

Policy number	2240
Short description	A policy on maintaining community relationships by dealing with concerns Biblically and promptly.
Relevant to	All HOPE employees, parents and students
Authority	This Policy has been approved by HOPE Board
Responsible officer	Director, David Ware
Responsible office	Management, Director and Board Personnel Committee
Date introduced	March 2009
Date modified	2 June 2016
Next scheduled review date	August, 2017
Related documents	Acknowledge draft from SVCC Australia and used with permission HOPE Parent and Teacher Handbooks
Related policies	

RATIONALE

One of the distinctive's of HOPE School is the working partnership between parents/guardians, staff and students. Whilst every endeavour will be made to maintain godly, pro-active, working relationships, from time to time it is possible that concerns, misunderstandings and disagreements may arise. Should a situation arise, it is our goal to apply Biblical principles as stated below.

- **Proverbs 25:8-10** states, *"Don't be hot headed and rush to court. You may start something you can't finish and go down before your neighbour in shameful defeat. So discuss the matter with him privately. Don't tell anyone else lest he accuses you of slander and you can't withdraw what you said."* (Living Bible)
- **Matt 18:15-17** likewise instructs us, *"If a brother sins against you, go to him privately and confront him with his fault. If he listens and confesses it, you have won back a brother. But if not, then take one or two others with you and go back to him again, proving everything you say by these witnesses. If he still refuses to listen, then take your case to the church, and if the church's verdict favours you, but he won't accept it, then the church should excommunicate him."*

(Living Bible)

PURPOSE

- 1.1 This document sets out HOPE policy on concerns, grievances or conflicts against the school from either within or without the school community and/or staff.
- 1.2 The objectives of this policy are as follows:
 - 1.2.1 Maintain good relationships; it is imperative that concerns are dealt with Biblically and promptly.
 - 1.2.2 Seek immediate resolution which avoids cynicism, gossip and a critical spirit and restores a climate in which quality learning and teaching can proceed and relationships can be restored.
 - 1.2.3 Lay out step-by-step procedures should a grievance remain unresolved and restoration not achieved. It is expected that the sequence of steps will be followed as laid out in this policy.
- 1.3 It is recognized that in some cases it will be beneficial to have the involvement of an advocate to walk through this process alongside one or more of the parties to the concern, grievance or conflict.

2. SCOPE

The following procedures are published on the school website, and can also be found in both Parent and Staff Handbooks. This gives members of the HOPE community, including staff and parents, a clear understanding of the course of action to follow when dealing with concerns, grievances and conflict.

3. PROCEDURES

- 3.1 **STEP 1:** Clearly identify the issue.
- 3.2 **STEP 2:** Arrange an interview with the person who is directly involved with the concern or conflict.
 - 3.2.1 Make an appointment either by phoning, using the student's diary or other appropriate means of contacting the person involved.
 - 3.2.2 It is recommended that the concern be clearly written down and dated, and given to the involved party prior to the meeting. This helps clarify the concern and allows time for the other party to collect their thoughts and any necessary documentation.
 - 3.2.3 Thoughts to keep in mind:
 - Attack the problem, not the person.
 - Deal with facts, not assumptions, guesses or rumours.
 - Verbalise feelings rather than acting them out.
 - Avoid unhelpful emotions that cloud the negotiations and the issues.
 - Be willing to listen to others' perspectives and seek to understand all aspects of the issue being raised.

- Be prepared to forgive, rather than judge.
- 3.3 **STEP 3:** If the concern, grievance or conflict remains unresolved, make an appointment with the appropriate Person of Responsibility within the school.
- 3.3.1 The Person of Responsibility chosen will depend upon the nature of the concern. Meet and discuss the written and dated document outlining the issue. The Person of Responsibility will research the grievance, talk with all primary parties, and act upon the grievance in a timely manner.
- 3.3.2 The Person of Responsibility will then document his/her decision and will reported to all involved parties. The hope is that the concern is dealt with appropriately at this point with no further follow-up required.
- 3.4 **STEP 4:** If the concern, grievance or conflict still remains unresolved, contact should be made with the Principal responsible for the area of concern.
- 3.4.1 The Principal will research the grievance, talk with all primary parties, and act upon the grievance in a timely manner.
- 3.4.2 The Principal will document his/her decision.
- 3.4.3 The Principal's decision will be reported to all involved parties.
- 3.5 **STEP 5:** First Stage of Escalation--Involvement of the Director
If a satisfactory resolution is still not achieved, the First Stage of Escalation will proceed where any of the involved parties may contact the Director who will make sure that all parties are informed of this next step.
- 3.5.1 The Director will impartially hear all parties and seek to resolve the situation in the most appropriate manner. This may involve a mediation that leads to reconciliation, or a clarifying of policies, or making a determination that best serves the interests of Hope school. The Director's decision will be documented, dated, and communicated with the appropriate principal, and all involved parties.
- 3.5.2 The Director will keep the involved parties updated regularly throughout the time of his/her involvement and seek to conclude this stage within 10 working days.
- 3.5.3 Once the Director makes a decision and all parties are informed, there will be 25 working days following the last documented communication. Within this time frame, if any one party is still not satisfied with the decision, they can then take it to the Second Stage of Escalation. After such time, the issue will be considered resolved.
- 3.6 **STEP 6:** Second Stage of Escalation--Involvement of the Appeals Member
If the aggrieved party is still not satisfied with the Director's decision, the aggrieved party has 25 working days to contact the Board Chair, while copying the Director, requesting an audience with the Board Appeals Member.

3.6.1 The Appeals Member will review the process of the Grievance up to this point and act as a mediator between the aggrieved party and the Director. It is not the responsibility of the Appeals Member to conduct an investigation. All correspondence and additional relevant information should be passed to the Appeals Member by the Director as soon as possible. The Appeals Member should then meet with the aggrieved party and the Director, either individually or together, as needed. The Appeals Member should endeavour to move the process forward as quickly as possible, whilst allowing for availability of the parties and adequate time for reflection.

3.6.1.1 **Conflicts of Interest.** If the Appeals Member has a conflict of interest, this must be declared and both the aggrieved party and Director must agree that the Appeal Member acts as a mediator during Step 6. If either does not agree, then another member of the Board must be invited by the Board Chair to act as the Appeals Member for this particular Appeal.

3.6.1.2 **Limitation of Power of Appeals Member.** The Appeals Member acts only as a mediator during Step 6. They cannot overrule the Director. Moreover, whilst they can have wide-ranging discussion with the aggrieved party and Director, they should, as much as possible, avoid voicing their own opinions on the Grievance, and make only limited written correspondence. This should be sufficient to make appointments and advise on the process only. It is for the Director to answer the aggrieved party's remaining grievances.

3.6.1.3 **Investigation.** The Appeals Member does not carry out any direct investigation of the Appeal themselves (such as interviewing involved parties and/or staff members beyond the aggrieved party). However, the Appeals Member may request that the Director carry out further investigations to facilitate resolution of the Grievance being raised.

3.6.1.4 **Confidentiality.** The Appeals Member should endeavour to keep details of the Grievance and in particular, the identity of the aggrieved party confidential outside the Board. The overall nature of the Appeal should be reported to the Board Chair promptly. However, whilst a Grievance is still being reviewed by the Appeals member, the details of the Appeal should not be shared with the Board to avoid prejudicing any subsequent Appeal to the Board. Nevertheless, the Director is at liberty to report details to the Board if this is still felt appropriate. Also, the identity of the Appeals Member will remain confidential from the public in order to prevent parties from trying to prejudice the process.

3.6.1.5 **Revision to Policy & Procedures.** If this process identifies potential deficiencies in school or Board-level policies or procedures, these will be brought to the Management Team, (school level) by the Director, or to the Board or appropriate sub-committee by the Appeals Member or Director.

3.8 **STEP 7: Appeal to the Board**

In the event the Appeals Member is unable to facilitate a satisfactory resolution at Step 6, then the aggrieved party or the Director may make an Appeal to the Board. This should be in writing from either the appellant or the Director to the Board Chair. At the discretion of the Board, by the appellant attending a scheduled or extraordinary Board meeting. The Board will meet in closed session when hearing an Appeal to the Board.

3.8.1 The Chair of the Board is responsible for overseeing an Appeal to the Board, with the exact process determined as appropriate for each individual Appeal. However, the expected process would be to create an Appeals Panel of three Board members (not including the Appeals Member), tasked with investigating the Appeal. All investigative activities should remain consistent with Board policies outlining Board/Staff linkages, Executive limitations and the like. At the end of the investigation, the Appeals Panel will write up a report and their recommendations for consideration to put before the full Board.

3.8.2 The Board Chair, in consultation with the Appellant and the Director, may call an extraordinary Board meeting to bring the Appeal to the full Board. During this meeting, the full Board will review the report and recommendations and make a decision. After reviewing the report, should the Board feel they are unable to make an informed decision, they may request that the Appeals Panel carry out further investigations before making a final decision. In this event, all parties will be notified and a deadline for these further investigations will be given, hopefully to be concluded by the next Board meeting. At this time, the new findings will be given and the full Board will then make a decision regarding the Appeal.

3.8.3 **Outcome of the Appeal.** The Board may either uphold the Director's decisions, or overrule them, requiring the Director to modify some or all decisions in the Appeal. The Board will need to distinguish clearly between requiring the Director to modify a decision because the Director has made it in breach of Board policies and where, the Board resolves to change the decision on other grounds. In the latter case, Board-level policies will need to be reviewed to better guide the Director in the future. There is no further appeal beyond an Appeal to the Board.

3.8.4 All decisions of the Board are final. All proceedings will be recorded by the Recording Secretary.

1. RESPONSIBILITIES

At the time of formatting, the following role assignments exist:

1. Director, David Ware
2. Hope Management

3. HOPE Board Grievance Officer, Ruth Appleby

Table of amendments

Version number	Date	Short description of amendment
2.0	21 Feb. 2013	Adjusted for formatting by Sarah White
	2 August 2013	4.1 Responsibilities reassigned to updated Principal roles by Sarah White
3.0	28 April 2014	Combined Appeals process with Grievance policy
4.0	07 Dec 2015	Major re-write of the Grievance and Appeals Policy
4.1	02 June 2016 18 th Jan 2017	Board discussed and approved with minor amendments Logo and font revised