians 6:4

## 3. Accountability

If a person who professes to be a Christian refuses to be reconciled and do what is right, Jesus commands his or her church leaders to formally intervene to hold him or her accountable to Scripture and to promote repentance, justice, and forgiveness. *“If he refuses to listen to others, tell it to the church”* Matthew 18:17

### PROCEDURES FOR POSITIVE RESOLUTION

All telephone calls and requests for appointments for grievance matters should be directed according to the procedures outlined below.

### PROCEDURES FOR STAFF MEMBERS WITH A GRIEVANCE

If the complaint or matter of concern is about a fellow member of staff (or a Board Member), after prayerful consideration, you must:

1. First speak directly to that person and strive to reach a positive resolution. If no positive resolution can be found, you are advised to;
2. Take the matter to the leader/coordinator overseeing the staff member OR
3. Approach a staff ‘wellbeing mediator’ to assist with taking steps to positively resolve the conflict
4. If no positive solution can be found, the mediator may advise you to take the matter confidentially in writing to the Principal, or Board Chair as appropriate, for further action

If the complaint or matter of concern is about school policies and procedures you must:

1. First speak directly to the person responsible for the implementation of the policies and/or procedures. If no positive resolution can be found, you are advised to,
2. Ask a school leader/coordinator overseeing the school section involved to assist in taking steps to positively resolve the conflict
3. If still no positive resolution can be found, you may take the concern to the committee responsible for the decision, ensuring you follow correct meeting procedure
4. Further unresolved concerns may then be directed to the School Board

If the complaint or matter of concern is about a student and/or parent, the staff member must

1. First, speak directly with the student/parent concerned. The student will be given the option of having a third person present who is acceptable to the other party. If no positive resolution can be found, you are advised to;
2. Take the matter to the relevant Assistant Principal to assist in reaching a positive resolution to the matter. This may involve taking the matter to the appropriate confidential leaders’ meeting
3. If the matter remains unresolved, the Sub School Assistant Principal may direct the matter to the Principal, who may take the matter to the School Board

### **PROCEDURES FOR BOARD MEMBERS WITH A GRIEVANCE**

If the complaint or matter of concern is about a member of staff (or another Board Member), after prayerful consideration, you must:

1. First speak directly to that person and strive to reach a positive resolution. If no positive resolution can be found, you are advised to;
2. Take the matter to another Board member as appropriate
3. If no positive solution can be found, take the matter confidentially in writing to the Principal, or Board Chair as appropriate for further action

If the complaint or matter of concern is about school policies and procedures you must:

1. Take the concern to the Principal, ensuring you follow correct meeting procedure.
2. Further unresolved concerns may then be directed by the Principal to the School Board

### **PROCEDURES FOR PARENTS WITH A GRIEVANCE**

If the complaint or matter of concern is about a member of staff (or a Board Member), after prayerful consideration, you must:

1. First, speak directly to that person and strive to reach a positive resolution. If no positive resolution can be found, you are advised to;
2. Take the matter to the Sub School Assistant Principal overseeing the staff member. If the staff member concerned is the Assistant Principal, then take the matter to the Principal who will take the appropriate steps to resolve the conflict. If it's about a Board member, you may wish to take the complaint to the Principal or Board chair

If the complaint or matter of concern is about a student or parent, after prayerful consideration, you must:

1. If comfortable, first speak directly to the parent, or the parent responsible for the student, striving to reach a positive resolution
2. If approaching the parent directly may be difficult, then you may approach the Class or Care Group teacher to assist you
3. If the matter cannot be positively resolved, you may take the matter to the Sub-School Assistant Principal or the Principal
4. If the matter cannot be resolved, the Principal may take the matter to the School Board
5. If the matter is of a highly confidential nature that would be damaging to individuals within the community, it is advised that the complaint goes directly to the Principal, or the Board Chair who will take responsibility for the situation.
6. Parents must be reminded that neither the Minister for Education and child development nor the Department for Education and Child Development has any power to directly intervene in any complaints relating to the operations of a non-government school. Parent issues/ complaints that are not satisfied by either the Principal or Board Chair are encouraged to contact the Association of Independent Schools SA (AISSA).



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### PROCEDURES FOR STUDENTS WITH GRIEVANCES

If students have a grievance they should:

1. First speak directly to your class/care group teacher
2. If it is concerning this teacher, then speak to a member of staff responsible for the sub-school welfare or sub-school coordinator or the School Chaplain or Counsellor. If no positive resolution can be found, you are advised to, seek your parents' support, asking for a plan to resolve the conflict with an appropriate school leader
3. The school leader/coordinator overseeing the school section should then assist in taking steps to positively resolve the conflict
4. If still no positive resolution can be found, you may take the concern to the Principal
5. Further unresolved concerns may then be directed to the School Board

### ACCESS TO SCHOOL COMMUNITY

The student grievance procedures will be explained to students at the beginning of each school year and in the new student information process.

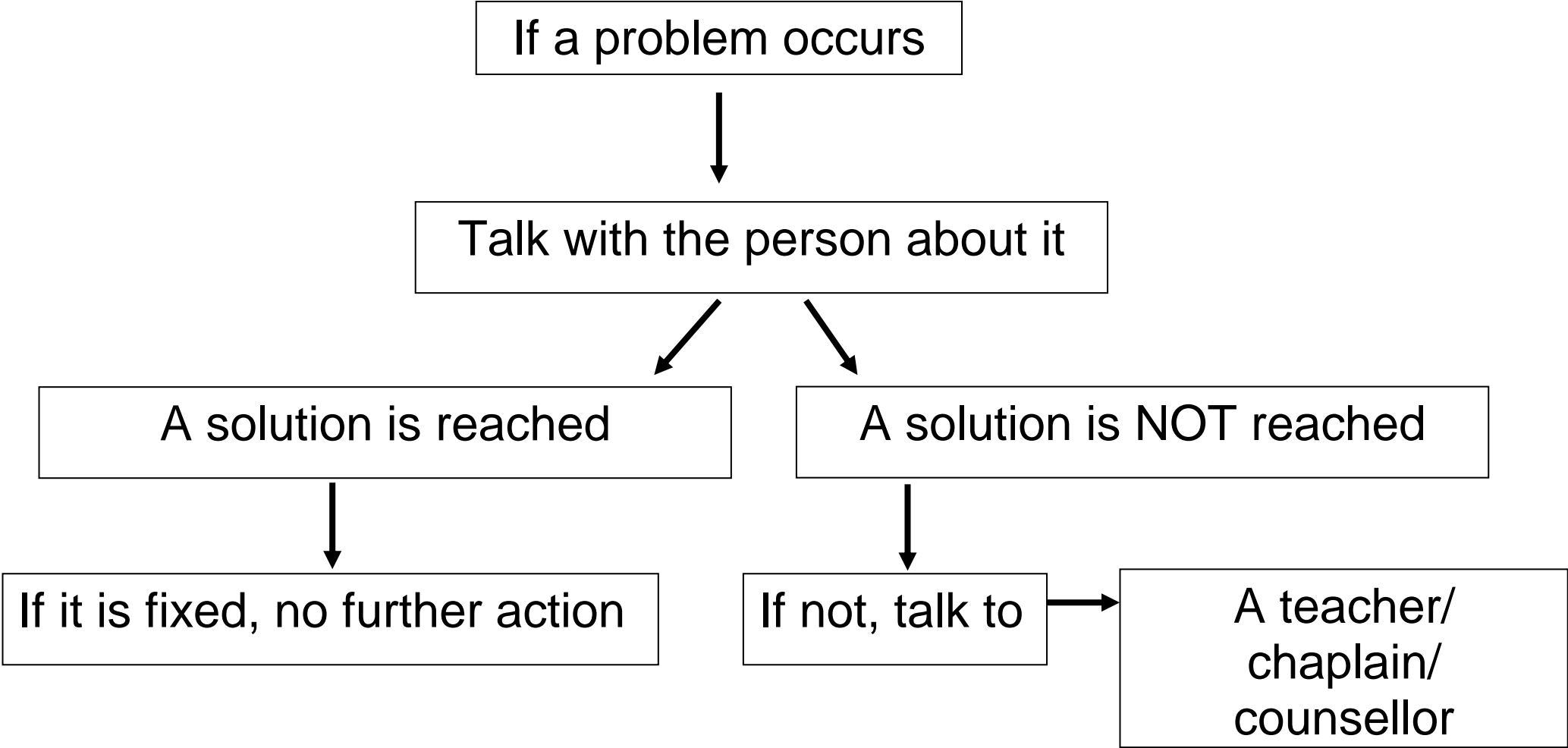
Parents can access a copy of this policy on the school website: [www.horizon.sa.edu.au](http://www.horizon.sa.edu.au)

Staff and Board members will be trained in grievance procedures yearly.

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# How to deal with a problem

Grievance Policy for Students/ Positive Resolution Policy





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There will be a mediation meeting



A solution is reached



If not, talk to the Principal



There will be a mediation meeting







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A solution is reached