

## **COMPLAINTS POLICY**

### **SCOPE**

From time to time, complaints may be received by the College from students, staff, parents (including guardians and caregivers) or other members of the community. This document sets out the processes by which these matters can be addressed respectfully, fairly, in a non-adversarial manner, expeditiously and with sensitivity to all concerned.

This document does not address complaints relating to staff employment matters which are managed through appropriate statutory provisions.

### **DEFINITION**

For the purposes of this document a 'complaint' can arise if a member of the community believes, in good faith and with supporting information, that the School has, for example:

- done something wrong
- failed to do something that it should have done
- acted unfairly, unreasonably, inappropriately or unprofessionally

### **RATIONALE**

When differences occur, the preferred pathway in solving them is by using the moral and spiritual guidelines given to us in God's Word, the Bible. We are to live and work together in harmony, giving preference to the other and showing love and consideration towards each other. The Bible exhorts us to "love one another" as demonstrated to us by Jesus (John 13:34-35) and to resolve disagreements by 'living in harmony with one another' whenever possible (Romans 12:14).

### **COMPLAINT HANDLING PROCESS**

Students, teachers, parents and community members are entitled, in good faith, to lodge a bona fide complaint with the School.

Every reasonable effort will be made by the College 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.

Issues involving bullying and harassment (verbal and/or physical abuse) will be dealt with in line with the College's Behaviour Improvement and Bullying and Harassment processes.

Under legislation issues involving physical and or sexual abuse needing to be reported in line with Mandated Notification requirements. (see the current *RCC Child Protection Policy*)

## **COMPLAINT HANDLING PROCEDURE**

### **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:
  - a. Coordinator
  - b. Deputy Principal
  - c. 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 College will gather relevant 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 COLLEGE BOARD**

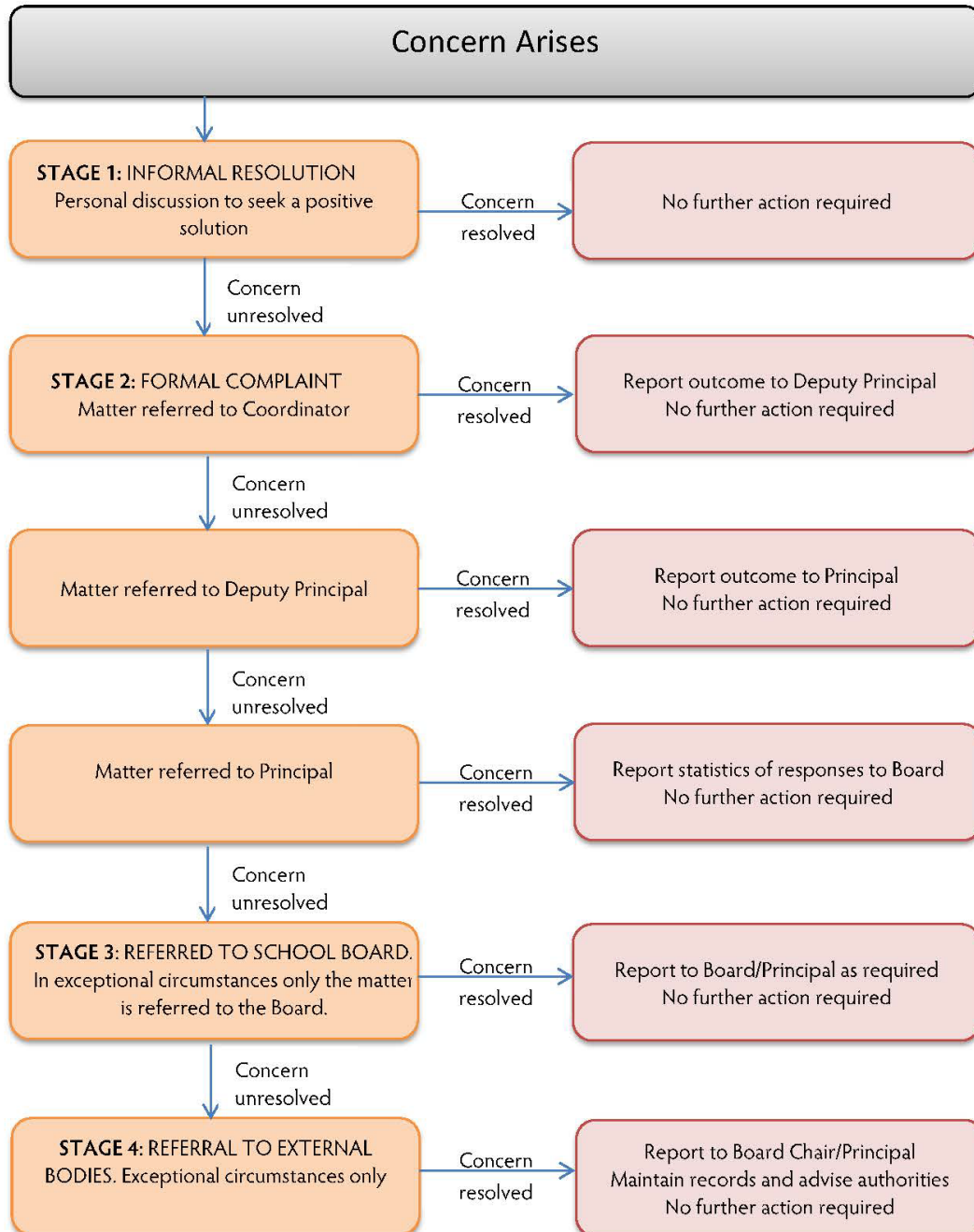
1. The Board Chair and members of the College Board are not directly involved in the first instance with the receipt, investigation or resolution of complaints other than complaints arising within or about the School Board itself.
2. In instances where a complaint is about the Principal and the matter 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 cannot be resolved within the School, the parties may seek the assistance of external professional agencies or other relevant judicial or para-professional bodies in order that a further attempt can be made to resolve the matter. This is subject to the following important provisions:
  - a. 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.
  - b. 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





Version	August 2021	
Publication Date	August 2021	
Review Date	August 2024	
Related Legislation and Regulatory Requirements	Education and Early Childhood Services (Registration and Standards) Act 2011	
Related Policies	RCC Child Protection Policy RCC Privacy Policy	
Responsibility	Principal	
Written By:	Senior Adviser to the Board	
Approved by:	Rivergum Christian College Board	Date: 26 August 2021