

# CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCEDURE



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## RATIONALE

As a Christian community, we strive for harmony and good relationships. However, being humans who are prone to sin, at times, disagreements and miscommunications are bound to lead to difficulties in relationships. There are numerous biblical exhortations to seek restoration of relationships. Our Complaints Policy is underpinned by the following biblical principles:

- Christians should be reconciled to one another when disputes of any nature arise between them (Matthew 5:23-24; 6:9-15; 18:15-22).
- Christians should resolve their disputes in the context of Christian community (Matthew 18:15-22; 1 Corinthians 12:25-27; Ephesians 4:15-16; Philippians 2:1-5).
- Christians are exhorted to resolve disputes between themselves within the community and not by recourse to secular courts. (Luke 12:57-59; 1 Corinthians 6: 1-8).
- Christians are to resolve disputes without consideration or calculation of revenge (Romans 12:17-21).
- Reconciliation will at times involve repentance, forgiveness, and restitution. (Luke 17:3-4; Romans 13:8-10, Numbers 5:5-10).

## AIMS

This procedure seeks to:

- Ensure that grievances and disputes are resolved in a timely and biblical manner and, where possible, between the persons concerned.
- Establish fair and consistent procedures to resolve grievances and disputes in the school community.
- Enable community members to be fully aware of relevant resolution procedures.
- Confirm that our processes comply with the relevant sections of employment agreements and other requirements placed on the college by authorities.

## OVERVIEW

This procedure should be read alongside the Complaints Policy which applies to all members of the Plenty Valley Christian College community including parents/caregivers, students, staff and leaders and governors.

Grievances and disputes shall be resolved through a staged process:

- **Stage One:** Checking personal motivation and your position.
- **Stage Two:** Personal and informal resolution.
- **Stage Three:** Formal discussions.
- **Stage Four:** Formal mediation.
- **Stage Five:** Arbitration.

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## PROCESS

If you feel that you have a reasonable grievance against an employee or other member of the Plenty Valley Christian College community it is important that you approach this conflict appropriately using the following process which protects the integrity of those involved and follows Biblical principles and relevant legislation.

It is the responsibility of all participants to resolve a conflict in the shortest reasonable timeframe and every effort should be made by participants to keep details of the conflict confidential to those directly involved in the process. Under no circumstances should a participant in the process be discriminated against or have prejudicial action taken against them because they are part of this process. It is recognised there maybe extenuating circumstances where this process conflicts with wellbeing considerations and may be modified by the principal to take this into account.

### Stage One: Checking the facts and personal motivation

- You should always consider could the incident be a misunderstanding and try to make the most generous interpretation of the motives of the other.
- You may wish to check that your grievance is reasonable by talking to trusted and confidential other. They may be able to help you see the situation in a different light and help you to analyse the assumptions that you have made in reaching you conclusion about an incident.
- It is not appropriate to talk to anyone else, unless they are in a position to assist in resolving the conflict, as this becomes gossip. The conflict should not be discussed in any personal, digital or social media platforms.
- Should you conclude that your grievance is reasonable and not able to be overlooked and forgotten then you have a responsibility to approach the person with whom you have the grievance.

### Stage Two: Informal discussions

- When differences first occur, reconciliation is sought through private and informal steps involving the parties concerned. No official record is kept of these discussions but both parties are encouraged to keep diary notes of the event with a précis of the matters discussed and any agreements reached.
- You should not assume that the other community member is aware that they may have treated you in a way that caused hurt or offence. It is the responsibility of the one who feels the injury or injustice to approach the other (Matthew 18:15).
- This step may be repeated any number of times until the issue is resolved or it becomes clear that resolution will not be reached.
- In extreme circumstances, if the situation is so significant for you that you fear meeting with the other person, even if accompanied by a support person, then you may go directly to Stage 3. This decision should not be taken lightly because the opportunity for full restoration of relationship will be harder once superiors are involved.
- Should it become clear that resolution is not possible through informal discussion then it is important to involve another appropriate person in the discussion. This should be the line Manager or Head of School of the one with whom you have the grievance. In case that you are in conflict with the Principal the Board Chair should be involved.

### Stage Three: Formal assisted discussions

- The Line Manager, Head of School, Principal (or the Board Chairman in the case of a dispute with the Principal) is to be informed of the disagreement.

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- The Line Manager, Head of School, Principal or the Board Chairman acknowledges receipt within two days of receiving a written complaint or notice of non-resolution.
- Stage Three can be invoked by the Principal, the Board, or any party to the conflict.
- Within a week of receiving formal written notification, the Line Manager makes contact with both parties individually to arrange a meeting to discuss the process and help them prepare for the Formal Assisted Discussion.
- The Line Manager chairs the discussion attempting to allow parties to identify any part they may have played in the development of the conflict, identify areas where they may agree to disagree or compromise, offer apology and forgiveness and restore the relationship with appropriate mutually acceptable boundaries.
- Detailed records are made of these discussions, including any commitments or undertakings given. Both parties are encouraged to sign and keep a common record of discussions.
- At this stage complaints and their progress will be recorded on the Conflict Register and be brought to the attention of the Board for the purpose of them tracking issues and ensuring the college continues to improve our care and processes.
- In extenuating circumstances, where a participant may be negatively impacted by this meeting they may be represented by another mutually agreed person.

## Stage Four: Formal mediation

- Where a conflict cannot be resolved as above, formal mediation is used in an attempt to reach a compromise position.
- Stage Four can be invoked by the Principal, the Board, or any party to the dispute.
- An independent person, agreeable to both parties, is asked to formally mediate in the dispute and fully document points of agreement and disagreement and report to the Board.
- Records are handed on to the mediator who acknowledges receipt to all parties and convenes a meeting within a week.
- It is expected that both parties at this stage are committed to reaching a satisfactory compromise solution, and would therefore generally comply with any reasonable recommendations of the mediator.

## Stage Five: Arbitration

- Where mediation has not succeeded, or in cases where matters relating to the Award or employment conditions are concerned, the final recourse is external arbitration through the Fair Work Commission (<https://www.fwc.gov.au>).
- If in the course of the Conflict Resolution Process a community member believes that the college is not fulfilling its requirements they may like to consider asking the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) to consider their complaint (<http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/complaints/Pages/default.aspx>).
- Other bodies that may consider a complaint after following through this process may be: Victorian Institute of Teaching, Consumer Affairs or the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### All persons involved are responsible for:

- Applying Biblical principles in their dealings with each other and those in authority over them.

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- Seeking God's will by praying earnestly, both individually and when meeting to discuss matters of dispute or discipline.

## **Staff Members are responsible for:**

- Following the processes outlined in this procedure, and/or allowing them to be followed.

## **Senior Staff are responsible for:**

- Implementing this procedure with their staff as directed by the Principal.

## **The Principal is responsible for:**

- Implementing this procedure.
- Tempering the implementation of this procedure with Christian love, forgiveness and speaking the truth in love.
- Keeping appropriate records of actions taken under this procedure.
- Seeking independent advice in serious situations, especially when invoking Stages Three to Five in the process.
- The review and maintenance of this procedure statement and associated documentation.

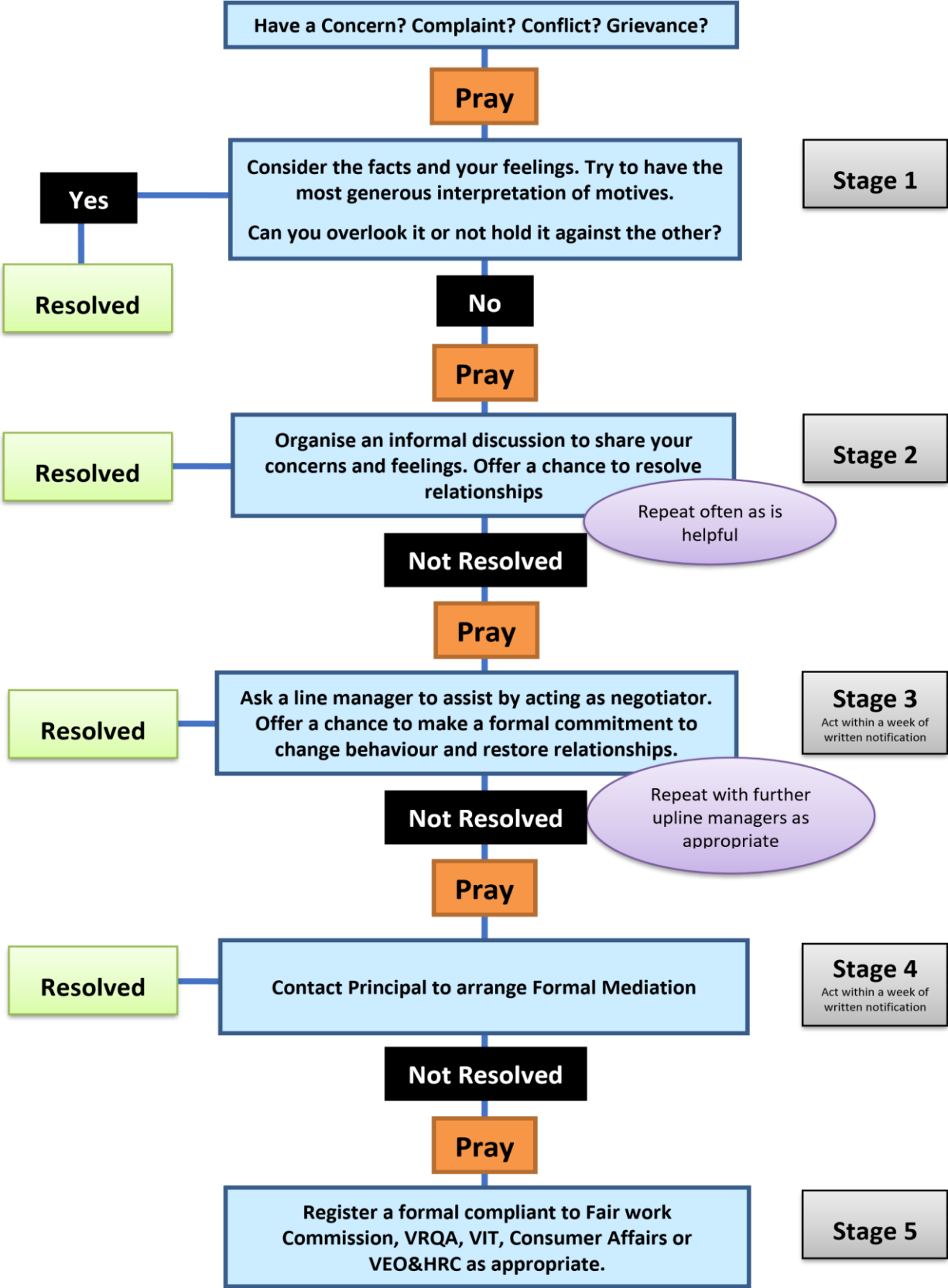
## **The Board is responsible for:**

- Seeking independent advice in serious situations, especially when invoking Stages Three to Five in the process.
- Ensuring that senior staff are qualified or trained to carry out their roles under this procedure.

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## FLOW CHART



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## DOCUMENT HISTORY AND VERSION CONTROL RECORD

**Name of document:** Conflict Resolution Procedure

**Responsible officer:** Principal

**Approved by:** Board

**Assigned review period:** Biennial

**Date of next review:** May 2021

**Category:** Staff

Version number	Version date	Responsible officer	Amendment details
0.1	15/03/2017	Principal	Initially issued as a Draft Policy Replaces Community Grievance Policy 1.3
1.0	15/03/2017	Principal	Approved by Board
1.1	13/03/2018	Principal	Added clause in Stage 2 that allowed access to line manager if fearful of one on one approach. Approved by Principal
1.2	19/03/2019	Principal	Changes made to wording
1.2	04/04/2019	Principal	Approved and Signed
2.0	14/05/2019	Principal	Changed from Policy to Procedure
2.1	21/10/2020	Margaret Vella	Updated to align with new Style Guide.

Approved by:



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John Metcalfe  
Principal

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Date