



# Crest Community Charter for Parents

This Community Charter is written 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 and parents (including guardians) so that relationships can be based on mutual respect, understanding and integrity.

In developing this Community Charter, the College recognises that parents ultimately want the best for their children. However, the College also expects parents to recognise that it must ultimately balance the interests of all of the College's stakeholders, including not only students and parents, but also the College's staff and their right to a safe working environment.

This Community Charter operates in addition to any other College policies and procedures which apply to parents, and may be varied from time to time by the College.

The Charter is split into three main sections:

1. Section 1 is a Preamble which outlines general expectations for behaviour and healthy communication across all Crest precincts – Hillcrest Christian College, Rivercrest Christian College, Crest Corporate Services (Administration) and the Ayr Hill Equestrian Centre.
2. Section 2 details the responsibilities and expectations for staff in communicating with parents/guardians.
3. Section 3 looks at the reciprocal responsibilities for parents/guardians in how to effectively communicate with Crest staff.

## **Section 1 Preamble**

### **1.1 Going the Distance**

For many families, partnering with Crest will mean a 15 year relationship from the time a child enters 3YO ELC to when they graduate from Year 12. Hence there is the need for a framework of Transparency, Sustainability, Efficiency and Accountability:

- ❖ Sustainability – we need to make sure that our partnership can 'go the distance'
- ❖ Transparency – let the 'left hand' know what the 'right hand' is doing so that we aren't double guessing one another
- ❖ Efficiency – matters should be dealt with in a timely way so that we don't get bogged down trying to resolve issues
- ❖ Accountability – a Community Charter like this helps us to see where our shared responsibilities are placed and how we need to interact with one another

### **1.2 The Biblical basis**

We recognise that in a growing school community like Crest, there will be plenty of times for celebration and also moments where things can go wrong. We recognise our own responsibility to 'love God and love others' – the two greatest commandments taught by Jesus – and that at times we recognise that we do not do this as well as we would like. As such, we need to show humility, look at our own shared responsibility when problems arise and then demonstrate a willingness to forgive and put things right, so that our community can continue to be a healthy place for our students to flourish.

## **Section 2 - Staff Responsibilities**

### **2.1 A Commitment**

Crest staff are committed to providing a high standard of service that is professional, timely, fair, accurate and accountable, and responsive to the needs of the Crest community.

### **2.2 What parents can expect of staff:**

- Timely, courteous service from each and every member of staff
- A polite greeting where we identify ourselves by name (staff will wear a name badge)
- Careful listening, so that we may understand and respond to your needs appropriately
- For staff to communicate clearly and take responsibility to assist you with your enquiry to the best of our ability
- Updates to keep you informed of the status of your request or enquiry and to close the loop on each matter

### **2.3 Our Service Response Commitment:**

There are a number of ways you can contact Crest Education to make an enquiry, request a service or provide feedback. If you would like to address a complex issue (eg. student progress or behaviour) you may wish to make an appointment. This way we can ensure that the most appropriate staff member is available to discuss your issue.

<b>Email/Online forms/Social Media /Phone messages</b>	We will aim to respond within 1 working day during term*. This will often involve giving you an idea of how long we then expect to need to resolve the matter and/or what follow up action may be necessary.
<b>In person</b>	We aim to resolve your enquiry immediately or if this is not possible, we will advise you when you can expect a response.
<b>Post</b>	We will respond within 2 working days of receipt

\* (During term breaks, please contact the College Reception who will then pass your concern to the most appropriate (and available) staff member for follow up).

### **2.4 Proactive communication:**

Crest staff value positive relationships that are built on healthy and timely communication

In addition to the scheduled parent teacher conferences, Crest staff will initiate at least two clearly identified personal contacts per year with parents to discuss student progress and wellbeing, these contacts will be either personal, email or phone interactions.

### **2.5 Responding to your concerns:**

Crest staff will:

- Respond to your concerns as a matter of priority. Our aim is to resolve matters effectively and efficiently so that the vital partnership between home and school remains strong.
- If you feel that the service we have provided to you has not met the terms of this Community Charter you may lodge a formal complaint. Complaints can be submitted via email, post, in person, or over the phone.

Further information can be found in the [Concerns and Complaints Management](#) section of this policy.

## **Section 3 – Parent Responsibilities**

### **3.1 A Commitment**

Parents of Crest are committed to partnering with staff to ensure that the best outcomes for their children are realised.

### **3.2 What Crest staff can expect of parents:**

#### **3.2.1 An Acknowledgement by parents regarding the policies of the College**

Upon enrolment of students, parents commit to support the policies and values of the College, including the acceptance of the Christian core and values of Crest, matters of student uniform, behaviour and discipline and of the ongoing payment of school fees for your child(ren).

#### **3.2.2 Help us to help you:**

Parents can support the College and be positive role models by doing, for example, the following:

1. Comply with the College's policies, procedures and directions, and ensure your children do the same.
2. The College expects that parents will behave respectfully at all times towards the College's staff (including employees, contractors and volunteers), students and other parents. This applies not only to words used, but also to tone and body language.
3. Respect (and show to your children they respect) that the College is inclusive and welcomes students from a variety of cultural and faith backgrounds, and with different needs.
4. Complete forms and provide permissions in a timely manner when requested to do so by the College.
5. Encourage your children to actively participate in the life of the College, including in the many sporting and extracurricular activities available (noting that some will be compulsory).
6. Be responsive to concerns raised by the College about your own child, including by being cooperative, providing information and attending meetings when required.
7. Keep the College informed about a child's behavioural or educational needs, including by providing updated medical information as it becomes available. However, parents need to also appreciate that while the College will take into account any new information, not every need can be accommodated.
8. Keep the College informed about a child's parenting arrangements, including any court orders that may be in place. However, parents should not involve the College in parenting disputes, or expect the College to act as the go-between for estranged parents.
9. Recognise the damage that gossip can do within a school community, and avoid unconstructive commentary (including criticism, uninformed rumour or speculation) with other parents, including on social media.

### **3.2.3 If there is an issue of concern raised by staff**

- Should a staff member raise a concern or complaint about a parent in terms of their behaviour, this will be followed up as a matter of priority by the respective Head of College.
- Such a concern may be raised about a meeting, an email, a phone call or an inappropriate post on social media. It may also include information which we hear 'second hand' through another member of the Crest community so that we can discuss alleged comments with you directly.
- This is an outworking of our OH&S policy which expects that all staff will be free to work in a safe environment without bullying or harassment.
- The Head of College (in consultation where necessary with the Executive Principal) will have discretion to decide how to best respond to concerns about a Parent's compliance with this Community Charter.
- Where the Head of College considers that a parent has breached this Community Charter, the Head of College may implement one or more of the following consequences (and not necessarily in any particular order):
  - 1 A request that the relevant conduct immediately cease.
  - 2 A written warning.
  - 3 A parent (or another relevant person) being banned from the College grounds, either for a particular period of time or permanently.
  - 4 A parent (or another relevant person) being excluded from College activities or events.
  - 5 A requirement that a parent (or another relevant person) only communicate with a nominated College representative.
  - 6 Termination of the enrolment of a parent's student(s).
- Staff and volunteers are empowered to take steps to protect their own health and wellbeing. If they have formed a reasonable belief that a parent is behaving inappropriately, they are encouraged to indicate this and ask that the behaviour 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 insisting that a parent immediately leave the College grounds (or a College activity or event).

**Approved by:**

**Mr Geoff Grace  
Executive Principal  
Crest Education**

**Date: 15<sup>th</sup> August 2019**

**Review date: August 2020**



# Crest Concerns and Complaints Management - Parents

## A Commitment

Crest Education staff welcome suggestions and comments from parents (including guardians) and take seriously concerns and complaints that may be raised.

## Scope

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 precincts – Hillcrest Christian College, Rivercrest Christian College and the Ayr Hill Equestrian Centre. In this policy, they are often collectively referred to as 'the College'.

We encourage parents to first treat their grievance as an informal **concern** when approaching Crest staff, and then lodge a formal **complaint** if this is not handled to your satisfaction.

A **concern** will be treated as a less serious matter that may be resolved with a more *informal* approach.

A **complaint** will be treated as an expression of genuine dissatisfaction that requires following a *formal* process as detailed below.

We seek to ensure that:

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

## Guiding Principles

When managing a concern or complaint, Crest staff aim to apply the following principles which are designed to ensure Procedural Fairness is maintained at all times:

### ***Sustainability***

In a school community the size of Crest, we need to have clear and consistent ways of resolving concerns and complaints to that there is predictability for both staff and parents in how we manage issues when they arise. As such, each concern or complaint needs to be addressed on its merits, in an equitable, impartial, objective and unbiased manner.

### ***Transparency***

Information about how and where to complain is well publicised. We aim to make the complaints management process simple and accessible to all. We aim to make the complaints handling process as transparent as possible and in responding to a complaint will, where practical, give reasons for our decision in writing, referring to applicable provisions in legislation, codes, standards or internal procedures.

### ***Efficiency***

We aim to put ourselves in the shoes of the complainant and understand the complaint from their point of view.

Complainants are to be fully informed of the progress of their complaint and complaints should be resolved as quickly as possible.

**Accountability** We are committed to undertaking a thorough investigation of each and every complaint, talking to people from both sides to establish common ground and verify explanations. Personally identifiable information about complainants is only available for the purpose of addressing the complaint (unless the complainant consents otherwise), and is actively protected from disclosure.

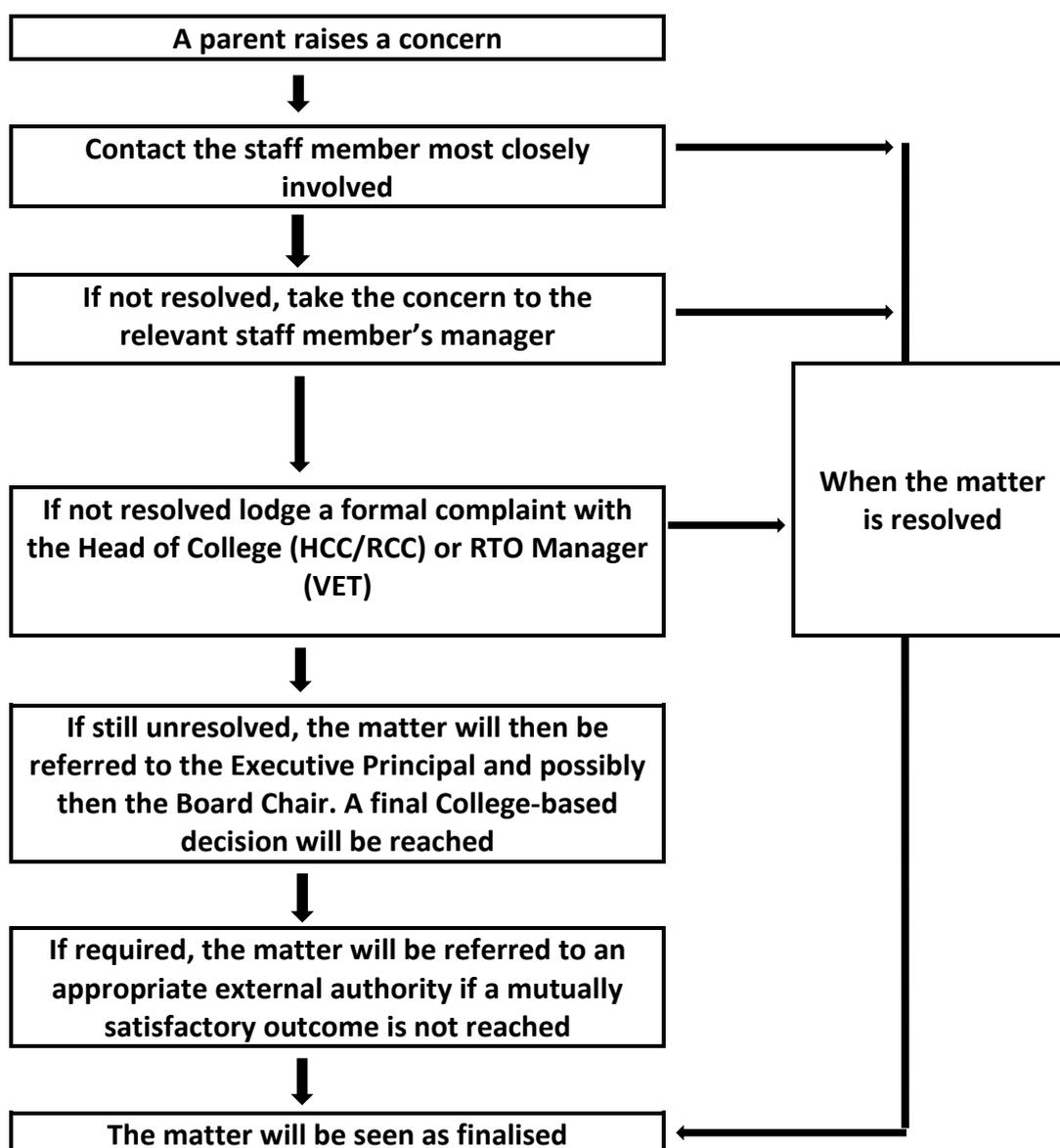
**Treatment of Personnel**

Where a complainant specifies action of a particular individual we will apply principles of responsiveness, accessibility, completeness, objectivity, confidentiality and transparency to that individual.

**Recording Information**

Whenever dealing with a complaint, and in particular when recording information relating to the complaint, we take the view that this information may at some time in the future be requested by the complainant or may be made public as a result of litigation (whether related or unrelated to the particular complaint). Personally identified information is not recorded if the name of the complainant is not directly relevant to the complaint or issue raised.

### A Flowchart for Managing Concerns/Complaints



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **“I don’t want to complain as such, but there is something bothering me.”**

The Crest staff are here for you, and we want to hear your views and your ideas.

### **“I am not sure whether to complain or not.”**

If, as parents you have concerns, you are entitled to raise them. If in doubt, you should contact the College as we are here to help.

### **“How long will it take to receive a response from the College?”**

If the concern is raised face-to-face or by telephone, it may be possible to resolve the matter immediately and to your satisfaction. If you lodge a formal complaint in writing, we will make a written response within two working days to acknowledge your complaint and, unless further exploration of the issue is needed, detail what action is proposed or will be taken and the timeline for this action.

### **“Will my concern or complaint be treated appropriately?”**

Procedural fairness is of the utmost importance and all parties will be treated justly and reasonably within the law and the College’s rules. In the interest of finding a just resolution, complaints will be examined and investigated by the Head of College. A hearing appropriate to the circumstances will be held free of any bias. Substance of the complaint will be provided to the subject of the grievance and a clear record of the incident, the action taken and the outcome will be kept. An evaluation of the action will be carried out and any related procedures will be reviewed.

### **“How do I best raise a concern?”**

#### **Parents wishing to deal with a concern should approach the staff member closest to the issue in the first instance.**

If this proves to be unfruitful, and there is the need to escalate a concern about a staff member, a student concern, a matter about teaching and learning or an administrative issue, the parent should then contact the appropriate staff as listed below:

#### **Hillcrest**

Any concerns should be dealt with by the respective teacher at the first instance. If this is unsatisfactory and/or not relevant to the issue being raised, then the next course of action is to approach one of the following staff members listed in the table below, as relevant.

ELC Director	All student matters
Primary Wellbeing Co-ordinator	Student behaviour, wellbeing and safety
Primary Learning Co-ordinator	Student learning
Primary Student Learning Support Co-ordinator	Students with additional learning needs
Secondary Wellbeing Co-ordinator	Student behaviour, wellbeing and safety
Secondary Academic Co-ordinator	Student learning
Secondary Student Learning Support Co-ordinator	Students with additional learning needs

Should this still prove unsatisfactory, we would ask you to discuss further with the Head of Primary or Head of Secondary (for pastoral matters) or Head of Learning and Teaching (for academic matters)

Beyond this, if the matter is not satisfactorily resolved, you may choose to contact the Head of College with a Formal Complaint.

### **Rivercrest**

Any concerns should be dealt with by the respective teacher at the first instance. If this is unsatisfactory and/or not relevant to the issue being raised, then the next course of action is to approach one of the following, as relevant staff members:

ELC Director	All student matters
Primary (PYP) Wellbeing	Student behaviour, wellbeing and safety
Primary (PYP) Learning	Student learning, curriculum matters
Middle Years (MYP) Wellbeing Co-ordinator	Student behaviour, wellbeing and safety
Middle Years (MYP) Learning Co-ordinator	Student learning, students with additional learning needs

Beyond this, if the matter is not satisfactorily resolved, you may choose to contact the Head of Primary for primary issues. Note that the Head of College is currently the MYP Co-ordinator so any unresolved concerns will need to then be assessed by the Head of College as a formal complaint and dealt with as such. or the Head of College for Middle Years matters.

### **Ayr Hill Equestrian Centre**

Any concerns should be dealt with by the respective teacher/trainer at the first instance. If this is unsatisfactory and/or not relevant to the issue being raised, then the next course of action is to approach:

RTO (Year 10-12) Matters	Equestrian Centre Manager	All student matters
Year 5 - 9 (HCC)	Head of Primary or Secondary	Student behaviour, wellbeing and safety
Year 5 - 9 (HCC)	Head of Learning and Teaching	Curriculum and teaching/learning matters
Year 5 - MYP1 (RCC)	Head of Primary or MYP Co-ord	All student matters

Beyond this, if the matter is not satisfactorily resolved, you may choose to contact the relevant Head of College for Year 5-9 matters or the Executive Principal if the matter is RTO-related.

### **Crest Corporate Services (Administration)**

Concerns regarding such matters as enrolment, finance, communication and fees should be raised first with the most appropriate staff member, depending on the nature of the concern. Most matters will be able to be resolved through this initial interaction.

If this does not resolve the issue at hand, then the next course of action is to approach:

Enrolments (Crest)	Senior Registrar	All matters not resolved by College registrars
Finance/Fees (Crest)	Finance Manager	All matters not resolved by Finance staff
Communication (HCC)	PA to HCC Head of College	All communication issues not resolved by sectional PAs/Assistants or Reception Staff
Communication (RCC)	RCC Office Manager	
Buses (Crest)	EA to Exec Principal	All issues not resolved by Bus Co-ordinators
Health Centre (HCC)	PA to HCC Head of College	All Health Centre issues not resolved by the College Nurses.
Health Centre (RCC)	RCC Office Manager	

Beyond this, if the matter is not satisfactorily resolved, you may choose to contact the Crest Business Manager with a formal complaint.

### **“How and when should I lodge a complaint?”**

If, after this has occurred, you still believe that your concern has not been dealt with satisfactorily, you may wish to lodge a **formal complaint**. A complaint should be made in writing, clearly outlining the details of the issue, and this can be lodged with the relevant Head of College at HCC or RCC who will then follow up by discussing an Action Plan with you. The Head of College may also seek to discuss the formal complaint with the Executive Principal.

## **“What if none of these steps resolves the matter?”**

The College recognises and acknowledges your entitlement to raise a concern or complaint and we hope to work with you in the best interests of the children and young people in our care.

We hope that you will feel satisfied with the outcome or, at least, that your formal complaint has been fully and fairly considered. If you are not satisfied, the Executive Principal will offer to refer the matter to the Board Chair. Alternatively, you may wish to write directly to the Chair. The Chair will call for a full report from the Executive Principal, and will examine matters thoroughly before responding. This may result in a satisfactory outcome but, if it does not, the Chair will invite you to a meeting. You may wish to be supported by a friend, but legal representation would not be appropriate at this stage.

Beyond this internal complaints process, there may be times when a matter needs to be taken to an appropriate external authority for mediation. Crest respects the right of parents to take up this option when all internal avenues have been exhausted.

## **“What happens about confidentiality?”**

- ✓ Your formal complaint will be treated in a confidential manner and with respect. Knowledge of it will be initially limited to the Head of College and those directly involved. Depending on the nature of the complaint and the seriousness of the matters raised, the Executive Principal and Crest Board Chair may also need to be informed. It is Crest’s policy that complaints made in good faith by parents should not rebound adversely on them.
- ✓ It needs to be noted that we cannot entirely rule out the need to make third parties outside the College aware of the complaint and possibly also the identity of those involved. This would only be likely to happen where, for example, a child’s safety was at risk or it becomes necessary to refer matters to Department for Health and Human Services (DHHS) and/or the Victoria Police for advice or immediate action.
- ✓ Action which may need to be taken under staff disciplinary procedures as a result of complaints, would be handled confidentially within the College.
- ✓ The confidentiality of complaints and concerns involving Full Fee Paying Overseas Students (FFPOS), as required by the Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000 and the National Code 2007, will subject to the Complaints and Appeals Policy for Full Fee Paying Overseas Students. This policy is available from the College directly.

## **Associated Crest Education Policies and Procedures**

- Crest Education Staff Code of Conduct
- Crest Education Volunteers Code of Conduct
- Crest Education Equal Employment Opportunity and Anti-discrimination Policy
- Crest Education Anti Bullying Policy
- Crest Education Harassment Policy

## **Relevant Legislation and Authority**

- Victorian Education and Training Reform Act 2006
- Victorian Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017
- The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care
- National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2007 (The National Code 2007)
- The Privacy (Enhancing Privacy Protection) Act 2012

## **Review**

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.