

Complaints and Disputes Policy

1. RATIONALE

The education of students does not happen in isolation and healthy, open communication amongst parents, College staff and students is a key ingredient for successful learning.

Inevitably, incidents and perceptions will arise that can negatively impact on relationships and therefore the effectiveness of the College community in achieving the goal of educating with excellence as preparation for life.

This policy for handling complaints and disputes is designed to facilitate resolution in a Biblical manner, preserving the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (Ephesians 3:3) and ensuring that no root of bitterness is able to grow up and defile many (Hebrews 12:15).

2. PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING THE POLICY

To maintain a positive, healthy College community, all members of the College community are encouraged to 'keep short accounts' by approaching relevant staff members to discuss any issues, complaints or disputes, no matter how big or small they may seem.

All complaints will be treated as important and investigated fully and appropriately with the goal of achieving full resolution.

All members of the College community are valued and respected and can expect to be treated as such. It is the expectation of the College that complaints or disputes will be raised and presented in a respectful and appropriate manner.

In all matters, the well-being of students' learning environment is the primary concern. Confidentiality is highly valued and it is expected that both staff and parents who are involved will respect this at all times, before the complaint is made, during and after the resolution process.

Two key ingredients in resolving complaints and disputes are humility and an acknowledgement that the focus is on the 'task at hand' (that is, students' learning environment). In order to resolve complaints and disputes, a humble attitude and a commitment to preserving a positive and peaceful learning environment for all students are essential.

3. DEFINITIONS

3.1. Concern

A Concern is the expression of a worry, something that has made a person troubled or anxious about an issue and is usually expressed at a 'first level' i.e. to a class teacher by telephone or email directly. Depending on the nature of the concern, it can often be resolved at this 'first level' in an informal manner.

NB: It would be prudent nonetheless for the teacher or staff member concerned to make and file a brief note on SEQTA regarding the issue and interaction in case of future escalation and to assist in the identification of patterns emerging over time.

3.2. Complaint

A complaint is an 'expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organisation, related to its products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required' (as defined by the *AS/NZS 10002:2014 Guidelines for Complaint Management in Organisations*).

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A complaint may be made if a complainant thinks that the school or someone has, for example:

- done something wrong;
- failed to do something it/they should have done;
- acted unfairly or impolitely; or
- ignored their concern.

3.3. Dispute

A dispute is a pursued unresolved complaint that has been escalated, either internally and/or externally to the school.

Taking a calm, positive approach to concerns and complaints and treating them as constructive suggestions can help to diffuse angst, the potential for acrimony and escalation. The receipt of a complaint, even an unjustified complaint can be helpful to a school in that it may indicate an area that can be improved.

4. PROCEDURES

Our complaints policy and procedures comply with the Guide to Registration Standards and Other Requirements for Non-Government Schools January 2020, as described below:

- 4.1. The organisation has an accessible, child focused complaint handling policy which clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of leadership, staff and volunteers, approaches to dealing with different types of complaints, breaches of relevant policies or the Code of Conduct and obligations to act and report.
- 4.2. Effective complaint handling processes are understood by children and young people, staff, families and volunteers, and are culturally safe.
- 4.3. Complaints are taken seriously and responded to promptly and thoroughly.
- 4.4. The organisation has policies and procedures in place that address reporting of complaints and concerns to relevant authorities, whether or not the law requires reporting, and co-operates with law enforcement.
- 4.5. Reporting, record keeping, privacy and employment law obligations are met.

5. COMPLAINTS INFORMATION

5.1. Who may complain?

- All members of the College community (parents and carers, students and College staff) are entitled to appropriately, respectfully and safely raise any complaint or seek resolution to any dispute that may arise at any time within the College.
- All College community members are urged to raise and discuss issues with a view to seeking full resolution.

5.2. What may be complained about?

- A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. A complaint may be made, for example, about aspects of provision of education, failure to meet reasonable expectations, unfairness, impoliteness or the conduct of College community members.
- Any concern, be it perceived or actual, should be raised with a view to seeking resolution.

5.3. How will the complaint be handled?

- All complaints and disputes will be treated with utmost respect and confidentiality. All complaints will be considered important and appropriately addressed as quickly and decisively as possible.
- Actions and timelines will be discussed and agreed upon by all involved parties and follow up meetings or communication will be scheduled as appropriate to the circumstances.
- Communication of the complaint will be confined to the appropriate spheres and College staff are expected to maintain an impeccable standard in modelling this. Parents and carers within the College community are likewise expected to act in a suitably professional manner in this regard.
- Gossip and slander are destructive, contrary to Biblical and College ethos and work against the objective of educating with excellence.
- A complaint register is kept by the Principal to keep a record of complaints made and category of complaints to monitor patterns. If patterns emerge the matter will be brought to the Council Chair's attention.

5.4. How should a concern or complaint be made?

- If there is a concern or complaint, it should be raised in the first instance to the teacher or staff member directly involved or responsible. The complainant is asked if they would like to make a formal complaint. If they would or if resolution is not achieved, then the process outlined in the flow chart in section 4 will be followed. The concern then becomes a complaint.
- Anyone making a complaint is entitled to have a friend or other College community member present at all discussions and meetings if this is felt necessary.

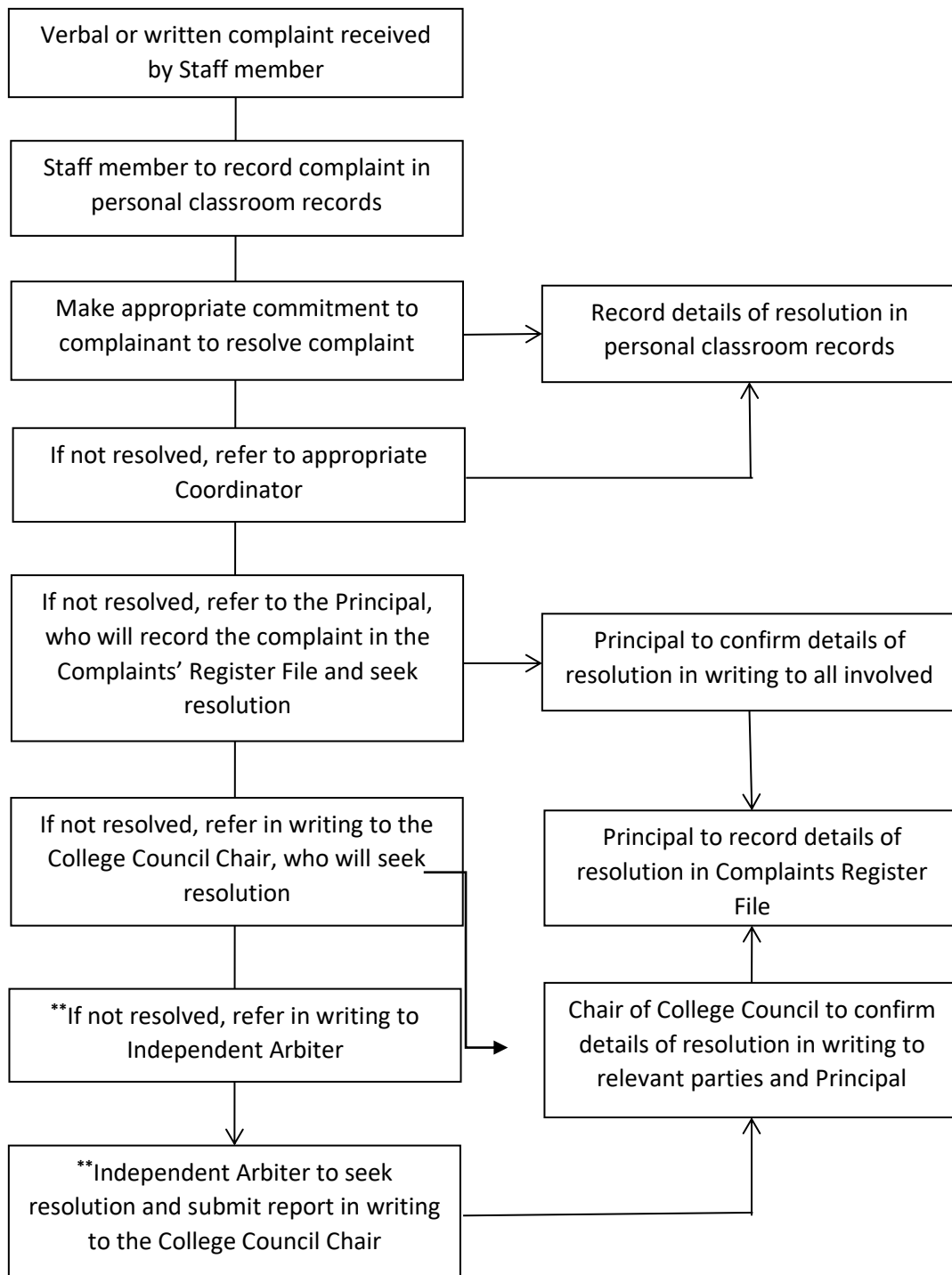
5.5. May a complaint be withdrawn?

- A complaint may be withdrawn at any time and should be by similar means that the complaint was made. For example, a complaint made in writing should be withdrawn via letter or email to the staff member to whom the complaint was made.
- The staff member who received the complaint is to give notice to any involved parties that it has been withdrawn.
- Complaints that are deemed by the principal to warrant investigation will be followed up regardless of withdrawal.

6. FLOW CHARTS

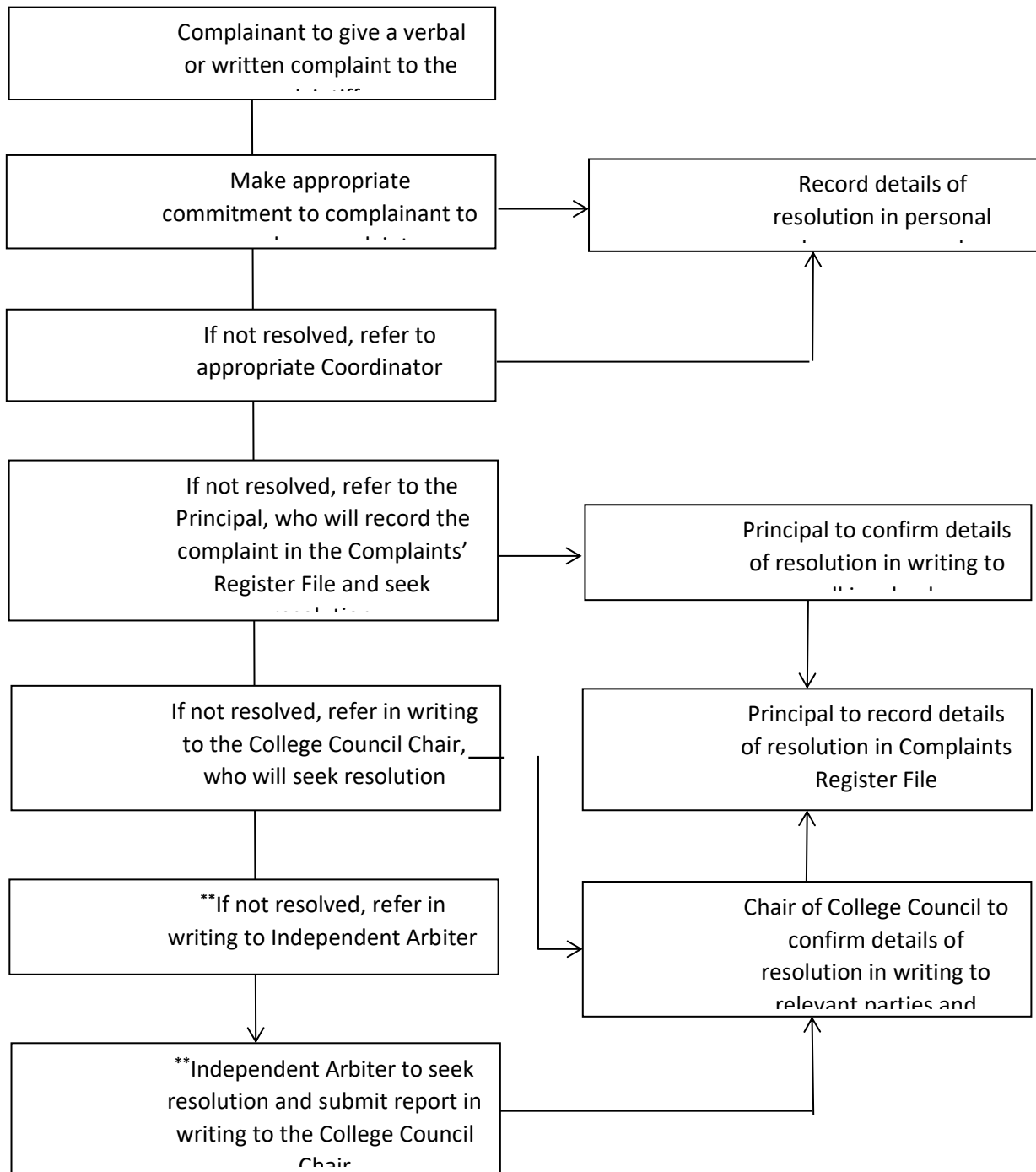
The flowcharts below outline the process for managing complaints and disputes within the college community.

6.1. FLOW CHART FOR MANAGEMENT OF PARENTAL COMPLAINTS



**Please refer to the Independent Arbiter Procedure for the process of seeking resolution through the involvement of an independent arbiter.

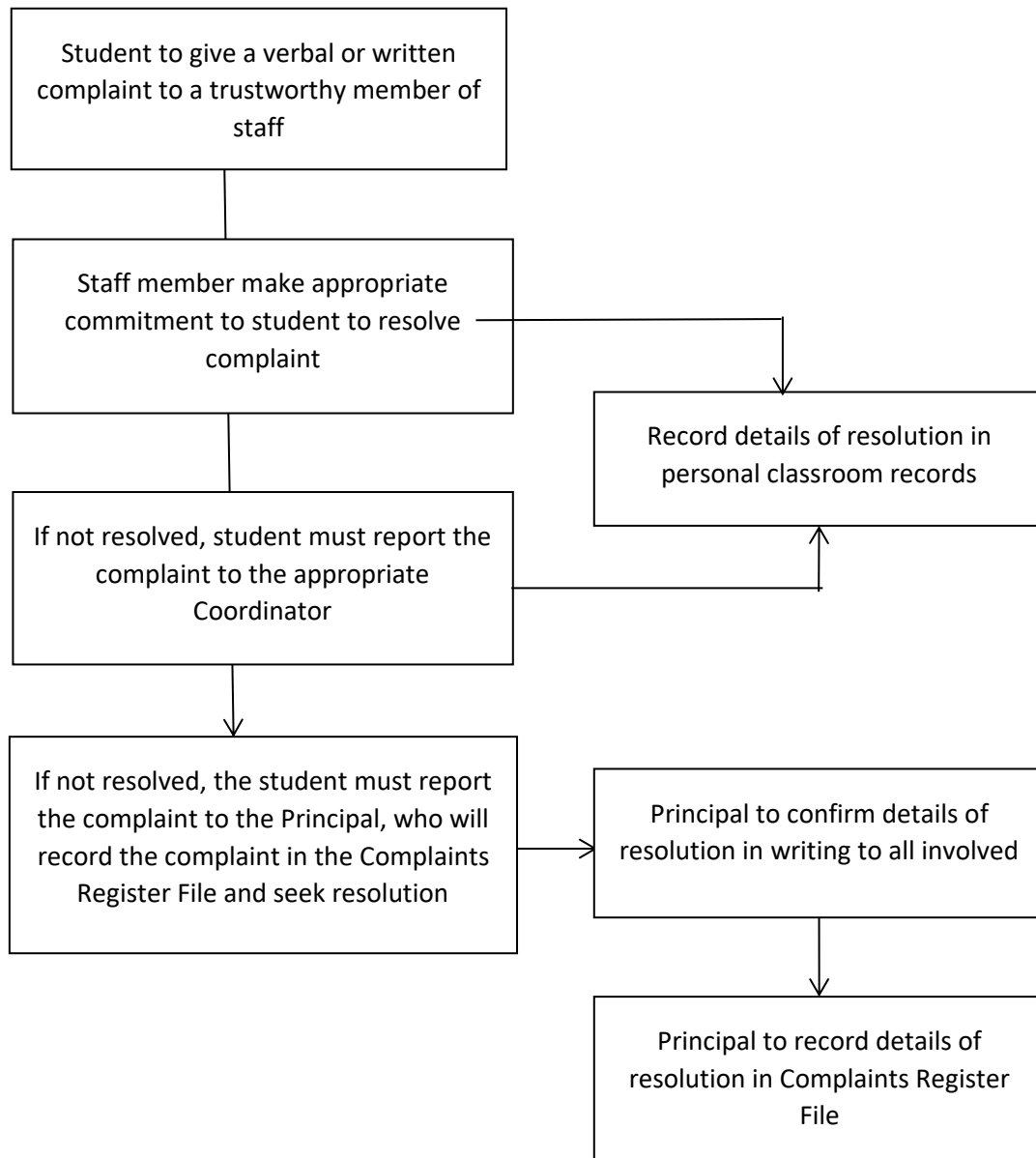
6.2. FLOW CHART FOR MANAGEMENT OF STAFF COMPLAINTS



**Please refer to the Independent Arbiter Procedure for the process of seeking resolution through the involvement of an independent arbiter.

6.3 FLOW CHART FOR MANAGEMENT OF STUDENT COMPLAINTS

Child friendly complaints procedure



6.4 FLOW CHART FOR COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE PRINCIPAL

