



CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

Managing and Recording Complaints

Pioneer Village School welcomes feedback from all members of the school community and takes all concerns or complaints that may be raised seriously. This Concerns and Complaints Policy is designed to assist families to understand how to make a complaint and should be used in conjunction with our Communication and Complaints Handling Guide. For the purposes of this policy, we use the terms 'staff' and 'staff member' to include all teaching and non-teaching staff, PVS Board members, volunteers, practicum students, contractors and external providers.

Aim

The School's aim is:

- To resolve complaints in a fair, equitable and prompt manner;
- To clearly identify a process to be followed to resolve complaints; and
- To minimise the effect of a complaint for the individuals concerned, as well as on the operation and level of service being provided by the school.

Pioneer Village School's Commitment

Pioneer Village School is committed to handling complaints effectively and efficiently.

To manage complaints effectively, we have established a Complaints Handling Program in line with;

1. Principles 6 and 9 of the *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations*, using the National Office of Child Safety's "Complaints Handling Guide: Upholding the Rights of Children and Young People",
2. The international complaints handling standard (ISO 10002:2018 Quality management – Customer satisfaction – Guidelines for complaints handling in organizations), and
3. The Australian/New Zealand complaints handling standard (AS/NZS 10002:2014 Guidelines for complaint management in organisations).

Our complaints handling program is inclusive of a system to manage concerns and complaints, and a complaints register which allows us to effectively capture, manage and report on complaints. Regular analysis of complaints received, and the implementation of rectification action, where deficiencies are identified, are key to the school's commitment to continual improvement.

Relevant findings are communicated to stakeholders whenever appropriate via methods including, but not limited to, updated policies available on the website, e-mail and newsletter.

Our internal complaints handling process aims to be culturally safe:

The Royal Commission's Reports and other papers indicate that a culturally safe complaint handling process will be one which overcome cultural barriers and taboos to disclosure, provide culturally appropriate means of making complaints, is managed by people who are aware of and sensitive to potential complainant's culture and cultural attitudes, including those arising from historical trauma and mistrust of authorities, and which facilitates access to culturally-appropriate therapeutic and other services as required. (The Guide, p.33)

Types of Complaints

General Complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to the school about its services, decisions, actions or those of its staff, or about the complaint management process itself. A concern is an expression of a worry.

Any member of the school community (parents, guardians, staff and student) is welcome to raise a complaint or concern about what they consider to be unfair or inequitable treatment relating to themselves, their employment, a child in the school, or another member of the wider community associated with the school. Complaints may be made in any form, including phone, e-mail, website, in person and anonymously – however it should be noted an anonymous complaint may impact the potential resolution.

A complaint may be made if an individual believes that the school has:

- Done something wrong;
- Failed to do something it should have done;
- Acted unfairly or improperly; or
- Ignored their concern.

A complaint may be made about:

- The school as a whole, or a particular department within the school;
- A member of the school community;
- A member of staff; or
- A particular practice or action undertaken, or not undertaken.

Please refer to our Communication and Complaints Handling Guide for information on how to proceed.

Child Abuse Complaints

The following complaints about or allegations of:

1. Breaches of the Child Safe Codes of Conduct
2. Child abuse, grooming or other harm of a current or former student by; current or former staff members; current or former students; other people on school premises or at school events

are managed by the school in a different manner to other complaints.

If your complaint is a child safety related complaint, please make your complaint to Principal, reception@pvs.wa.edu.au or 08 9399 6999.

If the Principal is the subject of your complaint please notify chair of the governing body, board@pvs.wa.edu.au

Further information can be found in our *Procedures for Managing Child Safety Incidents or Concerns at or Involving the School or its Staff, Volunteers or Contractors*.

Key Principles of Handling Complaints

- Resolution of the matter is to be sought.
- The school is to be open to the concerns of staff, parents and pupils.
- Complaints are to be received in a positive manner.
- Confidentiality is respected and maintained so far as is possible.
- Schools are not obliged to give complainants explicit information on what action has been taken, but rather provide an assurance that action has been taken.
- Staff, parents and pupils can expect to be taken seriously and can approach any member of staff about their concerns.
- Concerns are dealt with as quickly as possible, and those who have raised them are kept informed of progress within a given timeframe.
- It is not acceptable for complainants to receive adverse treatment because of their complaint.
- Clear confidential files and a log are kept in Principal's office, on student files and on the school server.
- Staff training covers the handling of complaints, and staff access policy updates and procedures through our Compliance Management System *Sentrient*.

Fair Process

Fairness, which must be accorded to both the complainant and the person against whom the complaint is made, requires that:

- Each party has an opportunity to be heard, in person or in writing as appropriate and to respond to the allegations and/or evidence offered by the other;
- Issues or facts which are disputed are investigated;
- The investigator is free from bias or the perception of bias and, in particular, is not 'judge in his or her own cause';
- Any complaint outcome is supported by the evidence, necessitating a finding on the balance of probabilities in the event of a dispute of fact;
- The complaint outcome is finalised by an adjudicator, who may also be the investigator, who is free from bias or the perception of bias;
- The outcome is consistent with established school policy.

Principles of Natural Justice

The following principles of natural justice apply to all members of our school community:

- The individuals concerned must be made aware of any allegation/s made against them and those to whom the allegation has been directed must be given the opportunity to comment. However, this does not apply in the case of an allegation of sexual abuse. In

this case, the associated parties will not be informed unless explicitly advised to do so by investigating authorities.

- Anyone associated with the grievance must have the opportunity to put forward their case and have it considered. However, this does not apply in the case of an allegation of sexual abuse. In this case, the associated parties will not be informed unless explicitly advised by investigating authorities to do so.;
- No individual should suffer victimisation as a result of accessing the grievance resolution process;
- Any records held in relation to the grievance resolution procedure are to be held in a confidential file in the Principal's office and/or placed in the relevant student's file if appropriate;
- Where necessary, an external authority such as the Department for Child Protection, AISWA, an Industrial Body or the Western Australian Police Service must be sought for advice or for immediate action;
- Actions and procedures associated with a complaint and the associated process should always be reviewed.

Procedures

In seeking a resolution to a grievance, either an informal or formal process may be undertaken. If possible however, grievances should be resolved as informally, and as quickly, as possible by the people directly involved. Procedures need to be flexible in order to handle both formal and informal complaints. The Rules of Procedural Fairness will be followed in handling all concerns and complaints:

Rules of Procedural Fairness

These rules require:

- (a) a hearing appropriate to the circumstances;
- (b) lack of bias;
- (c) evidence to support a decision; and
- (d) inquiry into matters in dispute

The grievance procedure, whether informal or formally handled, is complete once the parties concerned reach a mutually agreed solution, or a decision is reached.

A grievance and complaints folder will be maintained by the school for review.

Complaints to the Director General

'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.'

(The Guide, p33)

Where complaints have been submitted to the Director General, the complainant may be referred to the school's complaints policy for resolution through the published procedures, if

that process has not already been followed. Information received by the Director General in connection with a complaint will be evaluated and actioned as follows:

- If a child abuse concern is raised the matter will be immediately referred to the Department for Communities (Child Protection and Family Support division) and Western Australia Police Force;
- If another child wellbeing matter is raised it may be referred to a relevant agency under the Department’s information-sharing protocols;
- If possible teacher misconduct or incompetence is raised it will be referred to the Director, Teacher Registration for appropriate action;
- If a non-compliance with a standard or other requirement is alleged, including this standard, the Director General may inquire into whether the school is observing the standards and other requirements.

Definition

Trauma

For the purpose of standard 7.1 and the definition of reportable incidents, a trauma is a psychological wound or injury suffered at school or during a school-related activity [Australian Psychological Society].

Document Group	Welfare
Document Owner	Principal
Last Review	Nov 2021
Next Review	2024
Distribution	Internal/ External
Endorsed by the Governing Body 21.11.2022	

STUDENT CONCERNS & COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Based on the requirement of Registration Standard 9.1, the following information includes key action areas of *National Child Safe Organisation Principles 6 and 9* and incorporates elements of the *Complaint Handling Guide: Upholding the rights of children and young people*. PVS therefore gives consideration to the following when dealing with student complaints and grievances (*adapted from the Commissioner for Children and Young People's guidelines*):

- Students are acknowledged and respected as service users;
- Students are made aware of their right to make a complaint by means and in language which takes into account their age, language background or other relevant factors;
- Students can choose how to make a complaint, including speaking to someone face-to-face;
- The school creates opportunities for students to give feedback and discuss their experiences;
- The complaints process and possible outcomes are outlined in a publication or publications which are developmentally suitable for and appealing to the students of the school, including by illustrations or other visual material;
- 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 he or she wishes;
- Students are provided with an advocate, independent from the complaint investigation and management process, when they do not have one;
- A student's complaint is promptly acknowledged;
- Staff handling students' complaints, and those reviewing the outcome of a complaint, have training in working with children;
- Understanding, helpfulness and responsiveness is demonstrated towards student complainants;
- Students' understanding of information provided about the complaints process is checked;
- Student complainants are given choices about how they wish to be kept informed about the progress of their complaint;
- The policy provides confidentiality and obtaining the student's consent in relation to the complaint;
- Student complainants are made aware of the limits of confidentiality as the process progresses;
- Staff are trained in the school's complaints procedures, particularly as they apply to student complainants.

Pioneer Village School students are educated on how to raise concerns and complaints. The way in which they are taught to do this includes but is not limited to the following:

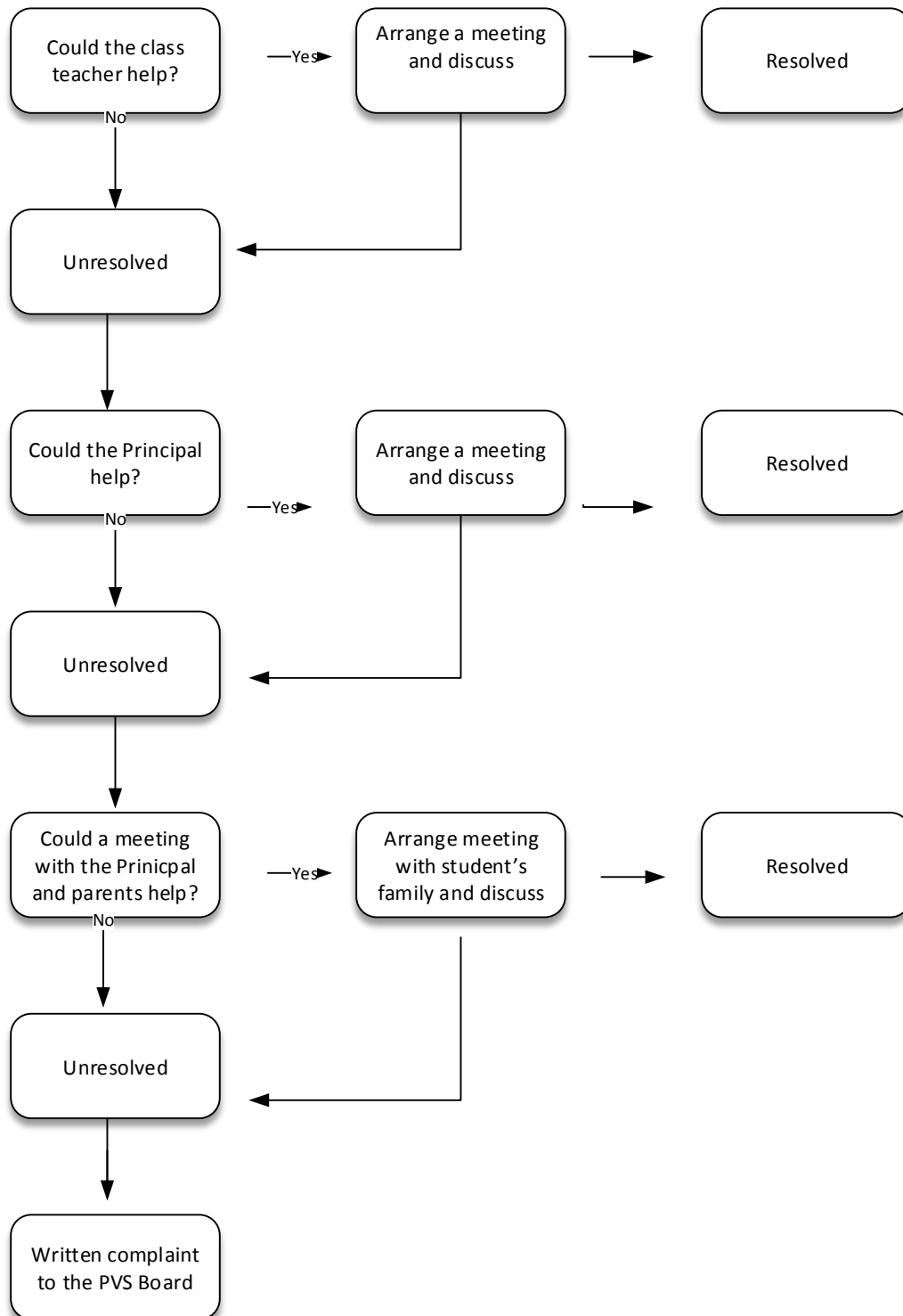
- Assemblies
- Class discussions

- Posters displayed in class and in Reception

The school will periodically review the child-friendliness of the complaints policy and update the *Charter of Commitment to our Students*.

Student complaints raising potential child wellbeing concerns are prioritised and brought to the attention of the Principal, and if necessary, referrals to appropriate authorities will be made as a result of a complaint (for example, to the Western Australia Police Force or the Department of Communities Child Protection and Family Support division).

Student Complaints Procedure



I CAN TALK TO SOMEONE ABOUT ANYTHING!

Any problems, concerns or suggestions?
We would like to hear!



HOW

I can talk to someone about anything. I can write it down. I can draw it. I can tell someone on my own, with a friend or with my parents.



WHO

I can tell anyone who makes me feel safe. All the teachers and community at PVS are here to help me.



WHAT

I can talk about a little things or big things. I can talk about worries, problems or ideas. Talking can help us solve problems.



NEXT

The person I talk to will help me if they can. If they can't they can find another grown-up to help.



SHARE

The person I talk to won't share my worries unless they have to so I am safe.

**Everyone should feel happy and safe.
Everyone is here to help me.**

CHARTER OF COMMITMENT TO OUR STUDENTS

Our Promise to You!

Respect

We will treat everyone equally. We will make sure everyone feels included and welcome. Everyone deserves respect and kindness.



Information

We will give you information about being safe and what to do if you feel unsafe.



Give you a voice

We will make sure there are lots of ways for you to have a say and be involved.



Help

We will listen and act on what you tell us. We will help you reach your goals and help you with your worries.



Trust and Try

You can trust that we will care about your needs and feelings. We try every day to be the best we can for you.

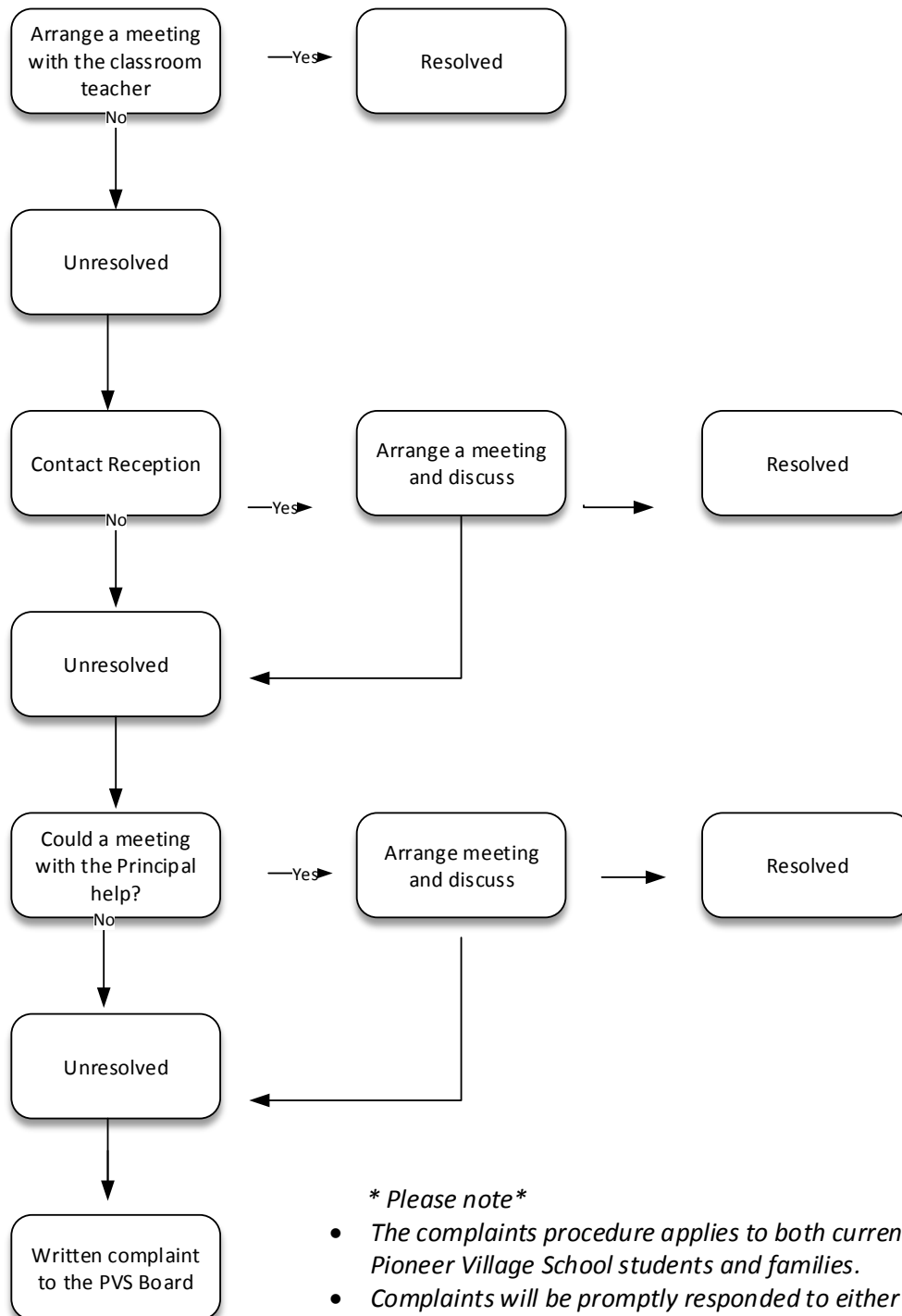


Safety

We will help you feel safe at your school! We will look after the grounds and help you with your problems.



Community Member Complaints Procedure



** Please note**

- *The complaints procedure applies to both current and former Pioneer Village School students and families.*
- *Complaints will be promptly responded to either in written form or verbally.*
- *Should either party remain aggrieved by the initial outcome, an independent review may be conducted by a person independent of the school.*