



POLICY DOCUMENT

Policy No. G2 SCHOOL COMMUNITY	Title Dispute Resolution	Effective Date: May 2016
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*"The servant of the Lord must not strive;
 but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,
 in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves"*
 2 Tim 2:24-25.

1. Purpose

This policy is intended to outline ways to achieve and preserve Godly relationships in communication between all members of the College community.

It is particularly designed to:

- encourage students to address conflict by the application of scriptural principles when dealing with both their peers and their seniors (adults), and in regard to their seniors, to reflect the additional obligation of respect
- emphasise the value of working together, and
- stress the importance of the avoidance of conflict.

2. Our Spiritual Objectives

In an endeavour to develop godliness, we should avoid conflict by respecting one another and working together, as illustrated by the following Bible passages:

- *"As much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" Rom 12:18*
- *"Let your moderation (forbearance, gentleness) be known unto all men." Phil 4:5*
- *"There be no divisions among you" 1 Cor 1:10; 11:18*
- *"If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit" Gal 5:25*
- *"Love one another" Jn 13:34*

These spiritual principles can be reflected in our actions by:

- acting humbly, considerately, and with love towards one another.
- reasoning the matters through with the other party when issues of difference occur.
- finding appropriate assistance to help resolve the matter, if the issue is not resolved.

3. All parties have a Responsibility to Resolve a Dispute

- **The Offender to the Offended**
"If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" Mat 5:23-24.
- **The Offended to the Offender**
"Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established" Mat 18:15-17.

4. Guiding Principles

4.1 Responsibility to one another

We live in a humanistic age where the rights of the individual are considered paramount; a time when men are lovers of self, proud, disobedient to parents, high-minded, without respect for others, and embracing these values are never able to come to the Truth (2 Tim 3:1-7). We have not so learned Christ.

We should be focussed upon our responsibilities to each other.

"For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.... if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" 1 Peter 2:19-23 (Phil 2:5-11; Jn 13:13-15; Luke 22:24-26).

4.2 Causes for Many Disputes

The great cause of many disputes is pride and anger. Paul, in warning of how pride is a cause of division to those walking in rank says; *"let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another"*, Gal 5:26.

In speaking of uncontrolled emotion he says; *"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you"* Eph 4:31-32.

4.3 The Principles that Should Override the Conduct of All

4.3.1 Our attitude to others:

"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others"; Phil 2:3-4.

"Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them"; Mat 7:12.

4.3.2 The question we must ask ourselves:

"Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?"; 1 Corinthians 6:7.

4.3.3 The objective in view:

"Seek peace and ensue (to earnestly pursue after, to acquire) it"; 1 Peter 3:11.

4.4 Communication Breakdown

When it comes to a breakdown in communication and the need to resolve differences there are generally two major matters that are important:

4.4.1 The right or wrong of the point(s) at issue

In respect to this, the questions that must be asked include:

- Is the issue important enough to take further? In coming to a decision on this matter the injunctions found in paragraph 4.3, *"The Principles that Should Override the Conduct of All"*, should be considered.
- Is there a possibility for a misunderstanding? If so, seek clarification carefully and humbly, doing unto others as you would have them do unto you (Mat 7:12).

4.4.2 The relationship between the protagonists

This, in many cases, may be more important than the issue itself. The relationship referred to here is dealt with under each of the areas of conflict that follow.

4.5 The Role of Parents

Parents have a particular responsibility in this matter. They are the first teachers of their children and need to be perceived by their children as positive role models of dispute resolution in the home and then in the ecclesia, at work and within the College. In most cases they will be the first adult to be aware of a dispute, particularly if it involves their child, and their initial response is particularly important in either resolving an issue or escalating it. It is natural for parents to defend their children but not necessarily wise. Worse still is for a parent to defend their child when in the wrong. Levi was elevated before all Israel because they stood for rightness notwithstanding the hurt that it brought upon their own family (Deut 33:8-10).

The greatest trap for a parent is to accept the story of their child and base their immediate reaction upon what their child has said. Whilst the child may not be accustomed to telling untruths, they may not be telling (or even know) the whole truth. Proverbs 18:13

Should the dispute involve an adult, such as a teacher, parents are encouraged to support the standing that should be had by an "elder" in the eyes of their child in their reaction. To this end parents are asked not to speak derogatorily about any member of the staff of the College in the hearing of their child(ren).

5. Areas of Conflict

5.1 Conflict between students

Many points of difference between students resolve themselves leaving no resentment. While it would have been better if no conflict arose in the first place, in these circumstances the process of conflict resolution has no real application.

However, in respect to more serious differences that may develop, students are encouraged to:

- attempt to discuss the matter with their antagonist alone. If this is unsuccessful or not possible, then
- seek some form of arbitration. This arbitration may involve a teacher or a parent (or both) or if not resolved at that level, by a member of the leadership team or the Principal.

5.2 Conflict between students and adults (staff, volunteers or parents)

Whilst the same process described in paragraph 5.1 should apply to the resolution of all conflicts, when the conflict is between people of different standing (such as between a student and an adult) each party should, in addition, reflect in their response and demeanour, their respective standing as follows:

The attitude that should be exhibited by the junior to a senior (ie by a student to a staff member or other adult) is expressed in the following scriptures:

- *"Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder"; 1 Peter 5:5.*
- *"Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and*

beloved, partakers of the benefit"; 1 Tim 6:1-2 (Eph 6:5-8; Col 3:22-25; Titus 2:9-10).

The attitude that should be exhibited by the senior to the junior (ie staff member or adult to a student) is outlined in the following:

- *"Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath"; Eph 6:4; Col 3:21.*
- *"Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven"; Col 4:1 (Eph 6:9).*

5.3 Conflict involving parents

5.3.1 With the operation of the College

If a parent has a personal concern about a matter which relates to the operation of the College (which may or may not involve his/her child), the parent is encouraged to take up the matter directly with the Principal. In the event that the matter cannot be resolved with the Principal, it should be referred to the Chairman of the Council.

5.3.2 With a Teacher

If the matter relates to the actions of a particular teacher in relation to their child, the parent should take the matter up directly with the teacher concerned. In the event that the matter cannot be resolved with the teacher, it should be referred to the Principal.

5.3.3 With the Chairman

If the matter is not resolved with the Chairman of the Council then neither the Minister for Education nor the Department for Education has any power to directly intervene in any complaints relating to the operations of a non-government school.

6. Related Policies and Procedures

- 6.1. Grievances & Complaints Flowchart – Junior Primary Students
- 6.2. Grievances & Complaints Flowchart – Upper Primary Students
- 6.3. Grievances & Complaints Flowchart – Secondary Students
- 6.4. Grievances & Complaints Flowchart – Parents

Document History

1998	Policy written as Complaints Policy (C7)
2004	Policy rewritten as Dispute Resolution Policy (G2) and approved by Council
Feb 2007	Policy revised and modified to include flowcharts as requested by NGSRB
Feb 2010	Reviewed, updated and approved by Council
Nov 2011	Minor modification to one flowchart as suggested by NGSRB
May 2013	Reviewed, updated with minor changes and approved by Council.
June 2016	Policy reviewed, updated and approved by Council
June 2018	Policy updated to included SA Gov directed statement