



Communications (Grievance) Policy

Introduction

This school is a ministry of Wyong Baptist Church and operates within that framework as a Christian community. In order to operate effectively as a community it is important that all members of the community including parents, staff and students, understand the basis on which the community operates. As a ministry of the church the principles upon which the school operates must be grounded in Biblical truth. As a community it must also be remembered that relationships are vitally important.

The policy set out below is founded upon Biblical principles which form the basis of communications within the school. Some key references include - Matthew 18:15-20 and 21-35; Romans 12:9-21; 1 Corinthians 13:1-8; Ephesians 4:1 and 5:21; and Philippians 2:1-5. The policy should also be understood and implemented within the context of the love for one another that should characterise a Christian community (John: 13:34-35).

Policy

Within the community of the school there is a great deal of formal and informal communication and it is not the intention of the school to restrict the relationships that are an important part of the life of the school. However Scripture warns, 'The tongue has the power of life and death' (Proverbs 18:21 NIV). The words that we say are very powerful and can cause considerable damage. In order to minimise the potential for damage to the school and the members of the school community the principles set out in Matthew 18 should be followed not in a legalistic way but as a model given by Christ himself for us to follow.

Within the context of the school this might generally happen as follows:

First Principle - Talk first with the person with whom you have a problem.

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. Matthew 18:15

It is vital that Christians should pray about an issue before trying to resolve it bearing in mind that we must not sin when we get angry ' "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry' (Ephesians 4:26 NIV), and that we must always be ready to forgive (Colossians 1:13) and to accept the responsibility to live at peace with others as far as it is our responsibility (Romans 12:18).

In the first instance any conflicts should be addressed informally between the two parties involved. The aim is to find out whether the problem you see is a real concern or just a problem of communication. If you then believe the other party is wrong you should lovingly correct them and restore the relationship before it suffers any further harm. As indicated in this passage this should be done in a private manner. If, and only if, this does not result in the conflict being resolved the matter may, after prayerful consideration, be taken to the next stage.

Second Principle - If you can't resolve the problem take a wiser person with you.

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. Matthew 18:16

Prior to involving others in any disagreement it must be borne in mind that to do so reduces the likelihood of the matter being resolved without some damage to the relationship with the other person. Although this may be healed over time it is wise to count the cost before embarking on this course of action.

If it is prayerfully considered that the matter needs to be taken before witnesses it is generally appropriate that this be the person most directly responsible for the person against whom the complaint is made within the authority structure of the school. If this does not result in the matter being resolved it is important to again seek the Lord to ensure that the complaint is justified as each stage will, most likely, result in further deterioration of the relationship. If the matter cannot be resolved at the lowest level of the authority structure within the school it should then be referred to the Principal. Referrals to the Principal can be made verbally (phone conversation or meeting) or in writing (letter or email).

In dealing with any issue the Principal will firstly ensure that the preceding steps have been undertaken and that appropriate opportunities have been given for the accused to respond to any accusations raised against him. In doing so the Principal may make available any documentation or other information pertaining to the problem. The complainant can expect a response to their concern within seven days of the Principal receiving the referral. This response will both verbal (in the form of a meeting or phone call) and in writing.

Third Principle - Only refer matters to the Board when the prior steps have been tried.

If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. Matthew 8:17a

If the intervention of the Principal does not result in a resolution of the dispute the matter should then be referred to "the church". As indicated above the school operates as a ministry of Wyong Baptist Church under which the school derives its authority. The church has delegated this authority for the running of the school to the School Board who, in this case, would act as 'the church'.

In the event that a matter is referred to the School Board this should be done in writing (either in the form of a letter or email) and addressed to the Chairman. This written communication will be dealt with at the next board meeting (board meetings are usually held on the third Tuesday of the month, although this can vary on occasion). Should the Chairman believe a resolution/response is required earlier than this an extraordinary board meeting to address the matter may be called.

It is not appropriate for individual Board members to be approached or canvassed on any issue as proceedings of the School Board are confidential and not discussed publicly. Any Board member who is approached directly with a complaint will not enter into discussion on the subject but will merely request that the matter be addressed through the appropriate channels as outlined in this policy.

In reaching a decision on any matters before it the School Board must consider all the available information and act in the best interest of the school as a whole. This may result in decisions being made for reasons that cannot be fully explained because of the need to maintain confidentiality. While it is intended that a response will generally be made to matters raised with the School Board this will not usually include details of any discussion and may consist only an acknowledgment that the issue has been raised. A response will be provided to the complainant from the Board Chairman or delegate in writing within seven days of the meeting at which it was addressed.

In the event that an issue is raised with the School Board and in the view of the complainant is not satisfactorily resolved it would be appropriate for that person to review their continuation as a member of the school community. It is not appropriate for issues to be discussed outside the framework that is discussed in this policy. In the event that this occurs the School Board may decide that, after following the procedure set out in this policy, it is in the best interests of the school that the relationship is terminated.

In the event the grievance or complaint is against the Principal the above principles still apply. Firstly, commit the matter to prayer and if appropriate, meet with the Principal to discuss the issue. Should a resolution not be reached, bearing in mind the aforementioned dangers associated with this action, have a third party join you when you meet. Should the matter remain unresolved it should then be taken to the School Board. This is done in writing and is addressed to the Board Chairman. The Board Chair will raise the matter with the board at the next meeting or earlier if deemed appropriate and a response will be provided to the complainant from the Board Chairman or delegate in writing within seven days of the meeting at which it was addressed.

Fourth Principle - Preserve unity as much as you on your part can do

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace: Ephesians 4:2 3

You should not discuss your grievances with other people not directly concerned with fixing the problem as set out above. The Body of Christ, which is in effect Christ himself is hurt when we gossip about problems or when we talk to others about issues that they do not need to know about. Often after an issue is resolved between two people the problem reoccurs because so many other people have heard about it and they did not hear how it was resolved. Christians are called to be patient, humble, forgiving and keeping unity as much as they can.

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