Grievance Policy

Policy No. 31

Approved by School Board
June 2024

KERANG
Christian College

Rationale
Positive, clear and effective processes for resolving grievances between the school and community members assists in the building of strong relationships, dispels anxiety, and ultimately provides students with an enhanced learning environment.

Aims
To provide clear, positive and fair processes that allow grievances to be aired and resolved in a timely and effectively manner.

Policy
The Kerang Christian College places a high value on sustaining relationships within the community that are characterized by justice, respect compassion, honesty, trust and grace. When a parent has a grievance or concern in respect of operational matters (the day-to-day operations and management of the school), the College has a clear procedure whereby such issues should be raised and addressed.

Do your best to preserve the unity which the Spirit gives by means of the peace that binds you together. (Ephesians 4:3)

If a fellow believer hurts you, go and tell him – work it out between the two of you. If he listens, you've made a friend. If he won't listen, take one or two others along … and try again. (Matthew 18:15-16)

Implementation

- Our College prides itself on clear, consultative and open communication.
- While we accept our responsibility to consult, and to communicate both clearly and effectively with the community, community members also have an obligation to read notices and newsletters, to attend briefings, and to seek clarification when required.
- There may, however, still be times when members of the community disagree or are confused about the things that we are doing.
- It is essential that the established process as outlined below is followed to resolve grievances.

Principles in dealing with conflict in the school community
Grievances must always be dealt with under the principles of Procedural Fairness, which means that the complainant has the right to be heard and the right to receive an impartial decision.

The following principles will be employed when dealing with more serious conflict:

1. Presumption of innocence until guilty.
2. Confidentiality
3. Allegations stated clearly in writing.
4. Affected parties made aware of allegations.
5. Chairman of the Board made aware of formal grievance matters. Other agencies e.g. CSA, ISV, VIT, Police, Ombudsman, Workcover, may be informed if appropriate. The school administration will cooperate fully with government departments and other agencies in the resolution of grievances.
6. Opportunity for response by the affected parties.
7. Evidence collected impartially.
8. Processes will take into consideration school policies and appropriate government legislation.
9. Witnesses present at formal meetings.
10. Minutes kept of all formal meetings.
11. Conclusions made as quickly as possible after weighing up evidence.
12. Affected parties will be made aware of the result of the investigation as soon as possible.

Records
Where the matter becomes a formal complaint, it is expected that all parties, including the College, shall maintain documentary records of meetings, correspondence, steps taken to resolve a matter etc. dealt with under these guidelines. At this time, parties involved should be asked for background information, and notes will be taken of the information furnished. Furthermore, any records, once the formal complaint is resolved, will be kept securely and confidentially in a file established for the purpose by the Principal but not in the staff member's personal file.

Confidentiality
The person handling the grievance has a responsibility for ensuring all parties involved in the grievance process understand the importance of confidentiality under the Privacy Act and that information is not divulged to third parties who are not directly involved in the meeting / grievance. Information on relevant files may be subject to applications for disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 1982.

Timeframe
The timeframe for the investigation should be determined once the scope has been defined,and should be carried out as swiftly as possible without constraining its' thoroughness. This should normally be within 3 weeks.

Child Safety Complaints or Concerns

The College treats child safety seriously and encourages anyone in our community to make is aware of any incident, allegation or concern associated with the safety of the children or young people in our care.

In particular,

- All students should feel safe to speak to any staff member to raise any concerns about their safety or any other concerns that they have
- If a student does not know who to approach, they should start with our Child Safety Champion or Home Group Teacher

Students with a Disability

Students with disabilities have rights under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth), the Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Commonwealth) and the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Victoria) to access their education on the same basis as their peers, including the right to reasonable adjustments.

As with all complaints to which this policy applies, parents and guardians should raise any concerns or complaints regarding the treatment of a student with a disability the appropriate teacher at the College in the first instance. The principal can also provide advice to parents when they are seeking to raise a concern or make a complaint to the College.

The College also recognises that parents of students with a disability can raise complaints or concerns regarding a student with a disability in a number of forums, including:

- The Australian Human Rights Commission- in relation to complaints regarding compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act of the Disability Standards for Education.
- The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission- in relation to complaints regarding compliance with the Equal Opportunity Act.

Consideration for Persons of Aboriginal Background, Culturally, Family Diverse or Linguistically Diverse Background, or with a Disability

The College respects the diversity of the school and wider community and understands that a range of issues may affect a complainant which means the College needs to make allowances for or provide assistance with the process as set out in the policy. For example, an interpreter may be required to ensure that facts are accurate and the exchange of information is fairly represented. The College will seek to honor due diligence in the area and make every effort to accommodate diverse needs to ensure equality of process.

Kerang Christian College is committed to establishing and maintaining culturally safe environments in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of all students and members of the College community are respected and valued, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, and students.

Grievance Procedures for Student Matters

Stage 1

If the matter involves a child or an issue of everyday class operation, make an appointment to see their classroom teacher, detailing the reasons for the appointment. In most instances, a parent should raise the issue with the teacher or teachers directly concerned. *(An email may be appropriate; if not, an appointment should be made.)*

Grievances brought by a student against another student will be dealt with in accordance with the College's Behaviour Management Policy.

An appointment should be made with the principal to discuss issues involving school policy, operations beyond a child's classroom, concerns about staff, or grievances that are probably not easily resolved.

Stage 2
Where Stage 1 is not appropriate or a parent is not satisfied with the response at Stage 1, the parent should take the matter to:

- The Head of School or
- The Principal

Stage 3
If a parent is not satisfied with the determination of the Principal, the matter may be referred in writing to the Secretary of the College Board.

The role of the Board in the day-to-day operational matters is to ensure that concerns or issues have been handled in accordance with policy and procedure.

All grievances are to be kept confidential.

All formal discussions and processes involving grievances will be documented.

The Principal and College Board Chairman will exercise his/her judgement as to whether or not they will act upon anonymous complaints.

Grievance Against the Principal
Contact between the Principal and the Complainant would not occur (except in an exceptional circumstance) and the Head of Primary or Head of Secondary School would assume responsibility for school communication with the complainant.

The Principal will inform the Chairman of the School Board of the complaint.

The role of the Chair of the College Board is to:

(a) Ensure the College Board is properly briefed and the individual members of the Board adhere to the mutually agreed guidelines.

(b) Ensure the Principal is afforded natural justice and the guidelines for the role of the Board are adhered to.

(c) Be responsible for controlling the publicity and communication to the whole school body when the complaint is filed and concluded.

The role of the Board is to ensure correct processes are observed along mutually agreed guidelines.

Informal Process for a Grievance Against the Principal
Steps involved in an informal procedure

- The person making the complaint approaches a Head of School in the first instance, to deal with grievances to discuss the matter. If there is a conflict of interest, the Board Chairman or a Head of School may oversee the grievance.
- The Head of School needs to obtain as much information as possible, evaluate the grievance/dispute and explore options for resolution.
- The person making the complaint should be advised of his or her right to submit a formal grievance if he or she is not satisfied with the decision and outcome of the informal process.

Formal Process for a Grievance Against the Principal
If the informal process, as documented, fails, then the Principal will inform the Chairman of the College Board and a mutually agreeable independent investigator will be appointed. The investigation will include interviews with the complainant and the respondent, and if necessary with witnesses called by either party.

For the purposes of this policy, the independent investigator's decision will be final. (Either party always has the right to pursue other avenues.)

Following the Independent Investigator's Report, the School Board will determine the consequences for the Principal. This may range from 'no case to answer' to dismissal. The School Board should notify the Principal. This correspondence will include the follow-up process to be undertaken, if any.

Steps involved in a formal procedure

- If informal discussions fail to resolve a grievance / dispute, a **formal complaint** is made in writing to the independent investigator designated to deal with formal grievances.

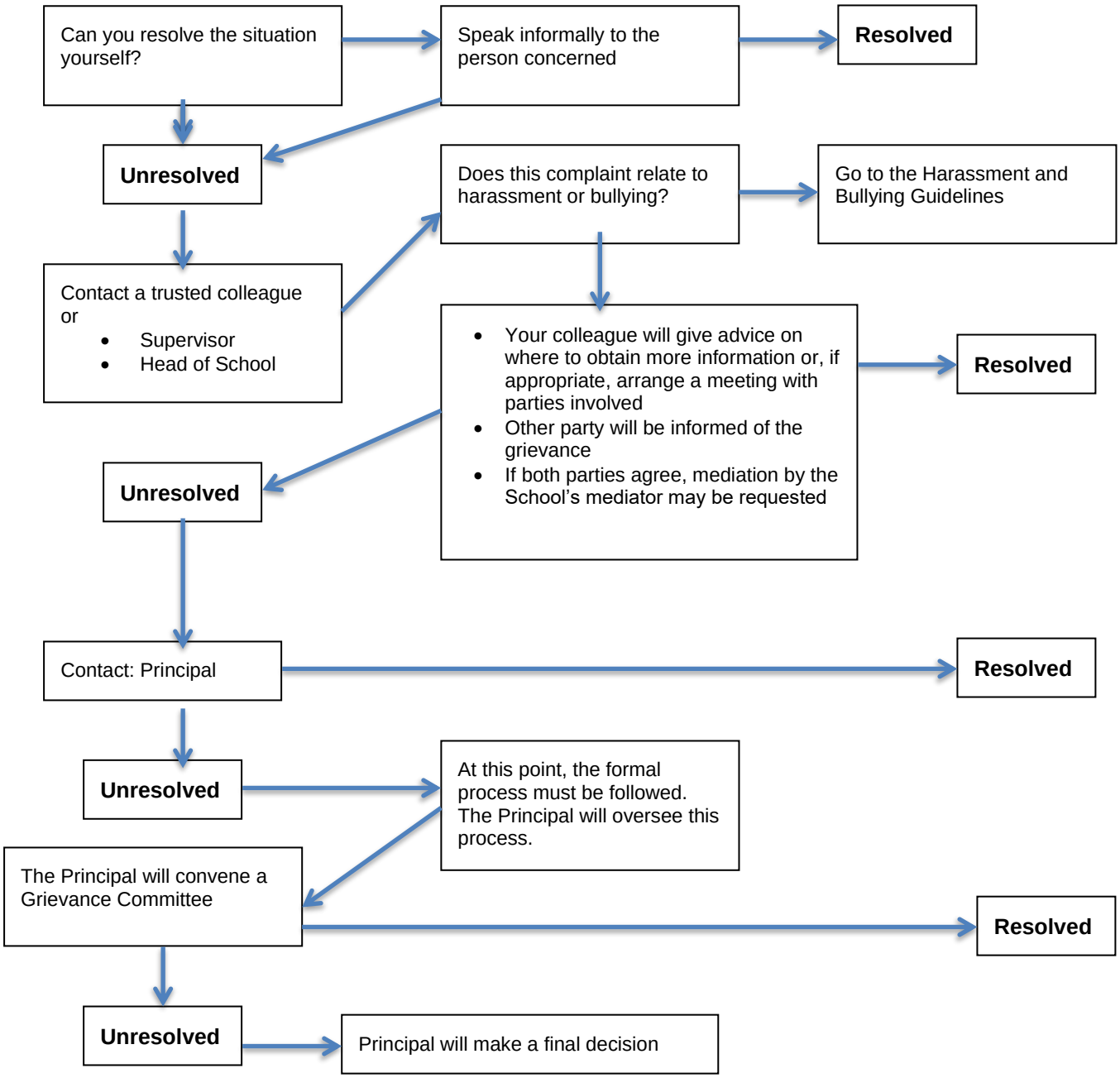
- The complainant must set out all the details of the grievance or dispute. The grievant will **state** the exact nature of the grievance, against whom it is filed, and the remedy sought.
- The person designated to deal with the complaint, **attempts to resolve** the matter with the complainant.
- **Inform** the Principal in writing, explaining the reason for the grievance and allow the Principal an opportunity to prepare a response.
- The independent investigator will gather the **facts** - the allegation and evidence.
- Summarise the discussion and **adjourn** to make any further investigations necessary to reach a decision.
- Encourage suggestions to help **overcome the problem**. The independent investigator shall arrange for one or more meetings with the relevant parties in an effort to resolve the grievance.
- Summarise the discussion and **adjourn** to make any further investigations necessary to reach a decision.
- Inform the Principal and the Board Chairman of your **decision** as soon as possible in writing.
- The Board will consider how serious the offence is, what **action** it merits and any steps which could be taken to improve the situation.

Recommended Process for Resolving Grievances – Staff

The Kerang Christian College is committed to providing effective mechanisms for dispute resolution for its employees, students, parents of the College, members of the community and other bodies associated with the College and its functions.

Advice on how to proceed can be obtained from the Principal. A complainant may proceed straight to a formal complaint at any stage if the issue is sufficiently serious or is not resolved to the satisfaction of the aggrieved person.

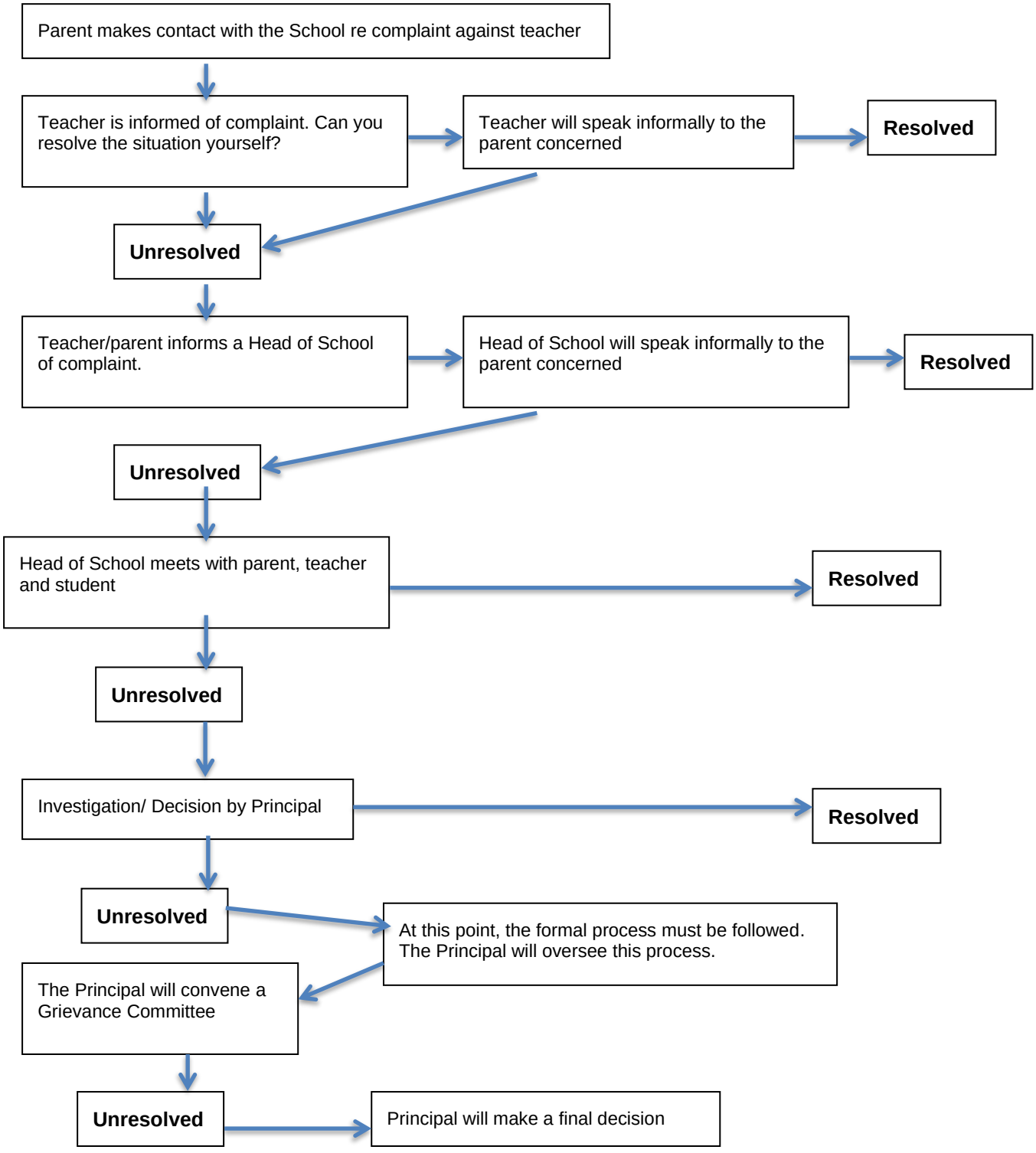
A Formal Grievance must be given in writing to the Principal.



Recommended Process for Resolving Grievances – Parents

The Kerang Christian College is committed to providing effective mechanisms for dispute resolution for its employees, students, parents of the College, members of the community and other bodies associated with the College and its functions.

It is recommended that in the first instance parents make contact with the teacher concerned. At all stages the teacher will be kept informed.



Recommended Process for Resolving Grievances – Students

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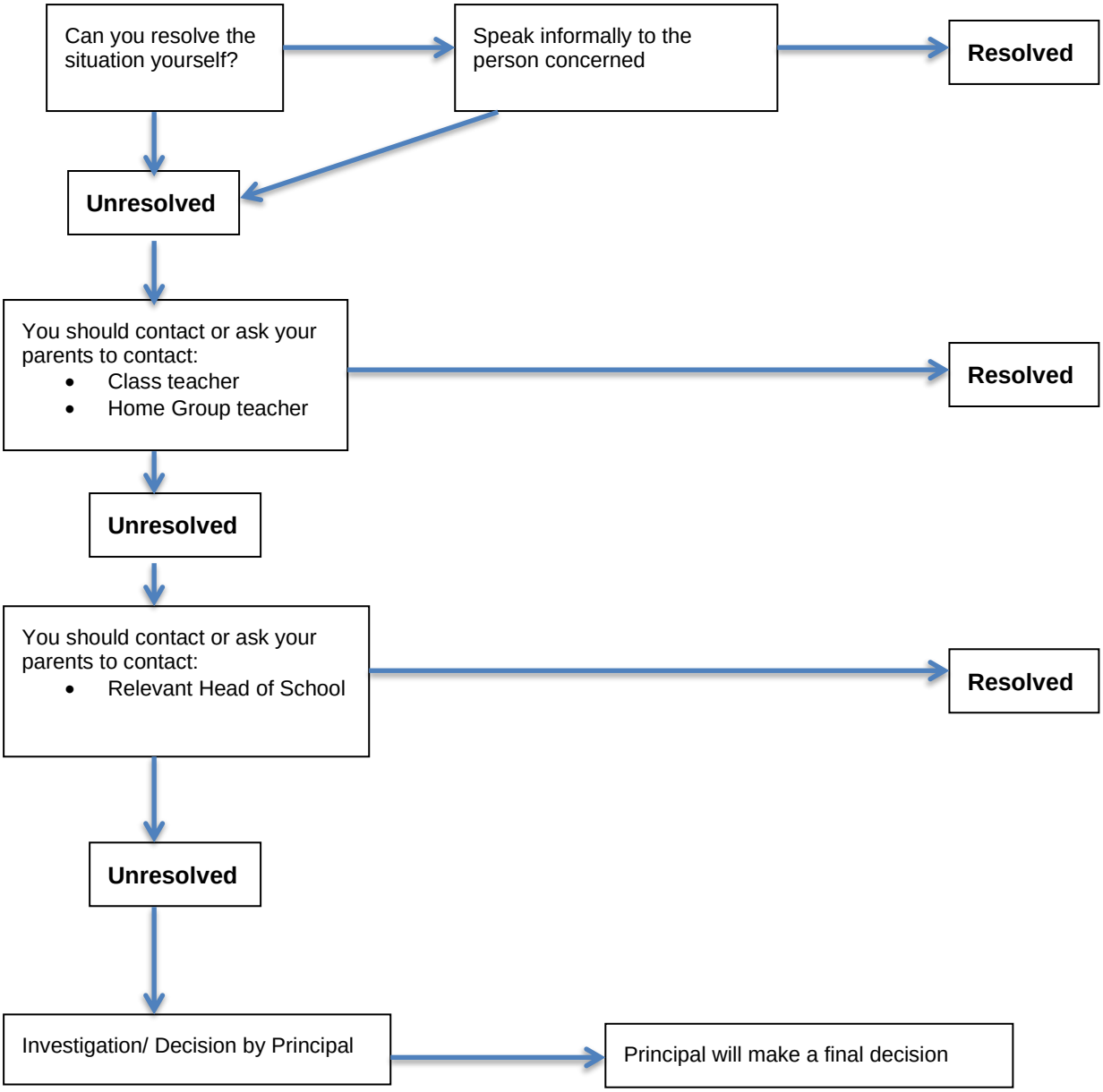

Responsibilities

Principal The Principal will ensure the policy is in place and to participate as necessary in investigations or reporting.

Teachers / Staff Staff at the College will respond to complaints and / or report as required

Parents Parents and carers will lodge concerns or complains as stated in the policy.

Students Students will lodge concerns or complains as stated in the policy.

Board Chair The role of the Chair of the College Board is to:

(a) Ensure the College Board is properly briefed and the individual members of the Board adhere to the mutually agreed guidelines.

(b) Ensure the Principal is afforded natural justice and the guidelines for the role of the Board are adhered to.

(c) Be responsible for controlling the publicity and communication to the whole school body when the complaint is filed and concluded.

Board The role of the Board is to ensure correct processes are observed along mutually agreed guidelines.

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle.

Related Policies

Workplace Bullying Policy (Policy No. 51)
Student Bullying Policy (Policy No. 14)
Behaviour Management Policy (Policy No. 15)

Approved: June 2004
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