

RESPONDING TO COMMUNITY CONCERNS: COMPLAINT HANDLING PROCEDURE

Torrens Valley Christian School is committed to:

- Working in partnership with parents to deliver Christian education and care of the highest quality.
- Ensuring that the School is a safe and fair place in which to work and study.
- Actively promoting the development of positive and respectful relationships and seeking to minimise the incidence of conflict that might otherwise give rise to a complaint.
- Encouraging, wherever possible, the resolution of complaints, if and when they arise, at the school level.
- Supporting the right of individuals to have their complaints listened to, taken seriously, in good faith and to be addressed and resolved fairly, reasonably and expeditiously.
- Complying with all relevant Government regulations and legal requirements including privacy and anti-discrimination laws, child protection, Family Court orders and Mandated Notification requirements.

PRINCIPLES FOR POSITIVE RESOLUTION

To achieve the best possible outcome the school's response to conflict is shaped by the following principles:

- **Strive to be peace-makers** and seek a positive resolution
- **Keep the matter confidential** – as appropriate, talk to those concerned
- **Keep the circle small** – discourage gossip and involving others unnecessarily
- **Be straightforward** – be honest about the situation
- **Be self-evaluating** – always ask where have I faulted?
- **Be forgiving** – seek restoration and move forward

COMPLAINT HANDLING PROCEDURE

Individuals are entitled, in good faith, to lodge a bona fide complaint with the School.

Every reasonable effort will be made by the School to ensure that the matter is addressed respectfully, fairly, in a non-adversarial manner, expeditiously and with sensitivity to all concerned.

In responding to a complaint, informally or formally, every reasonable effort shall be made to ensure that natural justice and procedural fairness are afforded to all concerned. This means, in practical terms, that:

- All parties are entitled to be treated with respect and to be heard.
- All parties should participate fully in the resolution process to achieve an outcome that is realistic and reasonable.
- A person who is the subject of a complaint should be informed of the substance thereof and given a full opportunity to present their perspective.
- All parties have a right to seek advice and support.
- Investigations and proceedings must be conducted fairly, thoroughly and without bias or undue delay.
- Parties should provide all relevant, material, complete and factual information, documents or other evidence relating to the complaint.

Please Note:

- Concerns that occur between one individual and another are not the responsibility of the School.
- In instances where an incident has occurred that is of concern to you as a parent, or to your child, the appropriate course of action is to raise it with the school staff who will assist in resolving the issue. Addressing a matter directly with a student or another parent or caregiver is not appropriate.

- Complainants are always encouraged to identify themselves. If an individual chooses to make a complaint without disclosing their identity, this limits the options for proper and thorough investigation and resolution of the matter. Since those who have a complaint made about them have a right to know the particulars of the complaint and to respond, the School will not follow through the investigation of anonymous complaints.

STAGE 1: INFORMAL RESOLUTION

1. Many complaints are minor in nature, or readily resolved, and may arise from genuine misunderstandings and/or issues relating to communication. In the vast majority of cases, these can be satisfactorily resolved informally.
2. Wherever possible, the informal and amicable resolution of concerns through direct communication and discussion between those concerned is encouraged.
3. Formal procedures for the resolution of complaints should only be invoked when a matter is of a very serious nature or when the matter cannot be resolved by the parties themselves through informal means.

STAGE 2: FORMAL AND SERIOUS COMPLAINTS

1. If no positive resolution can be found, or the complaint is of a more serious nature, the matter may be referred to the appropriate staff:
 - Coordinator
 - Deputy Principal
 - Principal.
2. As soon as practicable after a formal complaint has been received, a process will be put in place by the School to investigate the complaint.
3. In resolving a formal complaint the School will gather relevant and material and information relating to the situation and convene a meeting of the parties to discuss the concerns.

STAGE 3: REFERRAL OF A COMPLAINT TO THE SCHOOL BOARD

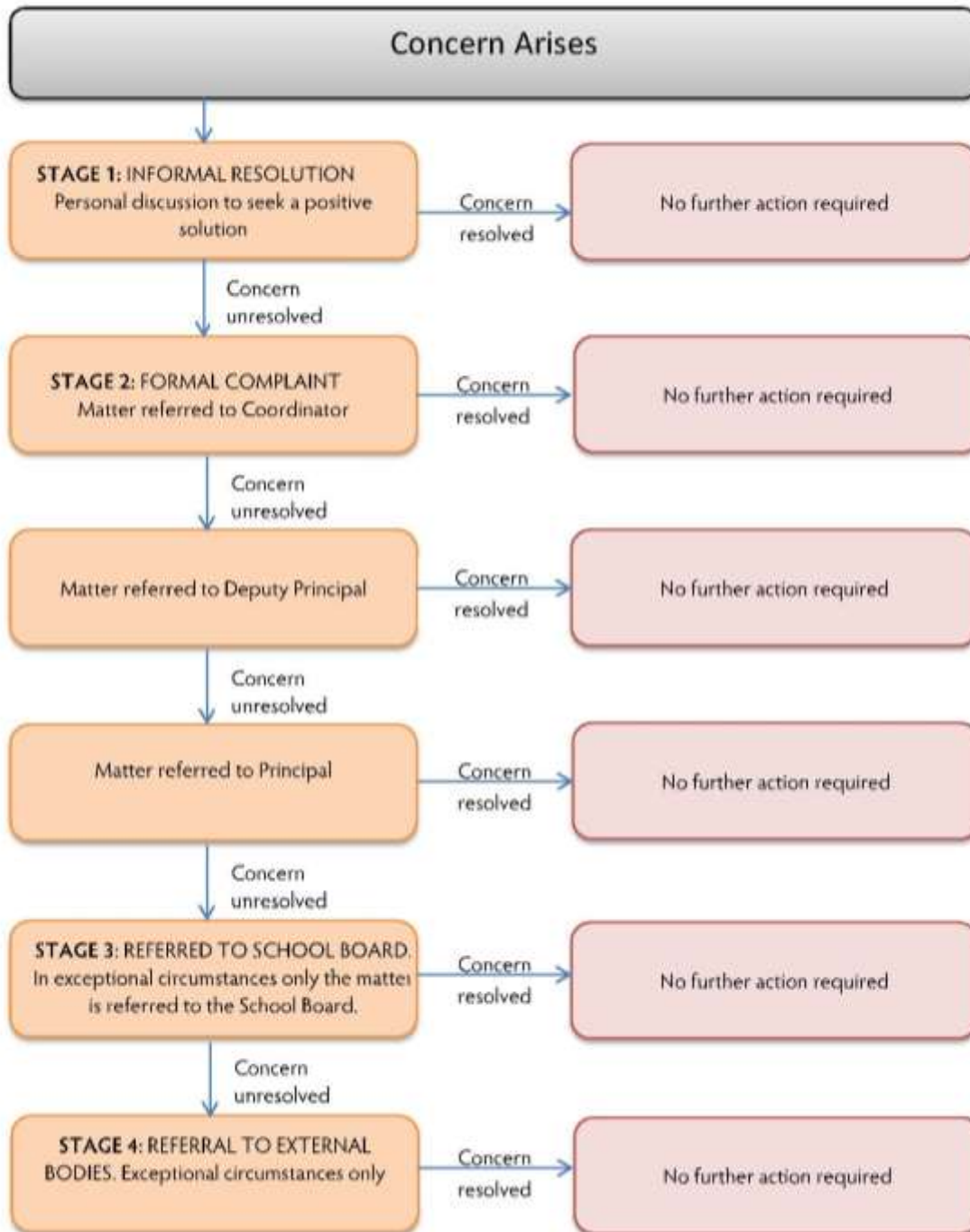
1. The Board Chair and members of the School Board are not directly involved in the first instance with the receipt, investigation or resolution of complaints other than complaints arising within or about the School Board itself.
2. In instances where a complaint is about the Principal and the matter cannot otherwise be resolved or the complainant feels it is appropriate to do so, a formal written complaint may be lodged with the Board Chair. In this instance the Board Chair will expeditiously take all reasonable steps to have the complaint fully investigated and to facilitate a resolution.
3. In other exceptional and special circumstances, a direct approach may be made to the Board Chair to formally lodge a complaint or refer a complaint where the resolution processes within the School have failed or are otherwise inappropriate. In this instance, the Board Chair will take advice from appropriate persons and make a determination as to how the complaint should thereafter be effectively dealt with.

STAGE 4: REFERRAL OF A COMPLAINT TO AN EXTERNAL AUTHORITY

1. When a complaint is not or cannot be resolved within the School, the parties may seek the assistance of external professional agencies or other relevant judicial or quasi-judicial bodies in order that a further attempt can be made to resolve the matter. This is subject to the following important provisions:
 - The Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA) will not act as a mediator between parents and schools but if a matter remains unresolved, or parents feel that the school has failed to take their complaint seriously, AISSA may be able to provide general assistance to help parents understand the School's position.

- Neither the Minister for Education and Child Development nor the Department for Education and Child Development has any power to directly intervene in any complaints relating to the operations of a non-government school.

COMPLAINT HANDLING PROCEDURE FLOWCHART



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