

4 STAGE GRIEVANCE AND DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCESS

Stage One – Personal and 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 urged to keep diary notes of the event with a summary of the matters discussed and any agreements reached.
- This step may be repeated any number of times until the issue is resolved or it becomes clear that resolution will not be reached.
- The Principal (or the Board Chair in the case of a dispute with the Principal) is to be advised of the disagreement if it is clear that a resolution cannot be reached. In such cases, Stage Two will be invoked and the parties will be informed of the school's resolution policy.

Stage Two – Formal Discussions

- Where a mutually satisfactory conclusion cannot be reached through informal discussions, formal discussions and/or counselling takes place (i.e. Stage Two)
- The Principal (or the Board Chairman in the case of a dispute with the Principal), or any party to the dispute or grievance is to be informed of the disagreement.
- Stage Two can be invoked by the Principal, or any party to the dispute or grievance.
- 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. In some cases, the nature and the details of the grievance require affected policies to be considered, and appropriate records of the information and data collected to be maintained; including minutes of meetings, incident reports and copies of relevant documentation relating to the grievance, in a secure location.
- In the specific case of MECS Kindergarten, the Kindergarten Director and Principal will determine if it is a **notifiable grievance** and if so, MECS Kindergarten will notify the Department of Education and Training in writing within 24 hours of receiving the complaint (Regulation 176(2)(b)), using the appropriate forms from ACECQA and will include:
 - details of the event or incident
 - the name of the person who initially made the complaint
 - if appropriate, the name of the child concerned and the condition of the child, including a medical or incident report where relevant
 - contact details of the Kindergarten Director
 - any other relevant information
- Stage Two can include informal mediation. The mediator selected for informal mediation must be independent and acceptable to both parties.

Stage Three – Formal Mediation

- Where a dispute or grievance cannot be resolved in Stage Two, formal mediation is used in an attempt to reach a compromise position.
- Stage Three 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. In the ordinary course of events we recommend asking Christian Education National to provide a mediator. A report shall be given to the Principal provided the dispute does not involve him/her. If the dispute involves the Principal then the report shall be given to the Board.
- It is quite likely that the involvement of a mediator will entail financial costs. In this case the costs will be shared by both parties.
- 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 Four – Arbitration

- Where mediation has not succeeded, the final recourse is to external Arbitration,
- It is quite likely that the involvement of an Arbitrator will entail financial costs. In this case the costs will be shared by both parties.
- It is expected that both parties at this stage are committed to reaching a satisfactory compromise solution, and would therefore generally comply with the conclusions of the Arbitrator.

WHAT HAPPENS TO MY COMPLAINT?

Your complaint will be assessed for action and we may contact you for further information. We will implement the process above if there is a dispute or grievance to resolve.

All personal information that we collect to manage complaints will be handled in accordance with the MECS Confidentiality and Privacy Policy and the related legislation.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?

We will try to action your complaint as quickly as possible. If an issue is complex, a more detailed investigation may be needed and we will keep you informed of progress.

We will acknowledge your complaint within no more than 5 working days. We will commence resolution within 10 working days. If an issue is complex, a more detailed investigation may be needed and we will keep you informed of progress.

If there is a grievance or dispute to resolve the steps outlined above may take some time, however, we are committed to timely processes and resolution.