

# St Philip's Blackburn North



## COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES POLICY

### VISION AND MISSION

#### Vision Statement

**Modelling the teachings of Christ,  
St Philip's School community aspires to be a place of welcome that provides many learning  
environments to meet the challenges of an ever-changing world.**

#### Mission Statements

Because we believe that Christ is the central focus of our school and we are witnesses to him and his teachings we aim to:

- provide an atmosphere where all are made welcome, where they feel safe and have a sense of belonging
- provide a school environment that is positive and challenges all students to work to the best of their ability
- foster in all a realisation that they are responsible for their own learning
- develop a sense of justice by respecting the opinions and rights of others
- encourage all to be sensitive to others and respect their differences
- encourage all to use their physical environments in a respectful manner
- provide a learning environment that utilises the most effective and current approaches in education.

#### RATIONALE

St Philip's Primary School is a Catholic School, modelled on the teachings of Christ, where each community member feels safe, included and respected. The issues of dignity, equity and justice in the relationships between all people within the school community are of fundamental importance.

St Philip's Primary School has both a desire and a responsibility to ensure that high standards of conduct are maintained by students, staff and parents at all times, and that grievances are managed and resolved fairly, efficiently and promptly.

Grievances occur when a student, employee or parent complains that an action or decision has been taken (or not taken) at the school that he/she believes to be in breach of a relevant Act, Regulation or Order, infringes upon the principles of merit and equity, or is otherwise unreasonable.

St Philip's Primary School recognises the rights of its students, employees or parents to register a complaint or grievance about any decision, behaviour, act or omission that they feel is unfair, discriminatory or unjustified.

There exists in the Diocese specialised policies, guidelines and procedures to cover certain types of complaints that may occur in schools (for example, Sexual Harassment, Equal Opportunity or Antidiscrimination). This policy is not intended to replace any such specialised policies, guidelines or procedures but rather provide direction in how to deal with student, employee or parent grievances. This

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Grievance Policy does not apply to complaints alleging criminal or unlawful behaviour, which shall be referred to the appropriate authorities.

### MANAGEMENT/ORGANISATION

A resolution to a grievance from a student, employee or parent should be sought through informal discussions with the appropriate person in order to come to a mutually acceptable resolution. If this informal process is unsuccessful, a formal Grievance Procedure shall be followed.

#### Formal Grievance Procedures

All grievances should be dealt with in a timely manner at the appropriate level before being escalated to a higher level.

1. Information for Students: At St Philip's Primary School we believe it is important that everyone feels happy and safe so that the best learning can take place. We believe that everyone, including students, staff and parents need to work closely together to provide the best educational opportunities for you. Through our student wellbeing and student leadership programs, students who have a problem, a concern or a complaint, will be encouraged to speak to someone about it.

What students will be encouraged to do if they have a problem:

- Try to identify the problem that is upsetting you. If there is more than one problem, write them down so that you are clear about what you feel or need.
  - If you feel you can, meet with the person you are having the problem with and if their behaviour is upsetting you, tell them to stop.
  - Often parents can help when young people are unsure of what to do. It is a good idea to ask for support or advice when problems arise rather than keeping it all to yourself.
  - If you talk with the person you are having a problem with does not solve your problem, talk to a staff member about your concerns and ask them to help you deal with it. The staff member will often be able to give you good ideas on how to cope and will help you solve the problem.
  - Try to stay calm when discussing your problem. Even if you don't feel it, being calm will help you get your concerns across more clearly than if you are upset or angry. It may help to take someone with you.
  - If you do not believe the problem has been resolved, make an appointment to talk to another staff member. If you still do not feel that the matter has been solved, make time to talk to the Deputy Principal, or Principal about your concern. Remember:
  - Effective management of a Grievance requires face to face, personal dialogue. All electronic forms of communication (e.g. Email, Text Messages, Twitter, Facebook etc.) are NOT acceptable.
  - Sometimes the person helping you may need to speak to someone else so that the problem can be solved. You need to let that person know that you are okay with that.
  - You can bring a friend, parent or teacher to support you when you need to talk about the problem.
  - No one will be allowed to pick on you or hurt you because you made a complaint.
  - If you want to, you can write out your grievance in a letter instead of talking about it, but the person helping you will need to speak to you later.
2. Information for Staff: The relationship between colleagues is an important part of ensuring that students are happy, secure and open to learning. St Philip's Primary School recognises that all staff need to work closely to provide the best educational opportunities for students. If a staff member has any concerns or complaints regarding any other member of the school community, they are encouraged to work together to resolve them as promptly and efficiently as possible

What to do if you have a problem:

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- Try to identify the problem clearly before taking any action. If there is more than one problem, list them to ensure that the extent of the problem is clear to the school.
  - Decide whether the problem is a concern, enquiry or a complaint, this will help in finding a solution.
  - In the interest of resolving matters quickly and effectively, you are encouraged to informally discuss your problem with the person concerned.
  - If informal strategies do not resolve the problem, lodge your complaint formally and in writing to the Principal. Where the Principal advises, mediation can be arranged between the parties concerned.
  - If you do not believe the problem has been resolved, if your complaint is serious, or involves the Principal, speak to the Parish priest. If the issue persists, send your complaint to the Director of Catholic Education stating your concerns in writing.
3. Information for Parents: The relationship between home and the school is fundamental in ensuring that students are happy, secure and open to learning. St Philip's Primary School recognises that parents and staff need to work closely to provide the best educational opportunities and care for their students. We encourage you to discuss your child's progress with staff and to let us know if you have any concerns so that we might work together to resolve these as promptly and efficiently as we can.

What to do if you have a problem:

- Try to identify the problem clearly before contacting the school. If there is more than one problem, list them to ensure that the extent of the problem is clear to the school.
- Decide whether the problem is a concern, enquiry or a complaint, this will help in finding a solution.
- Make an appointment to meet with your child's class teacher or staff member. The best way to do this is to contact the school office to arrange a mutually convenient time for a telephone call or a meeting.
- If you do not feel after your meeting that the problem has been resolved, or if you have a complaint about a staff member, make arrangements to meet with the Principal.
- Try to stay calm when discussing your problem. Even if you don't feel it, being calm will help you get your concerns across more clearly than if you are upset or angry. If it will help, take someone with you.
- Remember, staff are committed to resolving any issues that parents might have regarding their children and will discuss with you actions that might be taken in regard to your concerns.
- If you do not believe the problem has been resolved, or if your complaint is serious, send your complaint in writing to the Principal.
- If you do not feel that the problem has been resolved, or if the matter involves the Principal, send your complaint to the Parish priest. If the issue persists send your complaint to the Director of Catholic Education stating your concerns in writing.

St Philip's Primary School will document all formal grievances and any processes implemented to seek a resolution. Where a complaint is made against an individual, that person will be informed of the nature and content of the complaint and they will have the right to respond. All discussions will be kept strictly confidential. A person who has made a complaint may withdraw it at any time. No one will be victimised as a result of initiating a formal Grievance Procedure. At the formal stage, a person who has made a complaint has the right to be represented and supported by another person of his/her choice. A process of mediation may be available if a complaint is not satisfactorily resolved.

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### Principles for handling complaints for staff

- Always act promptly to investigate a complaint.
- Listen carefully to the Complainant. Give them a chance to tell their story.
- Keep an open mind.
- Discuss the issue with the complainant in a calm and reasonable way.
- Make sure that they are given a copy of the school's Grievance Procedures and discuss the steps that can and should be taken.
- Be clear in your own mind about the appropriateness of your own involvement, e.g. is this something that should be handed to the Principal?
- If this is a complaint that you should handle, make sure that you know (or can find out) school policies and procedure related to the issue.
- Clearly explain to the complainant the actions that you will take to follow-up on the complaint.
- Complaints should only be discussed by those responsible for handling them. They should never be the subject of casual conversation or gossip.
- Keep a record of all relevant details.
- It is a policy of the school that anonymous complaints will not be acted upon.

### Keeping records

It is important that adequate records of complaints are kept for the following reasons:

- So that subsequent inquiries and or concerns can be located within their proper context.
- So that complaints can be tracked through the stages of action to resolution.
- So that patterns of complaints can lead to improvements in our policies, operations and processes.
- So that accurate information is available to those directly involved in investigating the issues and exploring solutions.

Staff of St Philip's will:

- Maintain the Playground/Classroom incident log on the server when issues occur between students.
- Maintain records of conversations, meetings, interviews, telephone calls, written documents such as letters, faxes, emails etc. and the actions which they undertook in relation to resolving issues.
- Leadership and administration staff will maintain the school's complaints log where appropriate.
- **NOTE:** Any oral or written communications gathered in a mediation process are strictly confidential to the parties involved. This information should not be made available to any other person without the specific permission of those parties. This confidentiality guarantee does not apply where there are threats of physical violence or where child abuse is suspected or reported.

### **DEFINITIONS**

Reference to 'Parents' in this Policy includes Guardians and Caregivers.

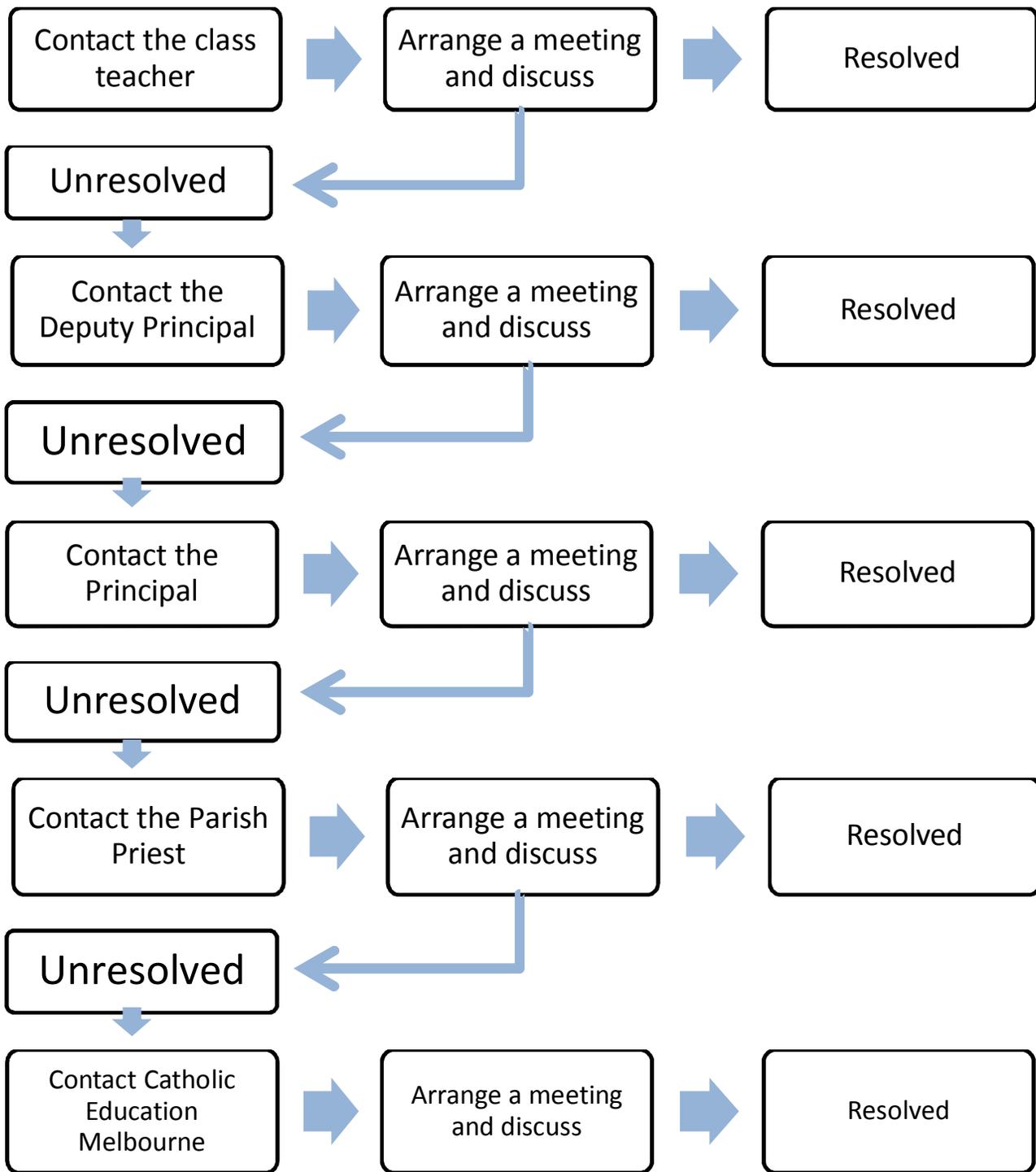
### **REVIEW:**

Last review 2012, Current Review: August, 2016

Ratified by the Education Board: 8<sup>th</sup> November 2016

## St Philip's Blackburn North

### Appendix 1: Flow chart for families making complaints

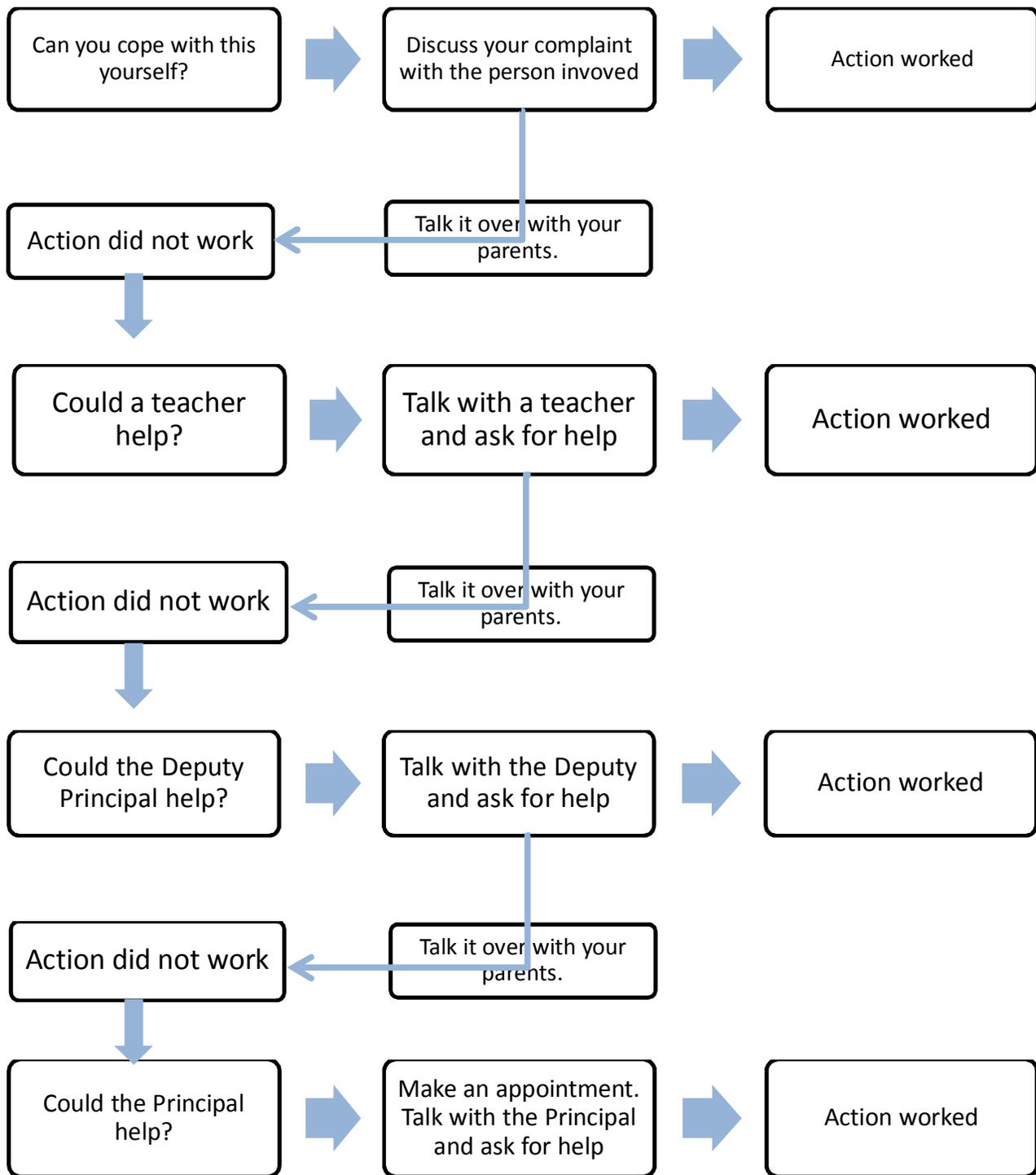


If matters still remain unresolved you have the right to seek arbitration through the courts, ombudsman, legal representation and other government commissions such as the Human Rights Commission etc. These might entail some financial cost to you.

Mediation is an option at any stage if the complaint and the person to whom the complaint is directed so agree. Normally, mediation is facilitated by the Head of School Services.

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### Appendix 2: Flow chart for students making complaints

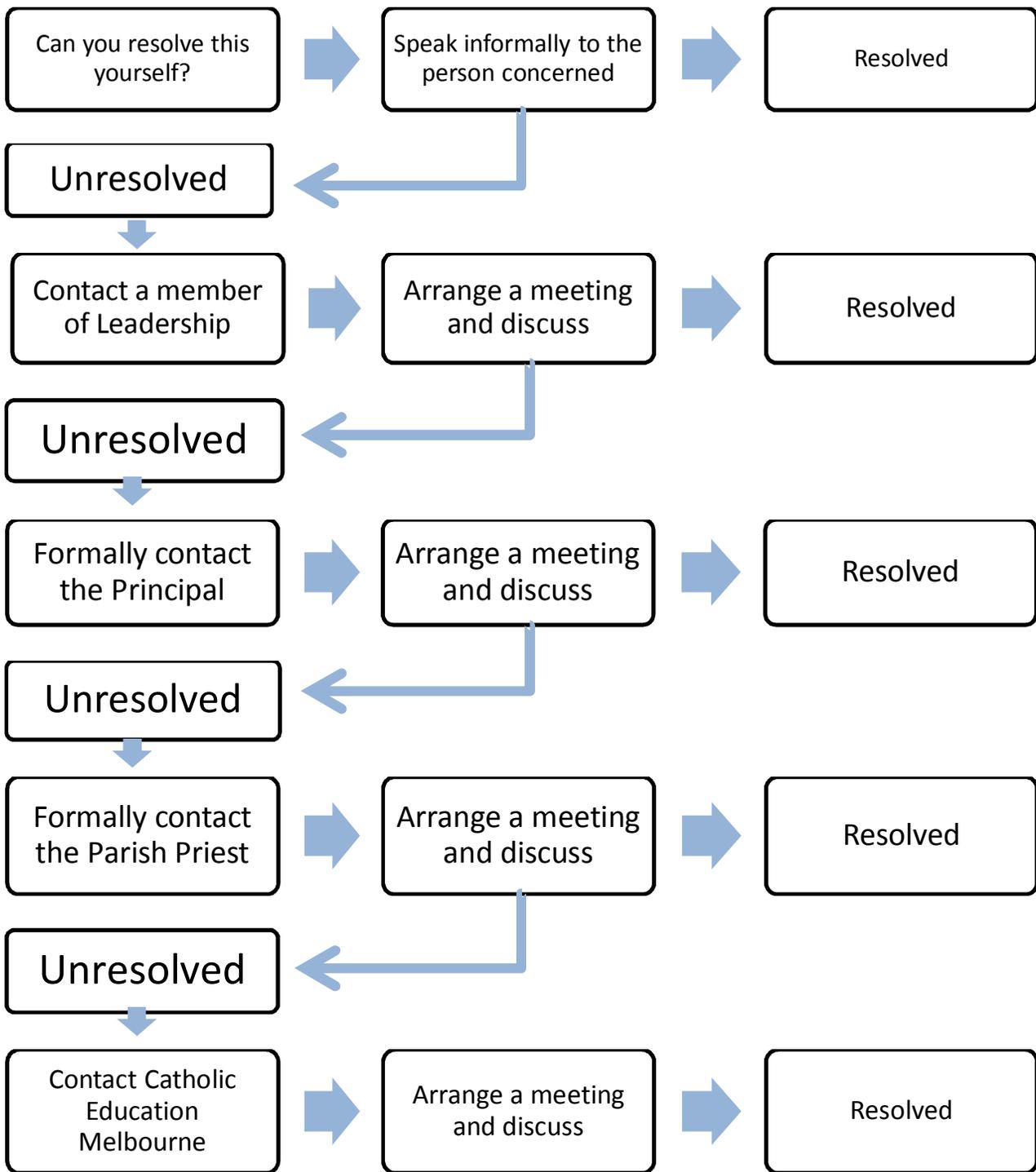


If matters still remain unresolved you have the right to seek arbitration through the courts, ombudsman, legal representation and other government commissions such as the Human Rights Commission etc. These might entail some financial cost to you.

Mediation is an option at any stage if the complaint and the person to whom the complaint is directed so agree. Normally, mediation is facilitated by the Head of School Services.

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## Appendix 3: Flow chart for staff making complaints



If matters still remain unresolved you have the right to seek arbitration through the courts, ombudsman, legal representation and other government commissions such as the Human Rights Commission etc. These might entail some financial cost to you.

Mediation is an option at any stage if the complaint and the person to whom the complaint is directed so agree. Normally, mediation is facilitated by the Head of School Services.

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## Appendix 4: Complaint Form

Please complete this form and return to the principal. A letter of acknowledgement will be sent to you and will inform you of the next step in the complaints process.

### Your details:

First name:	Family name:
Relationship with the school (e.g. parent, staff, student, neighbour, etc).	
Your address:	Phone (work):
	Phone (home):
	Mobile:
	Email:

### Details of your complaint:

(Please include all the information you can, e.g. witnesses, dates, events etc. If you need you can add extra pages or attach any documentation that you believe is relevant).

### The action(s) you have already taken to resolve the problem?

(e.g. who you have spoken to, what you said and what was done).

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What action do you believe is needed to now resolve the problem?

Your signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



### Office use only

Date form received: \_\_\_\_\_

Received by: \_\_\_\_\_

Date acknowledgement sent: \_\_\_\_\_

Acknowledgement sent by: \_\_\_\_\_

Complaint referred to: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Other notes:

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## Appendix 5: Acknowledgement Template

### Details:

Name of complainant:	
Date complaint received:	
Name of person who logged the complaint:	
Name of the person following up the complaint:	

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

We have received your complaint regarding the following issue:

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The following actions will be undertaken by \_\_\_\_\_ to resolve this issue:

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If, after these actions have been taken, you have any further questions or queries or you feel that this issue has not been resolved, please contact us or refer to the complaints process outlined in our Grievances and Complaints Policy.

Yours Sincerely,

Your signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name