 <b>CREST EDUCATION POLICY</b>	TITLE	<b>CREST COMMUNITY COMPLAINTS &amp; GRIEVANCE RESOLUTION POLICY</b>		
	LOCATION	STUDENTS		
	VERSION	03/2026		
	ISSUE DATE	FEBRUARY 2026		
	REVIEW DATE	FEBRUARY 2028		
	REVIEWED BY	Executive Principal	RATIFIED BY	CREST Board
PURPOSE:	To provide policy and procedure direction to all staff, students, parents and volunteers of the Educational Precinct.			
BACKGROUND:	CREST Education seeks to establish and maintain high level professional standards in relation to all activities within the Educational Precinct. This policy is in accord with the CREST Education 'Vision', 'Mission', 'Philosophy' and 'Key Commitments' documents as published and in line with CREST Board Policy.			
RELATED DOCUMENTS:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Victorian Education and Training Reform Act 2006</li> <li>• Victorian Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017</li> <li>• The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care</li> <li>• Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) Minimum Standards</li> <li>• Child Safe Standards Ministerial Order 870</li> <li>• Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)</li> <li>• Family Law Act 1975 (Commonwealth)</li> <li>• Children Youth and Families Act 2005 (Victoria)</li> <li>• CREST Child Safety &amp; Wellbeing Policy</li> <li>• CREST Parent Code of Conduct</li> </ul>			

CREST Education Ltd is a non-denominational Christian College operated in accordance with its Vision, Mission and Philosophy statements attesting to foundational beliefs which underpin its Christian basis of operation. This policy applies to parents and guardians (hereafter referred to collectively as parents) of the CREST Education community and outlines general expectations for how to manage concerns and complaints across all CREST campuses: (Hillcrest Christian College, Rivercrest Christian College and the Ayr Hill Equestrian Centre). In this policy, they are collectively referred to as 'the College'.

This policy does not apply to issues where CREST Education is an employer.

### Terminology

**Complainant** - The person making the complaint.

**Complaint** – A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction made to the College by a student, parent and/or a member of the community, and where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected by the complainant. This could relate to, but is not limited to, issues regarding child safety and wellbeing, the practice of teaching, the College's operations, unprofessional conduct at the College or any matter deemed to be significant. The College accepts that complaints may either be formal or informal. An informal complaint is understood by the College and this Policy as a 'concern', which will not result in a formal investigation or resolution.

- **Unresolved Complaint** - when agreement cannot be reached on a course of action and/or a remedy, or if the remedy cannot be implemented.
- **Resolved Complaint** - when an acceptable outcome to both parties has been reached.
- **Finalised Complaint** - when the College has made a final determination on the matter after exhausting the processes set out in this policy.

**Concern** – An informal expression of dissatisfaction by any person about any act, behaviour, omission, situation, decision or service provided. Concerns are less serious in nature and may arise from a stakeholder (e.g. a parent) having a contrary view to the College and/or a College decision. The complainant will not require a formal investigation into the concern.

Grievance - A grievance is a formal, documented complaint made to the College regarding an alleged breach of CREST policy or law. Following an investigation, a formal response by the College will be provided to address the allegations and, where possible, provide resolution.

**Parent(s)** - includes:

- a person who has parental responsibility for ‘major long-term issues’ as defined in the *Family Law Act 1975 (Commonwealth)*.
- a person appointed as ‘guardian’ pursuant to the *Children Youth and Families Act 2005 (Victoria)*
- an informal carer with whom the child normally or regularly resides, and who has day- to-day care and control of the child.

## **RATIONALE**

This policy exists to provide guidance and clarity for those who are partnering together in the CREST Education community. It is primarily intended to shape the interactions between staff, students and parents (including guardians) so that relationships can be based on mutual respect, understanding and integrity. This policy operates in addition to and alongside any other College policies and procedures which apply to parents/caregivers and may be varied from time to time by the College.

The College seeks to ensure that:

- a. Students and parents wishing to raise a concern or lodge a complaint know how to do so;
- b. The complaint or concern will be treated in a confidential manner and with respect;
- c. We respond to concerns within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient way;
- d. We give prompt written acknowledgment of formal complaints and grievances;
- e. Required action is taken within a stated timeline;
- f. Procedural Fairness is maintained throughout a complaint handling process
- g. Complaints are examined and investigated by an authorised person;
- h. The substance of the complaint is provided to the subject of the complaint;
- i. A clear record of the complaint is kept with the action taken and the outcome;
- j. If required, the matter will be referred to an appropriate external authority if a mutually satisfactory outcome is not reached. If necessary, an independent or third-party may be engaged ;
- k. Any action taken is evaluated and the procedures are reviewed so that a continuous improvement process is ensured.

## 1. SUMMARY

In summary, there are 5 key areas, which are expanded in this policy:

- **Student complaint and grievances**
- **Parent complaint and grievances**
- **Additional responsibilities for parents who are College staff**
- **Child safety and wellbeing complaints and grievances**
- **Unreasonable conduct and consequences for breaches of this policy**

## 2. STUDENT COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES

CREST Education's complaint-handling process for students reflects the following guiding principles:

- **Student-Focused**  
The College adopts a Student focused approach to the resolution of complaints with Students' wellbeing as a high priority.
- **Confidentiality And Privacy**  
Complaints will be treated with appropriate confidentiality, and where practicable, parents being notified and kept informed. As it necessitates, the College is required by law to disclose certain matters to external bodies.
- **Good Faith**  
The College expect all parties to act in good faith and work with the College to consider reasonable options for resolution.
- **Procedural Fairness**  
All complaints will be handled fairly and justly.
- **Responsiveness**  
The complaint will be dealt with as soon as possible, in compliance with internal and external reporting requirements.
- **No Disadvantage**  
A Student who makes a complaint will not be treated unfairly or unfavourably because they have made a complaint. The College will not tolerate victimisation of any Student exercising a right to lodge a complaint.
- **Vexatious And Trivial Complaints**  
The College will not tolerate vexatious (meaning a complaint without merit, designed to harass, annoy or cause financial or emotional distress to the College or to another Student) and trivial (meaning a complaint that lacks substance or merit) complaints.
- **Right To Withdraw**  
A Student has the right to withdraw a complaint. There will be some circumstances, however, in which the College has an external obligation to disclose such information and an obligation to investigate the matter even if a complaint has been withdrawn.

- **Support**  
A Student who makes a complaint has the right to have a support person present at any meetings, investigations or hearings related to the complaint. The Student will be offered access to the College's support services to assist them through the process.
- **Review And Appeal**  
Students have a right to appeal against a complaint decision made by the College.
- **Record Keeping And Reporting**  
Accurate records regarding the complaint, investigation and outcome will be securely held by the College and in accordance with CREST Education Policy.
- **Continual Improvement**  
The College takes the opportunity to learn from the complaints process and ensures where possible that risk mitigation strategies are put in place to prevent reoccurrences.

### 3. PARENT COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES

a) CREST Education's complaint-handling process reflects the following guiding principles:

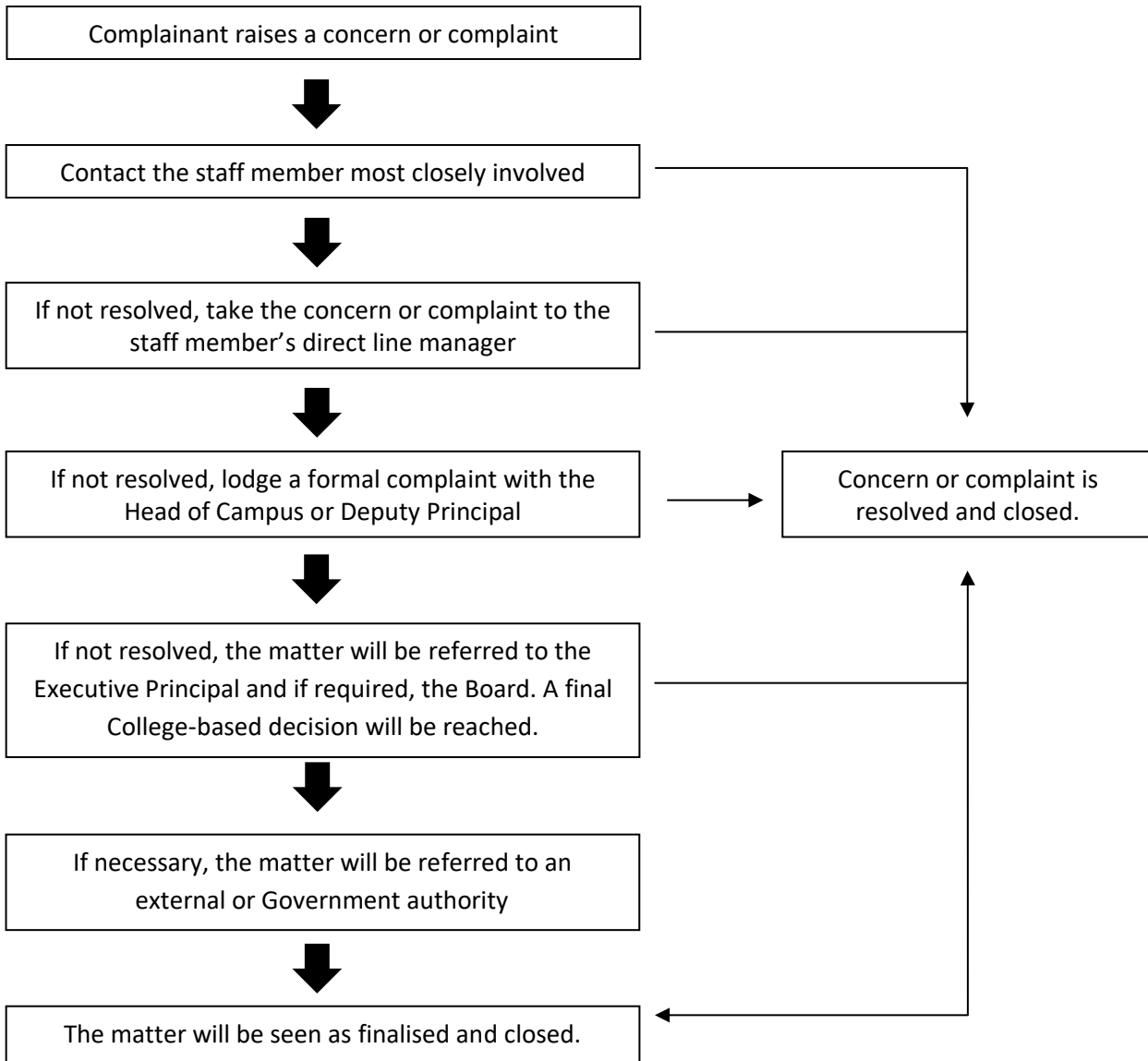
- **Accessibility**  
Information about how to make a complaint and the College's procedures when responding to a complaint should be easily accessible. The complaint-handling process should be flexible and include the ability to make a complaint in person, by phone and in writing.
- **Responsiveness**  
Receipt of written complaints should be acknowledged by communicating with the complainant as soon as practicable and inline with CREST communication policies. Complaints should be addressed promptly and the complainant kept informed of the progress of their complaint when the matter is complex and will take time to bring to resolution.
- **Objectivity**  
Each complaint must be treated in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner.
- **Protection of Privacy**  
Personally identifiable information concerning the complainant should be actively protected from disclosure except where needed in relation to the complaint. This means that the complaint should only be discussed with those directly involved in the complaint-handling process.
- **Student-focused**  
The College should be open to feedback including complaints and should show a commitment to resolving complaints with the wellbeing of students as the first priority.
- **Accountability**  
The College is required to have a fair, effective and efficient complaint-handling process. The College is accountable for our decision making and complaint-handling performance.
- **Review And Appeal**

Parents have a right to appeal against a complaint decision made by the College.

## Continual Improvement

- a. Complaint-handling procedures should be regularly reviewed for improvement. Complaint data and feedback should be used to identify recurrent themes and to implement improvement measures where a need is identified.
- b. The College is committed to procedural fairness and will endeavour to respond to each complaint in a fair, objective and unbiased manner, in accordance with the College's mission and values.
- c. The College will ensure that its complaint procedure is responsive and flexible. In practice, this means that staff, students and the College community will be able to make a complaint or raise a concern in person, by phone, or in writing. Service response times are as follows:
- d. Written and phone grievances, complaints or concerns (including complaints received via email, post or College portal) relating to Child Safety are a priority, and will be responded to within one working day, during term, upon receipt of the complaint or concern. All other complaints and concerns will receive a response within two working days, during term. This will often involve giving the complainant an estimated timeline of how long it may take to resolve the matter and/or what follow up action may be necessary. During term breaks, the College Reception should be contacted, who will then pass the complaint or concern to the most appropriate (and available) staff member for follow up.
- e. In person complaints or concerns will aim to be resolved your immediately or if this is not possible, verbal notice of when a response can be expected.
- f. The College will respond to all complaints promptly and professionally. Complainants will be informed regularly of the progress of the complaints process, particularly where the complaint is complex and may take more time to resolve.
- g. Staff managing a complaint process will be required to declare any conflicts of interest.
- h. The complainant and respondent will be provided with opportunities to present their point of view and will be always treated with dignity and respect.
- i. In dealing with the complaint, the College is committed to acting confidentially and expects those involved in the process will do likewise.
- j. Complaints procedures will be limited to dealing with the matter raised by the initial complaint, and will not engage with any other matters, except where the College determines that patterns of past behaviour may be relevant to the proceedings.
- k. The College may determine that a complaint is vexatious (that is, intended to harass, annoy or embarrass the College or the respondent) or spurious (without basis, or manifestly groundless). Where this is the case, the complainant will be informed in writing of the decision, and of the closure of the complaints process.
- l. The College will ensure that any actions, outcomes, and the final resolution of the complaint are documented and kept on file, and that both the complainant and the respondent may have a copy of the final decision if requested.
- m. The College will ensure that the handling of complaints does not contravene its Privacy Policy. The disclosure of personally identifiable information outside of the scope of the complaints process is forbidden.
- n. Once a grievance, complaint or concern has been resolved by the College, the matter is considered closed and is not to be re-prosecuted or raised in future complaints.

b) Flowchart for Managing Community Concerns and Complaints



c) The College is unable to directly resolve or respond to complaints and grievances submitted anonymously. Where a complaint or grievance relating to child safety has been received anonymously or under a pseudonym, the College will take the complaint seriously, and act upon the information received.

#### **4. PARENTS WHO ARE COLLEGE STAFF**

CREST Education staff whose children attend the College are entitled to the same rights as any other fee-paying parent. Staff who have children at the College are to adhere to the standard complaints and grievances procedure, but, additionally, must abide by the following:

- o. Staff should accept that any criticisms they may make about the College, its operation, colleagues, or students, may carry the extra weight of “inside knowledge” and staff must be cautious in what they say to other members of the College community. Similarly, staff must also be cautious of the information posted or published online or to their social media.
- p. Staff who are approached by other parents about concerns relating to the College are not expected to resolve them or engage in addressing them. Staff must politely direct parents to the appropriate channels as per this policy.
- q. Staff who have children that attend the College have every right to enquire about their child's progress and to raise issues of concern. In doing so, staff must be careful to ensure that the appropriate procedures are followed, and usual processes are not circumvented.
- r. Communication outside of the normal channels in matters which concern staff children is inappropriate and unfair to other fee-paying parents.
- s. It is inappropriate for a College staff member to use their privilege of access to colleagues to discuss their child during morning tea or lunch breaks when colleagues can rightly expect to relax. It is equally inappropriate for colleagues to approach parents on staff regarding concerns they may have about their child during morning tea or lunch breaks.
- t. College staff whose children attend the College have every right to be informed of progress and any disciplinary action; however, it is often more effective for the non-teaching parent (where there is one) to be the primary point of contact for complaints and grievances.
- u. Staff whose children attend the College will often face issues of confidentiality, both at home and at the College. College staff must avoid discussing College business or incidents in front of their child.
- v. It is completely inappropriate for any College staff member to allow their children access to their College computer or any College networks, databases or College files and or records.
- w. Staff must not use the privilege of their position to access records or information about their own children or matters relating to them in a manner which is unavailable to other College parents.

#### **5. CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES**

The College takes all child safety and wellbeing concerns and complaints seriously. This applies to all complaints and concerns relating to child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, College staff, volunteers, contractors, visitors, or other persons while connected to the College. Complaints or grievances made regarding child safety will always be acted upon and taken seriously, irrespective of how they are received (verbally or in writing).

- a. Any child safety and wellbeing complaint will be treated in accordance with the procedures set out in this policy and in line with the CREST Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy. Complaints will be handled promptly and thoroughly, and the child or student will be kept up to date on a regular basis.
- b. Where a student has raised a complaint or concern, they will be provided with special assistance to make their complaint. This may include a support person or a nominated professional present.
- c. After a complaint is made, the child will also receive ongoing care and support which will be determined in consultation with the child or student's parents and professional advisers.

- d. After assessing the complaint, the College may determine that the matter(s) need to be reported to various external or Government authorities including Victoria Police, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) and/or the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP).
- e. Under no circumstances will the CREST Education:
  - Prohibit or discourage students, staff or volunteers from reporting a complaint or concern relating to child safety or abuse;
  - Require students, staff or volunteers to make a judgment about the merit or validity of a complaint or concern relating to child safety or abuse; and
  - Prohibit students, staff or volunteers from making records in relation to a complaint or concern relating to child safety or abuse.

## **6. UNREASONABLE CONDUCT & CONSEQUENCES FOR BREACHES OF THIS POLICY**

All complaints should be considered in accordance with the College's complaint-handling procedures, outlined in this document, including when the complaining party's behaviour is thought to be unreasonable.

The Executive Principal or their delegate may at any point in the process outlined in this policy consider a complaining party's behaviour to be unreasonable. In these circumstances, it is appropriate for the Executive Principal, or their delegate, to communicate the basis on which the conclusion was made to the complainant in writing. The College may also indicate an acceptable procedure for future communication with the complainant about their complaint. The College considers behaviour to be unreasonable when:

- a. it poses a safety or wellbeing risk to students, staff or other members of the community
- b. it is unlawful
- c. it calls for staff resources and time unjustified by the nature or significance of the complaint
- d. an action or complaint is brought without merit or to cause annoyance to another person
- e. it is clearly and significantly outside the expectations of co-operation, courtesy and respect
- f. it is oriented towards conflict
- g. it has an unreasonable cost impact to the College

The Executive Principal will have absolute discretion for deciding how to best respond to concerns about compliance with the policy. Where the Executive Principal considers that a complainant has breached this policy, the Executive Principal, or their delegate, may implement one or more of the following consequences (and not necessarily in any particular order):

- a. A request that the relevant conduct immediately cease.
- b. A written warning.
- c. A requirement that the complainant only communicate with a nominated College representative.

- d. A parent (or another relevant person) being banned or excluded from the College grounds, either for a particular period of time (Immediate Order) or up to 12 months (Ongoing Order), as outlined in the *Education and Training Reform Act (2006) – College Community Safety Orders*. If a person contravenes a College Community Safety Order, they may be subject to legal action in the Magistrates' Court of Victoria. The person may have to pay a fine of up to \$10,904.00. Other penalties may apply.
- e. Termination of the enrolment of a parent's child(s).

Staff and volunteers are empowered to take steps to protect their own health and wellbeing. If they feel that a parent, student or community member is being inappropriate, they are encouraged to indicate this and ask that it stop. If it does not, or if a staff member feels that a parent's actions are posing a risk to their or someone else's health and wellbeing, they are empowered to remove themselves from the situation. This may include immediately concluding a meeting or phone call or demanding that a parent immediately leave the College grounds (or a College activity or event).

**DIRECTION:**

That all parents, staff and students become aware of the requirements of this policy and ensure compliance in all facets of dealings at the College.

**EXECUTIVE PRINCIPAL  
CREST EDUCATION**

**REVISION STATUS**

Date of Revision	Issue No.	Revision Detail	Authorised By
2025	1	Published	Executive Principal
2026	2	Reviewed by CREST Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusion of Student Complaints management process</li> </ul>	Executive Principal



CREST EDUCATION

# Community Complaints & Grievances Flow Chart

