

<b>Policy Name</b>	<b>Concerns &amp; Complaints Policy</b>
<b>Related Policies and Legislation</b>	Child Protection Policy & Procedure Staff Disputes & Complaints Policy National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
<b>Policy Category</b>	Community
<b>Relevant Audience</b>	All Treetops Community
<b>Date of Issue / Last Revision</b>	17 November 2010 29 October 2015 25 October 2018 <b>21 October 2021</b>
<b>Date Set for Review</b>	<b>October 2024</b>
<b>Person/s Responsible for Review</b>	Treetops Administration

## Concern & Complaints Policy

### Introduction

All parents/guardians, students, and staff at Treetops are valued and they should feel free to voice concerns or complaints. A complaint may take the form of a complaint, an area of concern or criticism. This policy provides parents/guardians, students, and members of the public with the appropriate process by which to bring concerns and complaints to the attention of the school, so that any such concern or complaint may be listened to and addressed in a constructive and timely manner.

All concerns and complaints shall be taken seriously, the process of handling concern and complaints shall be applied in a consistent manner, and always have an end process in sight. Parents/guardians and students shall be made aware of the process and each step in the process shall be documented.

Concerns and complaints shall be acknowledged as soon as practicable. All parties involved shall be notified as to what approach is being taken.

### **Role of the Director General of the Department of Education**

'The Director General of the WA 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, they do not have power to intervene in a complaint or override the school's decision.'

### **Child-Friendly Complaints**

While parents will often wish to raise issues on behalf of their children, there are other issues which students may wish to raise on their own behalf and which are best raised by them. Treetops shall encourage and support the independent voice of its students. Students should feel confident that they will be listened to, and comfortable to raise concerns with any member of staff. If the concern or complaint is a painful one for the student, they may need support from another student or an adult. They should be encouraged to seek such support.

Student concerns or complaints at Treetops will adhere to the Child Friendly Complaints Guidelines as published by *The Commissioner for Children and Young People Western Australia* and the *Australian Government National Office for Child Safety Complaint Handling Guide*.

#### The Commissioner for Children and Young People Western Australia

- 1. Organisational approaches prioritise child safety and a child friendly complaints process.*
- 2. Complaints systems are visible, accessible, and understood by children, young people, families, staff and volunteers.*
- 3. Complaints are taken seriously and responded to promptly and thoroughly.*
- 4. Trusted adults and support people are involved in supporting children and young people to make a complaint.*

- <https://www.cyp.wa.gov.au/media/4660/child-friendly-complaints-guidelines.pdf>

## The Nine Guidelines

The Guide is divided into nine guidelines addressing key aspects of an effective complaint-handling process and system.

**1 Embedding children's rights, safety and wellbeing into the complaints process**

Creating a child-rights focused complaints culture is the first step in handling complaints involving children and young people. All children and young people, staff, volunteers, parents and carers should feel supported in making a complaint to an organisation.

**2 Reporting responsibilities**

It is important that an organisation is aware of its obligations to report and take action to protect the safety of children and young people in their organisation. The roles and responsibilities of staff and volunteers in meeting these obligations should be clearly articulated in the organisation's complaint-handling policy.

**3 Sharing information and communicating with stakeholders**

Sharing information is important to promote the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. An organisation should be aware of relevant legislative responsibilities for information sharing. Staff and volunteers should also be aware of what information they can share, with whom, and when and how it should be communicated.

**4 Confidentiality and privacy**

Children and young people have the same right to privacy, anonymity and confidentiality as adults (subject to reporting obligations). An organisation should maintain current knowledge of, and comply with, their legislative obligations to maintain confidentiality and protect personal information and privacy.

**5 Managing risks – complaints and incidents**

It is important to have a clear understanding of potential risks to children and young people in an organisation and develop a plan to prevent risks from occurring. An organisation should monitor and reassess risks throughout investigation and complaints processes.

**6 Conducting investigations involving children and young people**

Complaints affecting children and young people should be properly investigated, taken seriously, and their rights are safeguarded throughout the investigation process. These investigations are planned, fair, proportionate and thorough, with findings supported by the available evidence.

**7 Being fair and objective**

Complaints processes should be fair to all parties involved, including affected children or young people and the subject of the complaint. An adult's opinion is not prioritised over a child's in the event that they differ; children and young people are listened to without judgement and their views are taken seriously.

**8 Explaining outcomes and review options**

It is important for an organisation to be aware of what type of outcomes are available for different complaints and explain them to complainants, including children and young people. Final outcomes of a complaint, their reasons and options for review should also be clearly explained to the complainant and subject of the complaint.

**9 Record keeping and complaints data**

Organisations should keep full and accurate records about complaints involving children and young people, in line with any legislative or other record-keeping requirements in the jurisdiction. These records should be analysed to improve service and identify trends and risks in the organisation.

<https://childsafety.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-09/factsheet-complaint-handling-guide.pdf>

## **Culturally Safe Complaints Management**

Treetops will foster an environment which accommodates cultural diversity as identified by The Royal Commission into Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse:

*‘an environment’ where there is no assault, challenge or denial of [a person’s] identity, of who they are and what they need’ and refers specifically to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This encompasses Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals’ own assessment of their safety and capacity to engage meaningfully, on their own terms with a non-Indigenous person or institution. This requires action from the non-Indigenous person or institution to listen, enable and support these environments, with accountability to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues or service users. [Final Report, Volume 1, page 322].*

**Concerns or complaints from members of the public will be referred directly to the Principal.**

**Concerns or complaints about the Board should be directed to the Board Chair, via the Board Secretary.**

## **Documentation**

An effective register or log shall be kept for three reasons:

1. The concern or complaint may become a case of legal action;
2. Patterns in the record may indicate a need for action;
3. The Principal should be able to report on the complaint regularly, if necessary, to the Board Chair.

The register or log should contain the following information:

- date of the concern or complaint;
- name of complainant and relationship to the school;
- subject matter of the concern or complaint, including the name of any person complained about and his or her relationship to the school;
- complaint investigator and position or role at the school;
- date investigation completed;
- whether complaint upheld;
- resolution agreed with or offered to complainant;
- date of referral for review (for example by the governing body)  
**All new concerns or complaints are referred to the Board at the next scheduled meeting via the Principal’s Report;**
- complaint reviewer and relationship to the school;
- date review finalised; and
- review resolution agreed with or offered to complainant.

## **Confidentially**

All concerns and complaints should be treated in a confidential manner. It may be possible to deal with an issue without naming individuals. However, it may be impractical to deal with some issues without naming individuals.

Staff members have a right to know about concerns or complaints which may damage their reputation. Treetops Montessori School is aware of the need to provide support for staff against whom a concern or complaint is made. A member of staff who is not otherwise involved should provide this support.

## **Resolution**

Resolution will come in any of the following ways:

1. Knowing that changes have been made;
2. Knowing that the school is now alert to a previously unknown situation;
3. Feeling by the concerned party that the matter has been satisfactorily dealt with;
4. A considered written response. The complainant should receive a written communication outlining the issue, action taken and outcome.

## **Steps in the Concern and Complaint Process**

In order for concerns and complaints to be appropriately addressed it is necessary to raise any such concern or complaint with the appropriate member of staff, rather than sharing dissatisfaction with other parents. The following step-by-step process is designed to assist in lodging a complaint.

**Step 1:** The first step is to determine who is the appropriate staff member to address a concern or complaint to:

1. Concerns or complaints about a specific student's educational, social or emotional development should be addressed in the first instance to the student's classroom teacher.
2. Concerns or complaints about student behaviour should be addressed in the first instance to classroom teachers or if of a more general nature to the school management.
3. Concerns or complaints about administrative process, school policy, or grounds and facilities should be addressed in the first instance to the School Administration.
4. Concerns or complaints about IBO or WACE Programme decisions should initially be made with the IB and Senior School Coordinator. This would also include formal requests for appeals of the IB Programme decisions made by Treetops.
5. Concerns or complaints about payment of School Fees should be addressed in the first instance to the School Administration.
6. Concerns or complaints about individual staff members should be addressed in the first instance to that staff member. If that is not possible, the complaint should be addressed to the Principal, who will bring the complaint to the attention of the staff member. In the case of the Principal, if it is not possible to address the complaint to the Principal, the complaint should be addressed to the Board Chair, who will then bring the complaint to the attention of the Principal.

**Step 2:** Once the appropriate staff member has been identified, the next step is to either discuss the concern or complaint in person with the relevant staff member (with a support person if requested) or to put the concern or complaint in writing to the relevant staff member. Any discussion/correspondence shall be fully documented.

**Step 3:** If the concern or complaint remains unresolved it should then be directed to the Principal, either in person (with a support person if requested) or in writing. If the complaint involves a student the Principal may need to talk with the student with or without the parent/guardian being present. All meetings and correspondence shall be fully documented.

**Step 4:** The Principal may choose to appoint a delegate (ie: a Coordinator) to investigate and make recommendation.

**Step 5:** The Principal will make a determination and communicate this in writing.

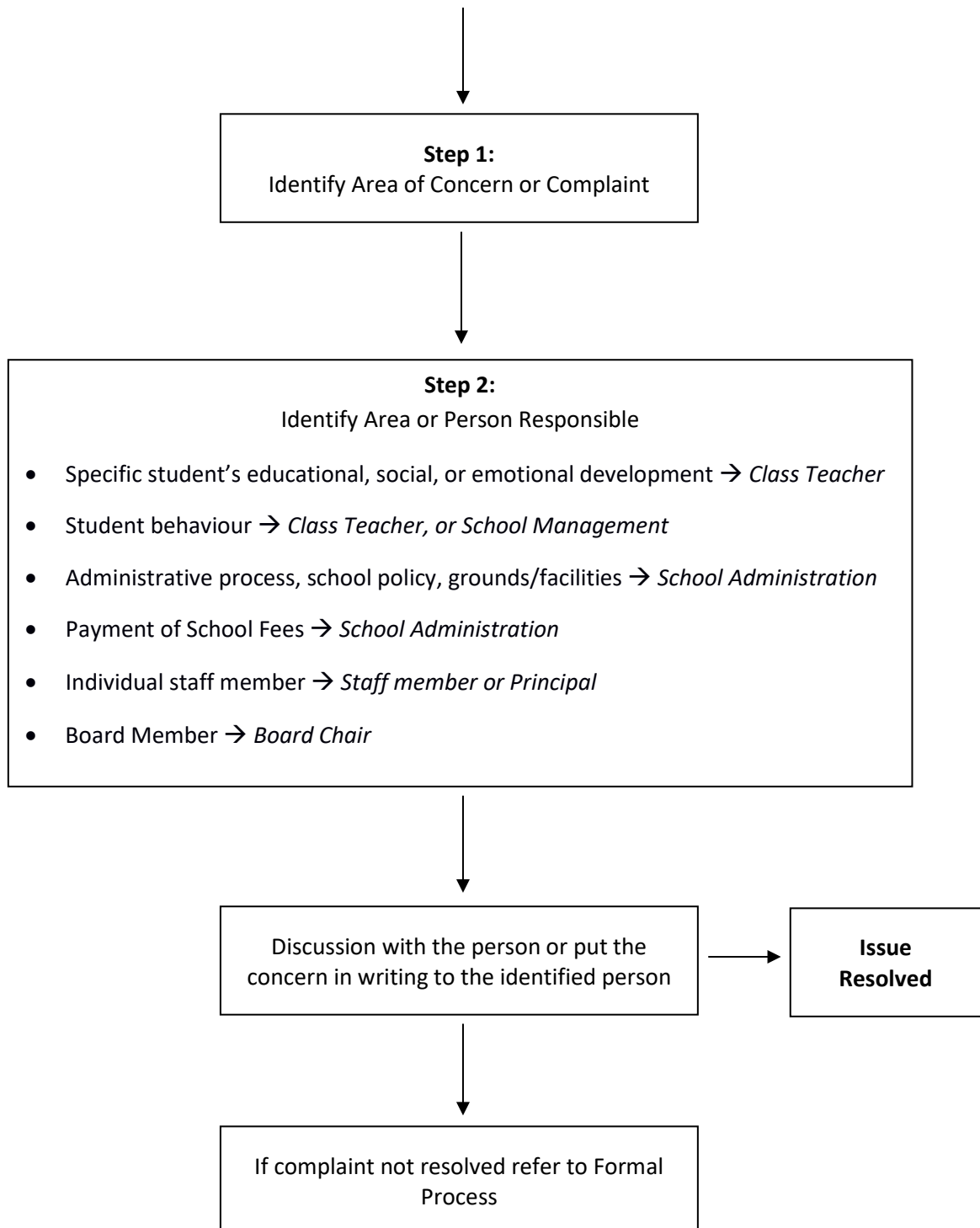
**Step 6** If after Step 5, the concern or complaint is not satisfactorily resolved the Principal may involve the Chairperson of the Board in the process. The parent/guardian will be informed by the Principal that this step has been reached. The Board Chair should discuss the matter fully with the Principal and be provided with relevant documentation. If a briefing is required from a staff member this should occur in the presence of the Principal.

The Board Chair should respond to the parent/guardian notifying them that they are reviewing the decision. If the chairperson wishes to gain further information they would give the opportunity for parties to add anything further. The Board Chair should provide an indicative date by which the parent/guardian should expect a response.

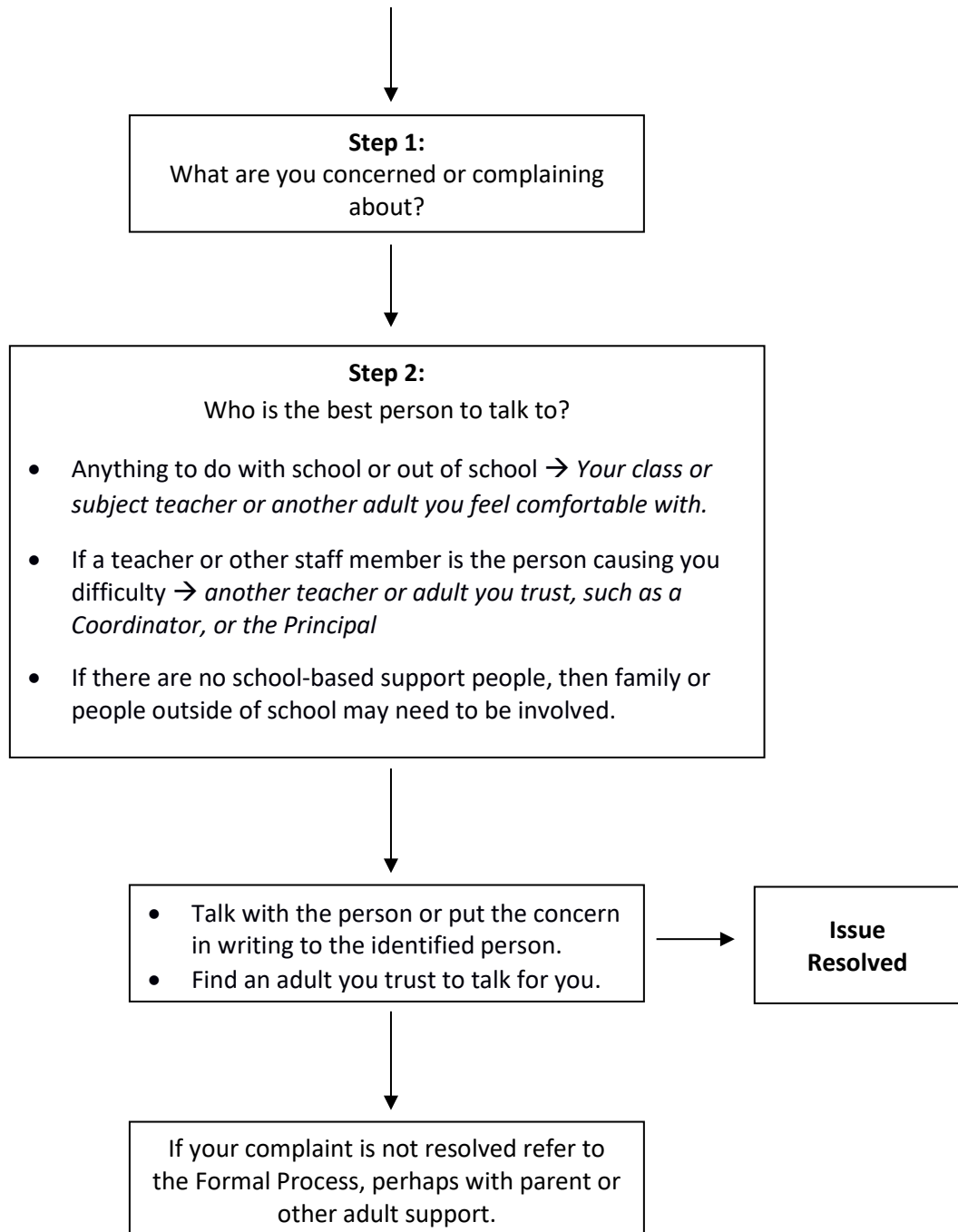
If a meeting is requested parents/guardians should be permitted to bring along a support person. Others involved should be the Board Chair, the Principal and, if appropriate, one other member of staff.

**Step 7** If Step 6 does not resolve the matter the Board Chair should consider seeking advice from AISWA and then convening a further meeting, and/or using an independent arbitrator with parties to resolve the matter. The Principal will confirm the outcome of the meeting(s) in writing within an appropriate agreed period.

## CONCERN / COMPLAINT RESOLUTION (Informal)



## CONCERN / COMPLAINT RESOLUTION (Student)





## CONCERN / COMPLAINT RESOLUTION (Formal)

