



Concerns, Complaints, and Disputes Policy **– Procedures and Forms**

The following procedures and forms support implementation of the KSCS Concerns, Complaints, and Disputes Policy including:

1. Concerns, Complaints, and Disputes Procedure
2. KSCS Concerns, Complaints, and Disputes Flowchart
3. KSCS Concerns, Complaints, and Disputes Policy Statement
4. KSCS Child-Friendly Complaints Procedure
5. Child-Friendly Complaints Poster for Staff
6. Complaint Information for Students
7. Child-Friendly Complaints Poster for Students
8. Concerns and Complaints Review Form

1. Concerns, Complaints, and Disputes Procedure

The Nature of Complaints

- A. There are essentially four areas of complaints: parents (and carers/guardians); students; the wider community and public; and staff. This document deals mainly with procedures for parents and students. For procedures for staff work-place grievances refer to the *KSCS Staff Grievance Policy*.
- B. While parents will often wish to raise issues on behalf of their children, there are other issues which students may choose to raise on their own behalf, and which are best raised by them.
- C. Complaints from members of the public will be treated in a similar way to complaints from parents, although most complaints from the public would be referred directly to the Principal.
- D. Complaints from former students, parents or guardians will be accepted and dealt with in accordance with this policy.
- E. For complaints or allegations related to grooming and child abuse, refer to the *KSCS Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy*. It is not within the school's remit to investigate allegations of child abuse. Where the alleged victim is a child, such an allegation will be the subject of a mandatory report in the case of sexual abuse or a child protection concern in the case of other forms of abuse and neglect. Where the alleged victim is now an adult, they should be referred to WA Police. Investigation by the school may taint a subsequent investigation by the appropriate authorities.

What Constitutes a Complaint?

- A. Non-Government School Regulation (NGSR) considers that, in the spirit of the provision of a safe school environment, the expression of a concern or a complaint equates to an expression of dissatisfaction and both should be managed and recorded in the same manner. For this reason, throughout this document, the use of the terms concern and complaint are both considered to be 'expressions of dissatisfaction' as required by NGSR and are used interchangeably.
- B. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. A complaint may be made if a parent thinks that the school has, for example:
 - 1. done something wrong;
 - 2. failed to do something it should have done; or
 - 3. acted unfairly or impolitely.
- C. A complaint may be made about the school as a whole, a specific department in the school, an individual member of staff, or another member of the school community.
- D. All concerns and complaints need to be handled seriously.

Key Principles for the Handling of Complaints

- 1. the school is open to the concerns of parents and students;
- 2. complaints are received in a positive manner;
- 3. parents and students can expect to be taken seriously and can approach any member of staff about their concerns;

4. concerns are dealt with as speedily as possible and those who have raised them are kept informed about progress;
5. it is not acceptable for students to receive adverse treatment because they or their parents have raised a complaint;
6. confidentiality is respected and maintained so far as is possible;
7. clear confidential files and a record are kept;
8. resolution of the matter is sought;
9. communication from the school is clear and unambiguous;
10. staff are trained in the handling of complaints.

Receiving Concerns and Complaints

- A. Let the person talk, actively listen, and feed back to them what you think they are saying. Ask questions to clarify the issues and help them explore their needs. Don't judge, solve, or diminish the person or their problem. Don't justify or take it personally. Allow the other person to get their whole story out, including their stated reasons and needs that may block resolution if not addressed. Demonstrate your willingness to listen to their complaint seriously, openly, and positively.
- B. See the complainant as a person who would like something to be different and is asking for your help. Approach the complaint as an opportunity to problem solve as partners in a non-adversarial way. See the complaint as an opportunity to learn, even if you don't agree with the person.
- C. When it is your time to talk, give the person information and/or tell your side of the story, if relevant, and describe factors affecting the issue they may not have considered. It may be more appropriate to refer the concern to another staff member, the Principal, or the Board Chair.
- D. You may be able to reach a resolution immediately or it may not be appropriate to resolve the concern at this stage. You may need to consult with others, gather information, or discuss with the Principal what actions need to be taken. Be clear about what will happen next, when it will happen, and who will be responsible for following through with the actions decided on. If you need support, please talk with the Principal.
- E. When finding solutions, be aware of what is a reasonable expectation and keep your perspective. You may need to balance the needs of the person you are speaking with, with the needs of others, including yourself. If the process is fair, positive, and open, hopefully all parties will be able to reach a resolution.
- F. At all times, be aware of confidentiality. Discuss this directly with the complainant and be clear about your respective expectations.

Resolution

- A. Sometimes the very acknowledgement of an issue by the school brings relief and resolution for parents.
- B. Satisfaction for a complainant may come from any of the following:
 1. knowing that changes have been made, and that matters will be different in future;
 2. knowing that the school is now alerted to a possible problem;

3. feeling that their concern has been considered seriously;
 4. an outcome which may be different from the one they sought, but which they perceive to be well-considered;
 5. a considered letter; and/or
 6. an apology.
- C. Rectification or redress may include:**
1. Communication:
 - i. Explaining why the problem occurred.
 - ii. Giving reasons for decisions.
 - iii. Reaching agreements acceptable to the complainant through mediation between the parties, conciliation, or other informal approaches to resolution.
 2. Rectification:
 - i. Reconsidering and/or adjusting/stopping or starting conduct/actions.
 - ii. Making changes to ensure the problem does not reoccur.
 3. Mitigation (to reduce the adverse consequences):
 - i. Ceasing action so as to prevent further issues/detriment.
 - ii. Taking steps to ensure that records are correct and up to date.
 - iii. Waiving fees, charges, or debts.
 4. Satisfaction:
 - i. Providing an apology.
 - ii. Providing assurance of steps put in place to correct matters and then following through.
 - iii. Instituting disciplinary action.
 5. Compensation:
 - i. Restitution - for loss (financial/earnings etc.) or damage to property.
 - ii. Reimbursement - refunds, and costs or damages that may or are likely to have been incurred by the complainant e.g., medical.
 - iii. Satisfaction or appeasement - financial assistance or payment, goodwill gift for damage to reputation or humiliation, worry, or distress (including grief and suffering).
- D.** There may be occasions when it would be prudent for the school to obtain legal advice on the most appropriate option for rectification and/or redress.

Complaint Handling Procedure

- A.** An effective complaints procedure can diffuse problems and can provide the school with helpful information. Complaints treated as constructive suggestions can be used to improve standards and may prevent cause for further complaint. Even an unjustified complaint may indicate an area that can be improved. Problems are likely to arise if parents feel that the school is not open to their concerns.

- B. The vast majority of issues causing concern in schools can be handled quickly and in an informal manner. Parents, where appropriate, will be asked to raise concerns directly with the relevant staff member. If approached about a matter that lies outside their area, staff should refer it to the most appropriate staff member.
- C. Concerns and complaints that have been raised in an informal manner that involve child safety and wellbeing issues or allegations of staff/volunteers' misconduct etc. will be referred to the Principal and managed through the formal complaints procedure due to the seriousness of the complaint. The Principal will ensure that appropriate school policies will be referred to in these cases. For example, the *KSCS Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy* and the *KSCS Staff Conduct and Discipline Policy*.
- D. The formal complaints procedure will also be followed when a parent requests to make a formal complaint or the Principal and/or staff believe it is the most appropriate procedure. There may be situations where staff members and/or the Principal should clarify with complainant/s whether they wish to engage in an informal resolution process or make a formal complaint.

Informal Complaints Resolution

- A. All members of staff are encouraged to deal with parental concerns that lie within their area of responsibility.
- B. Documentation will be kept of all conversations and communication and written responses to complaints should always be discussed with the Principal. Even if an issue is resolved informally, all staff are required to log issues raised.
- C. Matters incapable of resolution at a particular level are referred to the Principal, with parents kept informed of the action being taken.
- D. If parents wish to go straight to the Principal with their concerns, this will be respected. However, it will be explained that the Principal might not be able to respond until they have consulted appropriate staff. Parents may also be encouraged by the Principal to approach the appropriate staff member in the first instance.
- E. There may be certain circumstances, such as complaints about the Principal, when the parents need to be supported to direct their complaint to the Chair of the Board.

Formal Complaints Resolution

- A. If the School has been unable to resolve a complaint informally, or a parent simply wishes to make a formal complaint they can do so by any of the following means:
 1. Speaking to a staff member in person.
 2. Telephoning the School and asking to speak to the student's class teacher or the Principal – 08 9335 1471.
 3. Sending an email to kerrystreet@kerrystreet.wa.edu.au.
 4. Providing feedback/details of the complaint via the 'Feedback' function on our public website - <https://kerrystreet.wa.edu.au/contact/feedback/>.
 5. Writing a letter to the School addressed to the Principal – PO Box 48, Hamilton Hill, WA 6963.
- B. All formal complaints will be recorded in writing, logged, and managed in accordance with the following procedure:

1. All formal complaints will be reviewed by the Principal or in the case of complaints against the Principal, by the Chair of the School Board. Complaints about the Chair may be addressed to the School Principal.
2. The Principal may consider a complaint and determine that the School will not proceed further with the complaint procedure where the Principal considers the complaint to be not substantiated, vexatious, trivial, or regarding previously finalised issues.
3. Serious complaints are shared with the Chair of the School Board by the Principal.
4. All valid complaints will be acknowledged in writing within five (5) days, and allocated a status, priority, and target resolution date. It is our policy, where possible, to resolve all disputes within fourteen (14) days.
5. For all matters except those involving the School Board, the Principal is the final decision maker and as such is not able to act as a support person for any involved party.
6. The Principal will conduct an investigation into the issues raised, following principles of procedural fairness. Conflicts of interest will be managed to ensure a fair process and outcome for the complainant and the subject of the complaint.
7. If time is needed to investigate/consider the complaint then the complainant should be kept informed of its progress, in writing, giving the assurance that the issue has been understood and the matter is being addressed.
8. Following the determination, the Principal will formulate a resolution and provide a written response to the complainant. The school is not obliged to give complainants explicit information on what action has been taken, but rather provide an assurance that action has been taken. This is especially important when the matter involves a staff member. Outlining the resolution, to a degree considered appropriate by the school and in the interests of satisfying the complainant, should help prevent misinformation being circulated in the school community. The matter will be closed if this response is accepted.
9. All complaints received will be entered into the school's Complaints Register and, where appropriate, a corrective action will be made to address any underlying processes which the complaints investigation revealed may require improvement.
10. If the initial response is not accepted, the matter will be referred to the Board Chair (see 'Unresolved Complaints/Disputes' below).

Unresolved Complaints/Disputes

- A. Most complaints can be resolved if approached positively. If a complaint is unresolved, it may be due to its nature or to the way in which it was handled, or possibly because the complainant/s perceives the school to have 'closed ranks' against them.
- B. There may be a small minority of complainants who will never be satisfied, whatever the school does. The school may even discover, on investigation, that the complaint was without foundation or motivated by malice. Nevertheless, it is wise to treat all complaints seriously and to follow the procedures.
- C. A complaint is considered to be unresolved if the complainant/s have appealed to the Principal and are still not satisfied with the response. The Principal will refer the matter to

the Chair of the School Board and inform the complainant/s that this stage has been reached.

D. A situation may also arise where the complaint seems to the complainant/s, to have been mishandled by the Principal. In those circumstances, the complainant/s should write directly to the Chair.

E. Referral to the Chair of the School Board:

1. The Chair will discuss the matter fully with the Principal and be provided with relevant documentation. If a briefing is required from a member of staff, this should occur in the presence of the Principal.
2. The Chair will respond to the complainant/s, notifying them that they are reviewing the matter, asking them if they wish to add anything further, and providing a date by which they may expect a response.
3. The Chair may be able to offer a new resolution or approach to the matter, and this may satisfy the complainant/s. The Chair's response should be in writing and offer a meeting if the complainant/s remain troubled.

F. Meeting with the Chair of the School Board:

1. If a meeting is requested, the Chair will offer to meet the complainant/s at a time convenient to them. Depending upon the nature of the complaint those usually involved are:
 - i. the Chair of the School Board;
 - ii. the Principal and, at the most, one other member of staff; and
 - iii. the complainant/s.
2. Complainant/s are permitted to bring with them a support person who is not involved with the complaint. Legal representation is not appropriate at this stage.
3. The Chair will listen to and question the complainant/s and the Principal, in the hope that a solution can be found (this may include discussion with members of the Board). Advice on the resolution should be conveyed, in writing to the complainant/s. On rare occasions, the complainant/s may wish to take the matter further.
4. If required, the Chair will discuss with the complainant/s further resolution options and help them clarify the next step:
 - i. accessing mediation;
 - ii. referral to the school's Conciliation Committee; and/or
 - iii. referral to external resolution/arbitration alternatives.

If this is the case, then the Chair has no further involvement in the resolution process until the person facilitating the dispute resolution reports back.

G. If requested, a dispute may be heard and resolved by the School's Conciliation Committee.

1. The Conciliation Committee will comprise of members of the school community who have not been involved in the complaint or dispute so far. Depending upon the nature of the complaint those usually involved are:
 - i. a Board member (not the Chair);
 - ii. a member of staff; and

iii. a community member.

The members of the Conciliation Committee will be determined on a case-by-case basis and will be agreed upon by the Board Chair and complainant/s.

2. The Chair is responsible for initially contacting and confirming members of the Conciliation Committee. Once confirmed, the Board member sitting on the Committee will chair the Conciliation Committee and will be responsible for arranging meeting times, documentation and recordkeeping, compiling and communicating the resolution report, and ensuring all requirements are met.
 3. The Committee will discuss the matter fully with the Principal and Chair and be provided with relevant documentation. If a briefing is required from a member of staff, this should occur in the presence of the Principal.
 4. The Committee will arrange to meet the complainant/s at a time convenient to them. Complainant/s are permitted to bring with them a support person who is not involved with the complaint. Legal representation is not appropriate at this stage.
 5. The Committee will listen to and question the complainant/s, in the hope that a solution can be found.
 6. Advice on the resolution should be conveyed, in writing to the complainant and appropriate staff, e.g., the Board Chair and Principal.
- H. If requested, the School may agree to the engagement of an independent arbitrator to review the matter and facilitate a resolution. The arbitrator will be:
1. agreed by all parties;
 2. remunerated by both parties (if appropriate); and
 3. assured both parties will accept the arbitrator's decision.
- I. At all stages of a complaints' resolution process the complainant should be reminded that they can seek legal advice if they wish, especially at the point where the school has done all it can to reach a resolution.

Role of the Director General of the Department of Education

- A. The Director General of the Department of Education is responsible for ensuring that the school observes the registration standards, including the standard about its complaints handling system. Any student, parent, or community member is entitled to contact the Director General with concerns about how the school has dealt with a complaint. Information is available on the [Department of Education website](#). While the Director General may consider whether the school has breached the registration standards, she does not have power to intervene in a complaint or override the school's decision.

Recordkeeping

- A. The school will keep an effective record of complaints and other significant parental concerns because:
1. it may become the cause of future legal action;
 2. patterns in the record may indicate a need for action; and
 3. the Principal should be able to check the record if necessary.

- B. All staff will ensure some sort of notation is made about an expressed concern in case of future escalation or for sharing, as appropriate, at staff meetings.
 - C. The school will keep a record of the concerns, complaints, reports, and allegations it receives, the action taken, the decisions made, and the outcome. There will be a clear statement of what is concerning the complainant. Such notes can be agreed with the complainant. Individual complaint records should contain simple but clear notes of all communication with the complainant, including friendly chats and telephone conversations, as misunderstandings can easily arise.
 - D. The school will maintain a Complaint Register containing relevant summary information, that is separate from each complete confidential file on individual matters. The Board will keep a Complaint Register of matters referred to the Board Chair.
 - E. The Complaint Register will contain the following information:
 - 1. date the issue was raised;
 - 2. name of complainant and their relationship to the school;
 - 3. subject matter of the complaint, including the name of any person complained about and their relationship to the school;
 - 4. member of staff investigating the issue and their role in the school;
 - 5. date investigation completed;
 - 6. whether complaint upheld;
 - 7. resolution agreed with or offered to complainant;
 - 8. date of referral for review (for example by the Board Chair);
 - 9. complaint reviewer and relationship to the school;
 - 10. date review finalised; and
 - 11. review resolution agreed with or offered to complainant.
 - C. It may not be possible to complete every field named above, e.g., a complaint may be resolved at an early stage and there is no need to enter information under the 'referral for review' field etc. It is necessary however, to ensure that all fields that are relevant to a complaint are completed.
 - D. To enable the school to review its complaints records to identify patterns and to prioritise any matter related to student protection, welfare and wellbeing, the school will practice diligence and good risk management by erring on the side of caution with recordkeeping, particularly in matters that are or could be linked to child safety and wellbeing.
 - E. The *Records Retention & Disposal Schedule for Non-Government Schools* published by the Australian Society of Archivists advises that:
 - 1. reasonable steps be taken to ensure information is stored appropriately and is protected from misuse, modification, unauthorised access, or disclosure; and
 - 2. records required as part of an investigation, inquiry or legal process be identified, preserved, and not be disposed of.
- Refer to the *KSCS Records Management Policy* for more detail.
- F. The school must ensure that records of complaints, allegations, and findings related to grooming and child abuse, whether involving former or current staff or students:

1. contain as much detail as possible;
2. are stored securely; and
3. are not destroyed without the approval of the Director General or, where their retention becomes impracticable or unduly onerous, are forwarded to the Director General with her permission for retention.

Confidentiality

- A.** Confidentiality is an important issue for students, parents, and staff. It is essential that any complaint is treated in a confidential manner and with respect. Confidentiality applies with respect to both information relating to the person making the complaint and, if relevant, to a person against whom a complaint is made. The School will maintain the confidentiality of information throughout the complaints process. Refer to the *KSCS Privacy Policy* for more detail.
- B.** Parents often seek an assurance of confidentiality before expressing their concerns. If, for example, they wish to discuss a particular member of staff, they may fear that their child will suffer in some way because they have complained. The school's policy requires that complaints made by parents will not rebound adversely on their children and similarly that complaints raised by students will not rebound on them or on other students.
- C.** The question of confidentiality should be discussed sensitively and on an individual basis with the complainant/s and the school's policy should be carefully explained.
- D.** Personally identifiable information about a complainant will only be made available for the purpose of addressing the complaint and (unless the complainant consents) will be actively protected from disclosure.
- E.** If there is a situation involving the police, the Principal, or the Deputy Principal (if the Principal is unavailable), will take responsibility for action in the school and the Chair of the Board will be informed as soon as possible. If this is a Critical Incident, the Principal will notify the Director General of the Department of Education (See the *KSCS Critical Incidents Policy*).

Anonymous Complaints

- A.** Anonymous complaints may be where there is no indication of either name or address, or where the complainant says that they do not wish to be identified. Anonymous complaints may come from members of the public, from parents, or from students.
- B.** Parents and students are encouraged to give their names and are given reassurance on the issue of confidentiality. If they persist in wishing to remain anonymous, it is at the Principal's discretion as to what action, if any, will be taken, depending on the nature of the complaint.
- C.** Anonymous complaints will be recorded in the register as over time, they may contribute to an identifiable pattern.

Students' Complaints

- A.** The principles that apply to parental complaints should also be applied to concerns and complaints from students. There are, however, differences in approaches. One important difference from the handling of parental complaints is that students should be able to raise concerns with any member of staff with whom they feel comfortable, whether it is the class

teacher, another teacher or education assistant, the Wellbeing Coordinator, administration staff, a member of the leadership staff, or the Principal.

- B.** Complaints, and ways of dealing with them, will be explained to students. This is covered explicitly in each class at least annually, and in the Health Education programme (Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum), formally and informally.
- C.** Complaints that appear trivial still need to be handled seriously. Young people may test the complaints procedures on relatively minor issues before finding the confidence to raise something painful, such as bullying.
- D.** If the issue is a painful one, or if exploration of it is taking time, a student may need support from another student or from an adult. Students are encouraged to choose a person with whom they feel comfortable to provide support.
- E.** It is important to ensure the student is aware of the limits of confidentiality as the process progresses. In situations where it is believed that the matter needs to be referred on to an external authority it is essential that, at an appropriate time, a staff member explains this to the student, from the perspective of being in the best interests of the student's welfare and safety.
- F.** The student will be given a choice on how they wish to be kept updated on the progress of their complaint. Once the matter is resolved, the outcome will be discussed with the student by a member of staff. To make sure that it is fully understood, a written record may be shared.
- G.** Refer to the *KSCS Child-Friendly Complaints Procedure* for more detail.

International Students

- A.** In the event of an overseas student being dissatisfied with the result or conduct of the internal complaint appeals process, the School will advise the student of their right to access the external appeals process by contacting the Overseas Students Ombudsman at www.ombudsman.gov.au or phone 1800 117 000. This service is free and independent for external appeals and complaints about decisions made by the School.

Culturally Safe Complaints Management

- A.** Kerry Street Community School values diversity and does not tolerate any discriminatory practices. To achieve this, we support the cultural safety, participation, and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families and the particular needs of children from diverse backgrounds and circumstances.
- B.** Our school's complaint handling system aims to be culturally safe and overcome cultural barriers to disclosure. Staff training will include raising awareness of potential complainant's culture and cultural attitudes and strategies to overcome barriers.

Training

- A.** The school will ensure that through training, all staff, including support staff and volunteers, know how to carry out their responsibility to support and implement the School's policy.
- B.** Staff will receive training during their initial induction and during regular refresher sessions (see the *KSCS Human Resource Management Policy* for more detail).
- C.** Training will include:

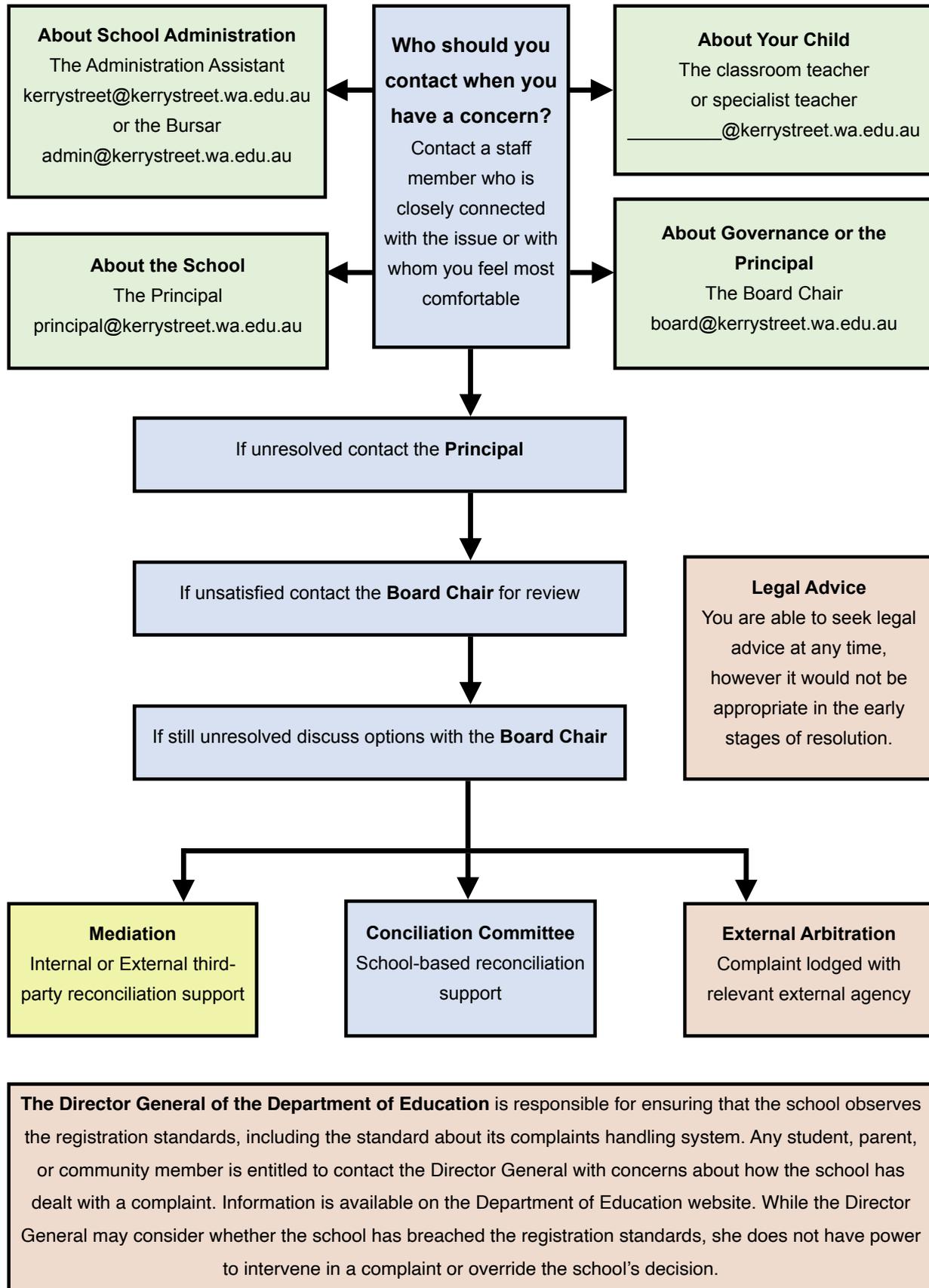
1. The concerns and complaints policy and procedure including a focus on the school's child-friendly process.
2. Knowing how to recognise concerns and complaints and be proactive in responding promptly and appropriately to expressions of dissatisfaction, in accordance with school policy.
3. The different ways that children and young people express concerns, distress, or disclose harm.
4. The relationship between the school's complaints handling system and its Codes of Conduct and who in the school they can speak to about a child safety and wellbeing concern.
5. Complaints that are associated with child protection matters and responding appropriately, including legal obligations, i.e., for mandated and non-mandated reporters and in respect to all forms of abuse.
6. What is a culturally safe environment and the cultural diversity and sensitivities within the school community.
7. The roles and responsibilities of leadership, staff, and volunteers in respect to complaints handling.
8. The school's required recording and reporting protocols, including those that are subject to legal obligations.
9. Information that the school will not tolerate any form of victimisation or adverse consequences shown towards complainants.

Review

- A. Concerns, complaints, community surveys, and incidents will be regularly analysed by the Principal and staff to identify causes and systemic failures to inform continuous improvement. This will occur termly and as needed.
- B. The Board will be kept informed by the Principal of complaints made about the organisation's services and conduct of its staff without breaching privacy or jeopardising ongoing complaints.
- C. The Principal will report on complaint management annually to the Board to ensure risks are identified and to inform improvements. Aspects for review in relation to the recording and analysis of information about complaints and breaches of relevant policies/codes of conduct will include, that processes are being followed, timeframes are being met, complaint trends/patterns and risks relating to certain individuals are identified and systemic problems are detected and mitigated (see the *KSCS Concerns and Complaints Review Form*).
- D. The Board will ensure that the school's policy and procedure is reviewed annually alongside the annual report from the Principal.
- E. The school will respond to reviews undertaken and make the necessary improvements.
- F. The findings of relevant reviews and actions taken will be reported to staff, parents and community members, and students. This will be achieved in a variety of ways and may include:
 1. The school newsletter.
 2. Parent emails.

3. School gatherings.
4. Community workshops.
5. The school website.
6. Social media posts.
7. Annual Report.
8. School publications.

KSCS Concerns, Complaints, and Disputes Flowchart





Concerns, Complaints, and Disputes Policy Statement

Kerry Street Community School welcomes suggestions and comments from parents and guardians and takes seriously any complaints and concerns that may be raised. A full copy of the school's Concerns, Complaints, and Disputes policy and procedure is available for download at: kerrystreet.wa.edu.au/about/school-policies or a hardcopy can be obtained from the school Administration office. If you are unable to attend the school in person you are welcome to ring us on 08 9335 1471 and request a copy to be sent to you by mail.

Please see below for some brief information and some 'FAQs' about our complaints system.

A concern or complaint will be treated as a matter, or as an expression, of genuine dissatisfaction that needs a response.

We wish to ensure that:

- parents and guardians wishing to express a concern know how to do so;
- complainants realise that we listen and take complaints seriously;
- we respond to complaints within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient way;
- matters raised are investigated according to the school's policy and procedure; and
- we take action where appropriate.

'How should I complain?'

Members of staff will be happy to help. It may be best to start with the person most closely concerned with the issue – e.g., the classroom teacher, or subject teacher. They may be able to sort things out quickly, with the minimum of fuss. However, you may prefer to take the matter to a more senior member of staff, for example the Deputy Principal or the Principal.

You can contact the school in person, by telephone on 08 9335 1471, at kerrystreet@kerrystreet.wa.edu.au, by submitting a message on the school's website, or by letter to PO Box 48, Hamilton Hill, WA 6963. Please ask if you require some assistance in expressing your concern.

When you contact the school, please ask to speak to the Principal or the Deputy Principal. Be as clear as possible about what is troubling you.

‘I don’t want to complain as such, but there is something bothering me’

The school is here for you and your child, and we want to hear your views and your ideas. You can start by contacting a member of staff, as described above.

‘I am not sure whether to complain or not’

If you have a concern you are entitled to raise it. If in doubt, you should contact the school, as we are here to help.

‘What will happen next?’

If you raise something face-to-face or by telephone, it may be possible to resolve the matter immediately and to your satisfaction.

If you have made a complaint or suggestion in writing, we will contact you within five (5) working days, to respond to your concerns and explain how we propose to proceed.

In many circumstances, the person you contact will need to discuss the matter with a colleague and consider it further before responding. You will be given a date by which time you will receive a response. If a detailed exploration of the issue is needed, a letter or report will be sent to you as quickly as possible. This will tell you of the outcome of your complaint. It will explain the conclusion, the reasons for it, and any action taken or proposed.

Please be aware that in some cases the school will not be able to discuss the details of action taken as it would be inappropriate. For example, if the action involved staff discipline. Under its legal obligation the school is also not able to divulge information on matters which require the involvement of a relevant government authority, without the permission of that government authority.

‘What happens about confidentiality?’

Your complaint or concern will be treated in a confidential manner and with respect. Knowledge of it will be limited to the Principal and those directly involved. The Chair of the School’s Board may also need to be informed. It is the school’s policy that complaints made by parents and guardians should not rebound adversely on their children. The school will not tolerate victimisation or adverse consequences shown towards a person who raises a concern and/or complaint.

We cannot entirely rule out the need to make third parties outside the school aware of the complaint and possibly also the identity of those involved. This would be most likely to happen where, for example, a child’s safety was at risk, and it became necessary to refer matters to the Police or other external authority. Matters of this nature would include an allegation/complaint of grooming, child abuse and/or there was a breach of the Staff, Community or Student Code of Conduct. If information is passed to a third party, you will be informed, unless this is prevented by legal obligation.

‘Can I remain anonymous?’

We would prefer to know the identity of a person making a complaint as it can help in investigation and resolution. Anonymous complaints will be noted and dealt with in accordance with the circumstances, available information, and the action required.

'What if I am not satisfied with the outcome?'

We hope that you will feel satisfied with the outcome, or at least that your concerns have been fully and fairly considered.

If you are not satisfied, the Principal will offer to refer the matter to the Chair of the School Board. Alternatively, you may wish to write directly to the Chair whose address is board@kerrystreet.wa.edu.au. The Chair will call for a full report from the Principal and will examine matters thoroughly before responding to ensure that the complaint has been handled in accordance with the school's policy and procedure as well as to give further consideration. When notified of the outcome of the Chair's review and consideration, if you remain concerned, the opportunity of a meeting with the Chair will be offered. You may wish to be supported by a friend, but legal representation would not be appropriate at this stage.

If the meeting does not bring about a resolution, the matter may be referred to a process of dispute resolution, e.g., conciliation, mediation, or external arbitration, and it is their task to look at the issues in an impartial and confidential manner. You would be invited to a meeting and asked if there any papers you would like to have circulated beforehand. As with the Chair's meeting, you will be offered the opportunity to bring a friend with you.

The school recognises and acknowledges your entitlement to complain, and we hope to work with you in the best interests of the children and young people in our care.

Special note – Students' raising a concern or complaint:

This leaflet is specifically for parents and guardians in the school, the school also has a 'child-friendly' complaints process that is tailored to meet the needs of students who wish to express a concern or complaint. As well as a student dedicated leaflet, the school employs multiple methods of letting students know that they can express a concern and how they can go about it. Other methods of letting students know involve student meetings, in class discussions, through the protective behaviours curriculum taught in the school and through the display of posters around the school, designed to be age and developmentally appropriate to suit the differing needs of students.

'The Director General of the Department of Education is responsible for ensuring that the school observes the registration standards, including the standard about its complaints handling system. Any student, parent or community member is entitled to contact the Director General with concerns about how the school has dealt with a complaint. Information is available on the Department of Education website. While the Director General may consider whether the school has breached the registration standards, she does not have power to intervene in a complaint or override the school's decision.'

4. KSCS Child-Friendly Complaints Procedure

Kerry Street Community School has developed this procedure with regard to the six elements of child-friendly complaints system outlined in the WA Commissioner for Children and Young People Guide - *Are you Listening? Guidelines for Making Complaints Systems Accessible and Responsive to Children and Young People*:

1. Focus on children and young people
2. Visibility
3. Accessibility
4. Responsiveness
5. Confidentiality
6. Accountability and continuous improvement.

Focus on Children and Young People

- A. The *KSCS Concerns, Complaints, and Disputes Policy* acknowledges that students are persons who may make a complaint using the School complaints processes.

Visibility

- A. Kerry Street uses strategies to publicise our complaints handling processes that include a range of methods which are effective in communicating with our students. These include:
 1. in person information sessions;
 2. in school publications, e.g., the Parent Handbook and the Student Code of Conduct;
 3. clearly positioned information on our public website; and
 4. display of posters (physical and digital).
- B. We ensure that students are made aware of their right to make a complaint by means and in language which take into account their age, language background, and other relevant factors. We do this through:
 1. age appropriate posters;
 2. class discussions and education programs;
 3. presentation at community gatherings; and
 4. communication via newsletters or emails.
- C. The School involves strategies to publicise our complaints process and possible outcomes in publications which are developmentally suitable for and appealing to the students at the School, including by illustrations or other visual material such as posters, and by:
 1. inviting comments;
 2. using minimal messaging; and
 3. using relevant technology for students at our School.

Accessibility

- A.** Kerry Street ensures our students know how to make a complaint, who they can make a complaint to and the methods in which they can make a complaint.
- B.** We use the following approaches to ensure our complaints handling procedures are accessible:
 - 1. making information available on our public website;
 - 2. ensuring information is available in different forms; and
 - 3. complaints can be made verbally and in writing.
- C.** It is Kerry Street's policy that:
 - 1. students can choose how to make a complaint, including by speaking to someone face-to-face;
 - 2. the School creates opportunities for students to give feedback and discuss their experiences, e.g., through the Kids' Council and Student Opinion Survey;
 - 3. the School enables an advocate to complain on behalf of a student and, when that occurs, makes sure the student can participate directly to the extent they wish; and
 - 4. students are provided with an appropriately trained advocate, independent from the complaint investigation and management process, when they do not have one.

Responsiveness

- A.** The School acknowledges that it is important to ensure our complaints management system is responsive to our students and all staff are trained to identify, respond quickly, and actively listen to, all complaints.
- B.** It is School policy that:
 - 1. a student's complaint is promptly acknowledged. Depending on the severity of a complaint, acknowledgement can be verbal (less serious) or in writing (more serious);
 - 2. timelines for investigating and responding to complaints are established and communicated;
 - 3. staff handling students' complaints, and those reviewing the outcome of a complaint, have training in working with children;
 - 4. understanding, helpfulness, and responsiveness is demonstrated towards student complainants;
 - 5. students' understanding of information provided about the complaints process is checked regularly; and
 - 6. student complainants are given choices about how they wish to be kept informed about the progress of their complaint.
- C.** Generally, it is only more serious complaints that require formal acknowledgment, investigation, and responses.
- D.** Often during the acknowledgement phase the complainant may be provided with a document that provides an overview of the school's complaints handling process in order to clearly establish expectations at an early stage of the process.

Confidentiality

- A. It is the School's policy that all complaints will be treated as confidential.
- B. When handling complaints from students:
 - 1. the student's consent in relation to the complaint is obtained.
 - 2. any personally identifiable information concerning the complainant, or the person who is the subject of the complaint, is only to be used for the purpose of addressing the complaint.
 - 3. students are made aware of the limits of confidentiality as the process progresses; and
 - 4. staff are trained in the school's complaints procedures, particularly as they apply to student complainants.

Accountability and Continuous Improvement

- A. The specific needs of children and young people are recognised in the School's accountability and continuous improvement processes.
- B. Appropriate data is kept to enable reporting and monitoring of complaints involving children and young people.

Child Wellbeing Complaints

- A. In all circumstances where a complaint relates to the wellbeing of a child or young person, the School will refer to the *KSCS Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy* to refer the complaint to the appropriate authorities.
- B. Child Safety and Wellbeing include:
 - 1. care of a child;
 - 2. physical, emotional, psychological, and educational development of a child;
 - 3. physical, emotional; and psychological health of a child;
 - 4. safety of a child.

Our Response Team

- A. The School has appointed the Wellbeing Coordinator as responsible for:
 - 1. ensuring that all staff are educated about the School's *Child-Friendly Complaints Procedure*;
 - 2. investigating complaints where appropriate (not in the case of complaints involving grooming and child abuse);
 - 3. where necessary, escalating complaints and when requested by the complainant;
 - 4. maintaining accurate records;
 - 5. regularly reporting to the Principal about complaints received;
 - 6. ensuring systemic complaints are identified; and
 - 7. monitoring the effectiveness of, and continually improving, the School's *Child-Friendly Complaints Procedure*.
- B. The Principal is responsible for:

1. overseeing all complaints received from students;
2. ensuring complaints involving grooming and child abuse are reported;
3. ensuring the complaints records and the Complaint Register are maintained;
4. ensuring systemic complaints are identified and rectified; and
5. monitoring the effectiveness of, and continually improving, the School's *Child-Friendly Complaints Procedure*.

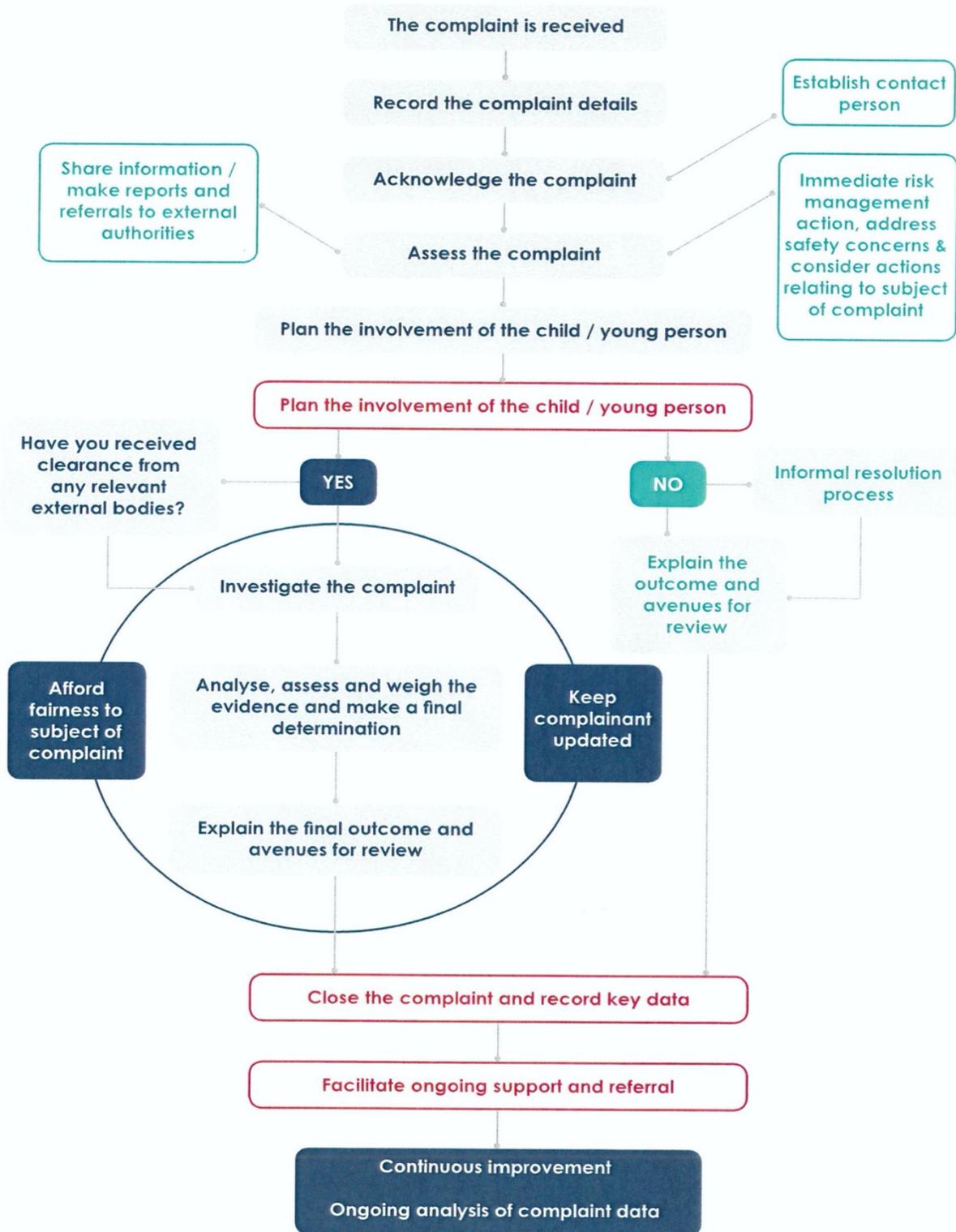
Pastoral Care Services

- A. The School acknowledges that in some cases, students may not wish to engage with our complaints handling policies and procedures to make a complaint.
- B. We encourage all students to contact our internal and external wellbeing services if they require assistance, guidance, or support to make a complaint.
- C. Students will be made aware of their ability to contact the WA Commissioner for Children and Young People if they wish to make a complaint outside the School's complaints handling policy and procedures.

5. Child-Friendly Complaints Procedure Poster for Staff

Complaint Handling:

Upholding the rights of children and young people (an overview)



6. Complaint Information for Students

Any Problems, Complaints, or Suggestions?

If so, the school would like to hear

Every student in the school has the right to feel speak up about how they feel about something that is affecting them. The right to tell someone if they feel worried, afraid and/or if they do not feel safe. The school will take what you have to say seriously and wants to help.

How do I make a complaint?

- By talking about it – or by writing it down if you find that easier.
- You can do it by yourself, with a friend, as part of a group, or through your parents or another adult that you trust and or feel safe with.

Who can I talk to?

To anyone on staff, to anyone in the school that you feel safe and comfortable with, or you can talk to a family member that you trust and feel safe with.

Does it matter what the issue is?

No, it can be a big problem or a small one. Talking things over can often help to find solutions.

What will happen next?

If possible, the staff member will deal with it in person. If not, they will explain who it needs to go to and why. We will ask you how you would like us to keep you updated on what is happening with your concern or complaint and we will support you in managing whatever is troubling you.

Do others have to know?

The teacher or the person you talk to will not talk to anyone else about your issue unless they have to, for your safety and wellbeing. If this is the case, we will discuss this with you.

Even if you find the issue hurtful or embarrassing, we encourage you to talk to us as we want to make sure you feel safe and happy at our school.

What is your complaint about?

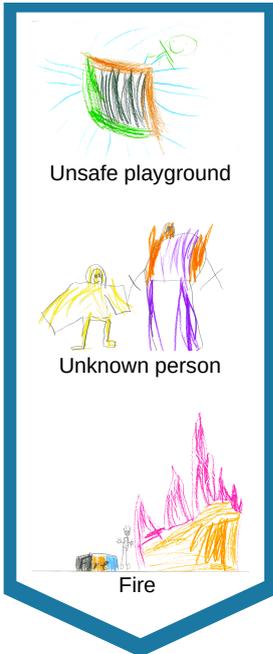
School Grounds

Myself

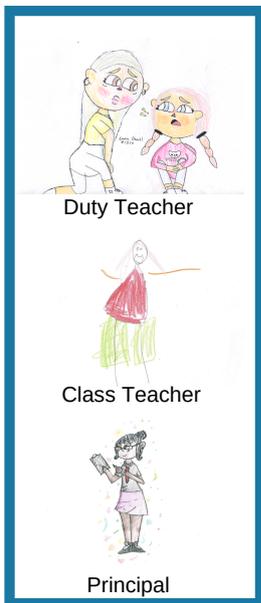
Friends

Teachers

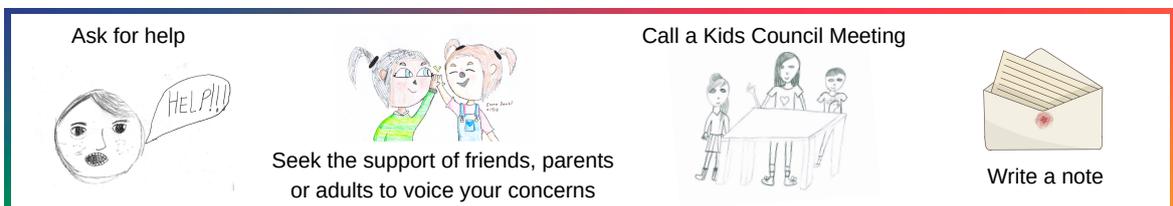
This includes things like:



Who can help?



How can I share my concerns or complaints?





Concerns and Complaints Review

General Item	Y/N	Evidence/Notes	Action to take
The school welcomes complaints in any format.			
The school's complaints handling system is culturally safe.			
There is a clear process for dealing with complaints, including allocation of responsibility.			
Staff are aware of the process and how they should respond to respond to a complaint.			
All staff are given training/guidance relevant to their role, so as to enable them either to resolve or refer a complaint.			
Complaints are acknowledged promptly.			
Rules of procedural fairness are employed.			

The assessment phase enables prompt resolution where possible and, where it is not, a prompt decision is made to determine how to proceed.			
The complainant receives information as to how the school proposes to deal with the complaint and the proposed timeframe and the school takes into account the complainant's view.			
The school informs the complainant of the outcome of the complaint with an explanation of the reasons and information on any further avenues of redress which may be available.			
The school maintains a record of complaints received, action taken, decisions made and outcomes.			
The school reviews its complaints records regularly with a view to assessing both its services and its complaints management system.			
The school reports findings of relevant reviews to all members of the school community.			
Child-Friendly Item	Y/N	Evidence/Notes	Action to take
Are children and young people recognised as users of this agency?			
Are complaints/comments clearly invited from children and young people?			
Are a range of methods used to advertise complaints system?			

Are publications colourful and age-appropriate for a variety of ages?			
Can complaints be lodged by different methods, e.g., Facebook, SMS?			
Is simple, clear information available for children and young people?			
Is an outreach service used to take complaints information to young people?			
Are there policies and procedures in place to receive complaints from advocates on behalf of children and young people.			
Are publications colourful and age-appropriate, for a variety of ages?			
Is the person receiving complaints trained and respectful to children and young people?			
Can the young person decide how often, and by what method, they would like to be informed about the progress of their complaint?			
Are there appropriate policies and processes regarding children and young people and confidentiality?			

Are staff knowledgeable and skilled in dealing with confidentiality?			
Are children and young people included in our reporting and accountability processes?			
Is data on complaints made by children and young people captured and reported to monitor agency performance?			
Is feedback from children and young people included in satisfaction survey processes?			
Summary:			
Review completed by:			Date: