

# Melville-Knox Christian School

## Complaint Policy



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## **1. Policy Statement**

Melville-Knox Christian School undertakes to be transparent and show integrity in all its dealings. This necessitates taking complaints seriously and striving to bring all complaints to a resolution that all involved parties are satisfied with. As far as is possible according to law and public policy confidentiality will be guaranteed to those raising complaints as far as the complaints process within the School is concerned. Complainant should be made aware that the complaint might necessitate reporting on to statutory agencies outwith the School depending on its nature and seriousness. The school will maintain a Complaint Log in which all complaints will be recorded with a date, name of the Complainant(s), a short description of the nature of the complaint, the name of the Complaint Handler approached, whether the complaint is formal or not, as well as a complaint number. The Complaint Log and documentation of the complaint will be kept in a secure/locked filing cabinet to which the Head Teacher (or equivalent) and the Chair of the Board alone will have a key.

## **2. Dedicated Complaint Handlers**

At all times, there will be the minimum of two (and a maximum of four) dedicated Complaint Handlers. The Head Teacher (or equivalent) and the Chair of the Board will allocate Complaint Handlers by virtue of position and office. If they are both of the same sex, the Board may nominate another person of the opposite sex from the Board itself or from outside the Board to serve as a discretionary Complaint Handler. The Board has the discretion to appoint up to two discretionary Complaint Handlers.

The dedicated Complaint Handlers will receive training before taking up their positions. This training will be from existing or previous Complaint Handlers. Complaint Handlers will be thoroughly familiar with the School's Complaints Policy.

The names of the Complaint Handlers will be made known to the parents and pupils of the School. The names of the Complaint Handlers will also be published on the school's website and displayed in the school building in a publicly accessible area.

## **3. Complaint Procedure**

Any complaints, irrespective of their nature and content, will be dealt with according to the following procedure:

At every stage of the Complaint process consideration must be given to the appropriateness and necessity of referring the matter on to any relevant statutory agencies and authorities.

### **Level 1:**

- The Bible commands Christians to make every effort to live in peace and to resolve disputes in private, or within the Christian community. Scriptural passages as 1 Corinthians 6:1-8, Matthew 5:23-24 and Matthew 18:15-20 address this area of Christian living. This is why, a

person having a grievance or a complaint should go first to the person against whom he/she has a grievance, discuss and try to resolve the matter. ONLY if this is unsuccessful, the aggrieved party should resort to 2.

- Should the Complaint not be resolved through between the Complainant and the subject of the complaint, or should the Complaint be of such a nature as to render this stage inappropriate, the Complaint will move on to Level 2

## **Level 2**

- The Complainant may raise a Complaint either by approaching a Complaint Handler in person or in writing to one of the Complaint Handlers. The Complainant(s) may bring another person with them for moral support if they so wish. A Complaint may also raise a complaint in writing and present it to a Complaint Handler or post it to the School addressed either to the Head Teacher or the Chair of the Board.
- The Complaint Handler(s) will then discuss the nature and contents of the Complaint seeking to establish a fuller understanding of the Complaint. This discussion should be recorded by the Complaint Handler in note form and any outcomes recorded in the Complain Log.
- The Complaint Handler should seek to constructively resolve the Complaint informally if it is possible to do so at this stage. If the Complaint is resolved the details of the Complaint should be recorded in the Complain Log.
- Should it not be possible to resolve the Complaint informally the Complainant(s) will be asked if they want to make the Complaint formal. If the Complainant wants to make the Complaint formal the Complaint moves on to Level 3:

## **Level 3**

- If the Complainant(s) wish to make the Complaint formal the Complaint Handler(s) will record this in the Complaint Log. The Complaint Handler(s) will form an Action Plan and then inform the Complainer(s) of the approximate time scale involved. A time and date for the next meeting between the Complainant(s) and the Complaint Handler(s) will also be agreed on.
- No Complaint Handler that is the subject of a Complaint may act as a Complaint Handler in that Complaint.
- The Complaint Handler(s) will write an Initial Report of the Complaint and log the Complaint into the Complaint Log, giving it a Complaint Number. The Initial Report will include the details of the Complaint and the suggested Action Plan. The Initial Report will be recorded in the Complaint Log.
- In the follow-up meeting the Complaint Handler(s) will show the Initial Report to the Complainant(s) and they will sign the Initial Report if they agree with its contents. Should there be disagreement about the contents of the Initial Report any issues should be resolved through discussion with a view to producing an agreed Initial Report. The Initial Report should be signed and dated by the Complainer(s) and the Complaint Handler(s). It may be necessary to produce a revised Action Plan if changes are made to the draft Initial Report.
- The Initial Report will be stored in a separate folder in a secure/locked filing cabinet in the school. The folder will have the complaint number on it.
- The Action Plan will then be executed. On completion of the Action Plan a meeting will take place between the Complainer(s) and the Complaint Handler(s) to determine the satisfaction of the Action Plan outcome(s).

- Should the outcome(s) of the Action Plan result in satisfaction of the issue of Complaint this will be recorded in the Complaint Log in a pro forma detailing the outcome and actions required and signed by the Complainant(s) and the Complaint Handlers(s). Any remedial action necessary by the School as a result of the Complaint process should be recorded on the pro forma.
- Action Plan outcomes may require the iteration of the Level 3 process in order to endeavour towards a satisfactory outcome to the Complaint.
- If the Complainant(s) consider that the Complaint Handler(s) do not act justly or timeously enough, this should be raised with the Complaint Handler(s). If this is of sufficient seriousness it may result in the raising of another Complaint and the need to appoint new Complaint Handler(s).
- Should the Complainer(s) determine that they have not achieved satisfaction then the Complainants may escalate the Complaint to Level 4.

#### **Level 4**

- Should the Complainant(s) not receive satisfaction at the Level 3 stage of the Complaints Process they may appeal to the Board of the School.
- The School will provide full details of the contents of the Complaint to the Board Secretary.
- The Board will discuss the Complaint at the next Board meeting. Depending on the seriousness of the Complaint the Secretary may recommend the calling of a pro re nata Board meeting to consider the issue.
- The Board may determine to recommend a resolution at the Board meeting. The Board may appoint a Commission to complete further investigation and report back to the Board for further determination.
- The Board will keep the Complainants(s) informed of the progress of the Complaint.
- The School Board or the Commission will meet with the Complainant(s) to inform them of the determination of the Board on the matter.
- Should the outcome(s) of the Board's deliberation result in satisfaction of the issue of Complaint this will be recorded in the Complaint Log in a pro forma detailing the outcome and actions required and signed by the Complainant(s) and the Complaint Handlers(s), Any remedial action necessary by the School and/or the School Board as a result of the Complaint process should be recorded on the pro forma.
- Should the Complainer(s) determine that they have not achieved satisfaction then the Complainant(s) may escalate the Complaint to Level 5.

#### **Level 5**

- Should the Complainant(s) not receive satisfaction at the Level 4 stage of the Complaints Process they may appeal to the Board of Reformed Christian Education for Scotland (BRCES).
- The School will provide full details of the contents of the Complaint to the BRCES
- The BRCES will discuss the Complaint at the next Board meeting. Depending on the seriousness of the Complaint the Secretary may recommend the calling of a pro re nata Board meeting to consider the issue.
- The BRCES may determine to recommend a resolution at the Board meeting. The Board may appoint a Commission to complete further investigation and report back to the Board for further determination. Commission Members should not be directly connected with the School.
- The Board will keep the Complainants(s) informed of the progress of the Complaint.

- The School Board or the Commission will meet with the Complainant(s) to inform them of the determination of the Board on the matter.
- Should the outcome(s) of the Board's deliberation result in satisfaction of the issue of Complaint this will be recorded in the Complaint Log in a pro forma detailing the outcome and actions required and signed by the Complainant(s) and the Complaint Handlers(s). Any remedial action necessary by the School and/or the School Board as a result of the Complaint process should be recorded on the pro forma.
- Should the Complainer(s) determine that they have not achieved satisfaction then the Complainants may escalate the Complaint to Level 6.

#### **Level 6**

- If the Complainants(s) are not satisfied with the outcome of the Level 4 process they may as a final appeal resort to making representation to the Registrar of Independent Schools. This step is only advised on accusations of very serious nature against the School, the School Board or the BRCS.

#### **4 Time Frame**

There is no set time frame for resolving a Complaint as the nature of complaints may vary greatly in complexity and seriousness. The Complaint Handler should estimate the time needed for resolving each case. It is the responsibility of the Complaint Handler to inform the Complainant(s) of any major changes in the estimated time frame when they occur.

#### **5. Review and Reporting**

The Head Teacher and/or the other Complaint Handlers will annually review all Complaints logged in the Complaint Log on an annual basis. Care should be taken to identify any patterns and any learning points for the School and for the staff of the School. Effort should be made to follow up outcomes to ensure that the measures effected have had a beneficial effect in the longer term. long term successes.

The Head Teacher will annually report to the School Board the number and nature of Complaints (including those that were not lodged as Formal Complaints), in order to monitor and keep track on the successful resolution of issues. The School Board should consider whether any further remedial action is required and make recommendations to the Head Teacher.