



TASMANIAN  
CATHOLIC  
education office

# POLICY

# SCHOOL

# GRIEVANCE

POTENTIAL RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES, STAFF, STUDENTS  
AND COMMUNITIES WHEN MAKING A COMPLAINT

RELATED POLICIES / PROTOCOLS / STATEMENTS

**Policy No: 021:2008**

## **INFORMATION GUIDE FOR STAFF**

### **RATIONALE**

**In handling complaints, this school acts in accordance with the TCEC Complaints Processing Policy. Therefore, it is important that you are familiar with this document. Please speak to the Principal if you are unsure about the details of this policy.**

Catholic schools have a responsibility to act wisely and justly in relation to issues of conflict that have the potential to cause a breakdown in the relationships between members of our school community.

We must always keep in mind when handling complaints, that regardless of how important or unimportant the issue might appear on the surface, for the persons involved, it is a source of unhappiness. Anyone who makes a complaint therefore must be treated with respect; our response will be perceived as a measure of how we live up to the Gospel values that we espouse.

The prompt, respectful and just manner in which we handle complaints has a two-fold benefit for our school. It makes us aware of areas where we need to improve and can help us to build positive relationships with students, staff, parents and members of the wider school community.

### **KEY PRINCIPLES FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS:**

- 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 issues 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 on to the Principal?
- If this is a complaint that you should handle, make sure that you know (or if you don't, can find out about) school policies and procedures 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 the relevant details.
- It is a policy of the school that anonymous complaints will not be acted upon.

### **KEEPING RECORDS OF COMPLAINTS:**

It is important that adequate records of complaints, e.g. in a school complaints log, are kept for the following reasons:

- So that subsequent enquiries and/or concerns can be located within their proper context i.e. in the 'big picture'.
- 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.

### **What should be recorded?**

Notes of meetings, interviews, telephone calls, written documents such as letters, faxes, emails etc.

All records should be dated and signed.

### **An exception to the record rule:**

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.

## **INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES - PARISH SYSTEMIC SCHOOLS**

**Please note: The following material has been developed from a study of 'best practice' used in a wide range of educational contexts. It is intended for use as a template guide to schools in the development of grievance procedures.**

At our school, we believe that the relationship between the home and the school is a very important part of ensuring that children are happy, secure and open to learning. We recognise that parents and teachers need to work closely together to provide the best educational opportunities for children. We encourage you to discuss your child's progress with his/her teacher and to let us know if you have any concerns so that we might work together to resolve these as promptly and effectively 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 complaint. This will help in finding a solution.
- Make an appointment to meet with your child's class teacher. The best way to do this is to contact the school office to arrange a mutually convenient time for a telephone call or meeting.
- If you do not feel after your meeting that the matter has been resolved or if you have a complaint about the teacher or another staff member, make arrangements to meet with the Assistant Principal.

- Try to stay calm when discussing your concern. 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.
- Remember, the 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 concern.
- If you still do not feel that the matter has been resolved or if your complaint is about a very serious matter, send your complaint in writing to the Principal.
- After your complaint has been dealt with by the School Principal, if you are still not satisfied with the outcome, you should then send your complaint in writing to the Senior School Consultant for the school.
- If the matter has still not been resolved, notify the Director of Catholic Education stating your concerns in writing. If no resolution has been achieved, the Director will arbitrate after thorough examination of the grievance and related issues.
- If matters still remain unresolved you have the right to seek arbitration through the courts, ombudsman, legal representation and other government commissions such as Human Rights Commission etc. These might entail some financial cost to you.

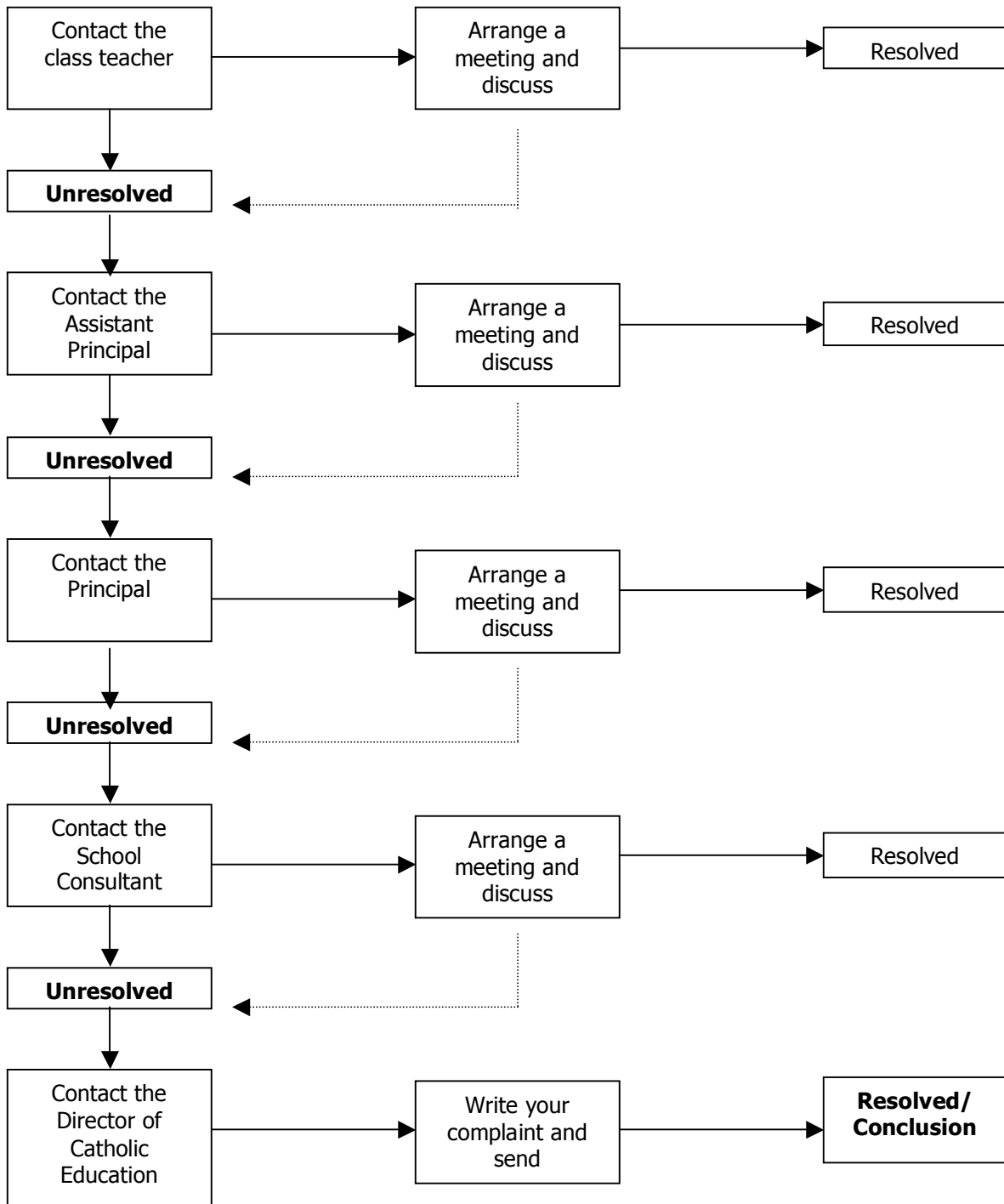
**Note:** The School Registration Board and the Secretary of the Department of Education **do not** deal with complaints within the Catholic Education system.

**When you make a complaint:**

- If a complaint is made against a person, that person will be informed of the nature and content of the complaint and will have the right to respond.
- Discussions of complaints are confidential.
- Complaints may be made verbally or in writing.

- All complaints, the actions taken to resolve them and outcomes of those actions will be fully documented.
- A person who has made a complaint may withdraw it at any time. If the complaint is in writing, the withdrawal should also be in writing.
- No one will be victimised as a result of taking out a formal grievance.
- At the formal stage, a person who has made a complaint has the right to be represented and supported by another person e.g. a friend or other person of his/her choice as a support person.
- A process of mediation may be available if a complaint is not satisfactorily resolved.

## FLOW CHART FOR FAMILIES MAKING COMPLAINTS – PRIMARY SYSTEM

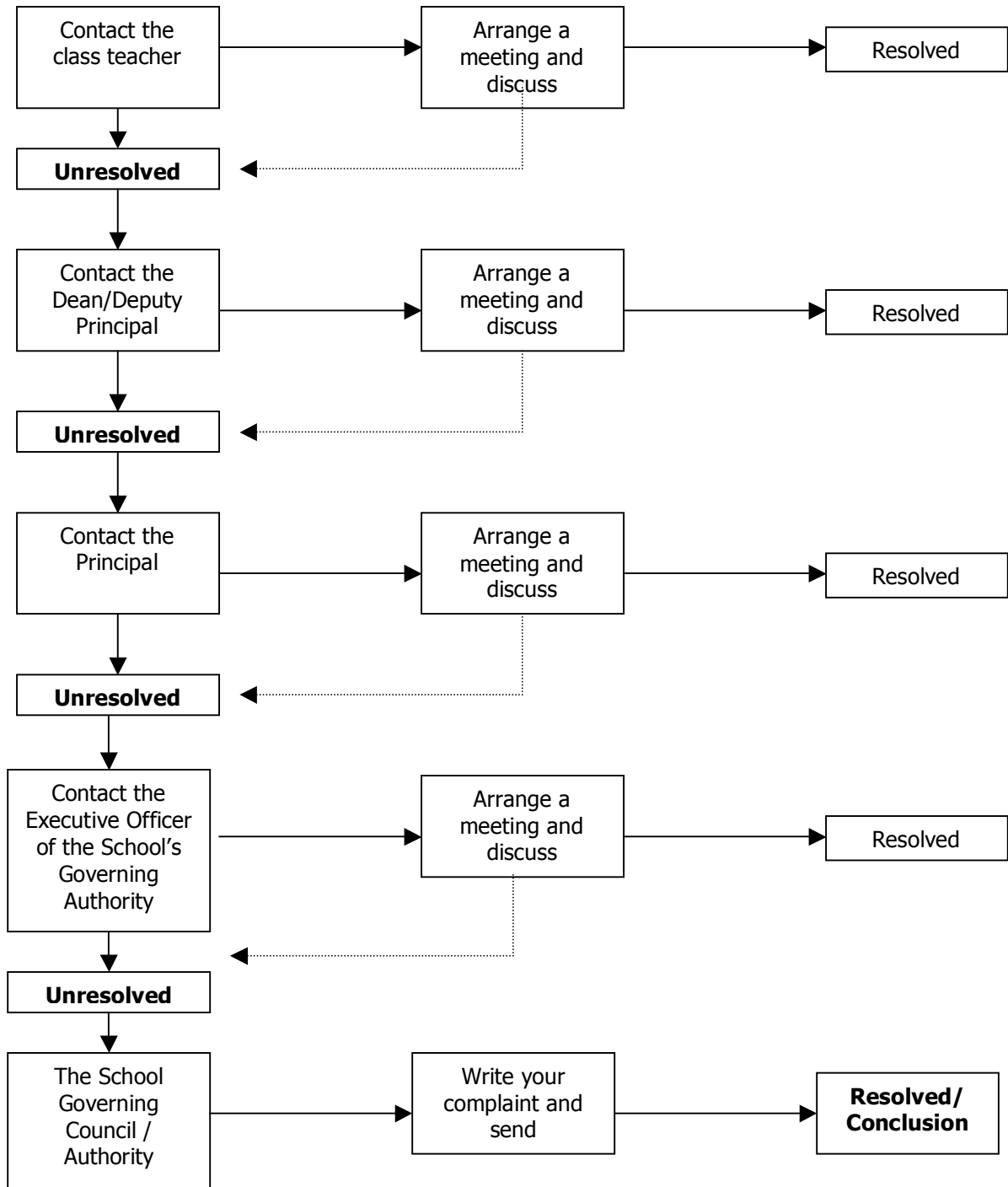


If matters still remain unresolved you have the right to seek arbitration through the courts, ombudsman, legal representation and other government commissions such as the Human Rights Commission etc. These might entail some financial cost to you.

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



## FLOW CHART FOR FAMILIES MAKING COMPLAINTS – COLLEGE SYSTEM



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 complainant and the person to whom the complaint is directed so agree. Normally, mediation is arranged by the Executive Officer of the School's Governing Authority.

## **INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS**

At our school, we believe that it is important that everyone feels happy and safe so that the best learning can take place. We believe that everyone, staff and students, need to work closely together to provide the best educational opportunities for you. If you have a problem, a concern or a complaint, we encourage you to speak to someone about it and we have provided some steps that you might work through to help you do this.

### **What to do if you have a problem:**

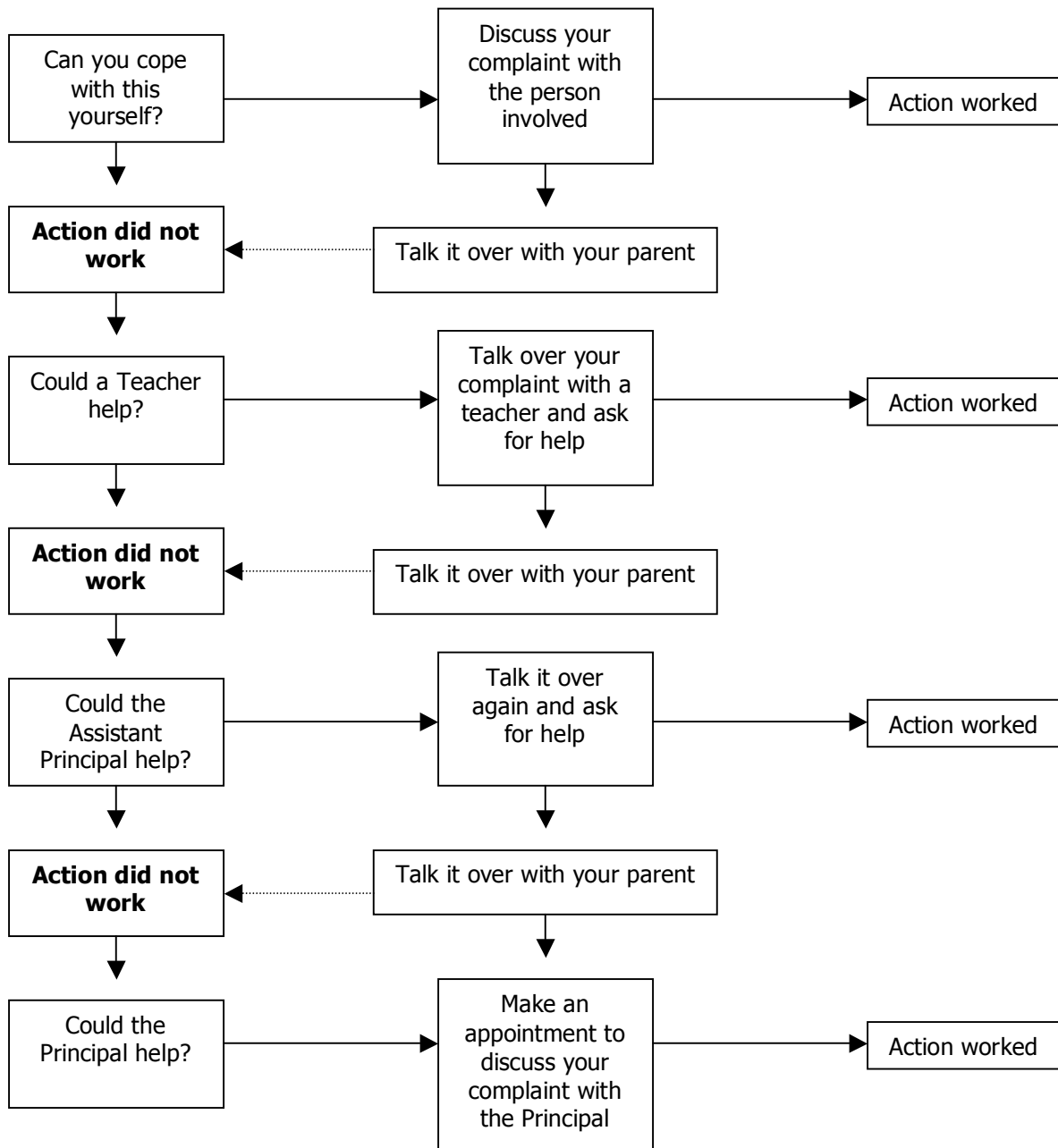
- Try to identify the problem that is upsetting you. If there is more than one problem, list them so that you are clear about what you feel or need.
- If you feel you can, talk to the person you are having the problem with and if their behaviour is upsetting you, tell them to stop.
- If you do not feel that you could do this or if your talk with the person does not solve your problem, talk to a teacher about your concerns and ask them to help you deal with it. Your teacher will often be able to give you good ideas on how to cope with it and will help you. You should explain:
  - Who was involved,
  - What happened,
  - What you did, and
  - What you believe was unfair or unjust.
- Try to stay calm when discussing your problem or concern. 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.
- Work with the teacher to decide what should be done to help you.

- If you still do not feel that the matter has been solved, make an appointment to talk to the person at the school who deals with student problems. The teacher will tell you who this is if you don't already know.
- If you still do not feel that the matter has been solved, make a time to talk to the Principal about your concern.

**Remember:**

- Sometimes the person helping you will need to speak to someone else so that the problem can be solved. You need to let that person know that you are comfortable with that.
- You can bring a friend, parent or a 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 are making a complaint.
- If you want to, you can write out your complaint in a letter instead of talking about it, but the person helping you will need to speak to you later.

## A STUDENT'S GUIDE TO MAKING A COMPLAINT



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 complainant and the person to whom the complaint is directed so agree.

## **INFORMATION FOR STAFF – PARISH SYSTEMIC SCHOOLS**

At this School, we believe that the relationship between colleagues is a very important part of ensuring that children are happy, secure and open to learning. We recognise that all staff need to work closely together to provide the best educational opportunities for the students in our care. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding any other member of the school community, we strongly encourage you to work together to resolve these as promptly and effectively as you can.

### **What to do if you have a problem:**

- 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 complaint. This will help in finding a solution.
- In the interests of resolving matters quickly and effectively, you are encouraged to informally discuss your concern/complaint with the person concerned.
- You may also wish to informally discuss your concerns with a senior staff member (e.g. Assistant Principal) and seek advice and assistance.
- If informal strategies do not resolve the issue, make your complaint formally and in writing to the Principal. Where the Principal advises, mediation can be arranged between the parties concerned, with their mutual agreement.
- If you still do not feel that the matter has been resolved, if your complaint is serious or involves the Principal, telephone or send your complaint in writing to the Senior School Consultant for your school who will then contact you and make arrangements for you to discuss your grievance.

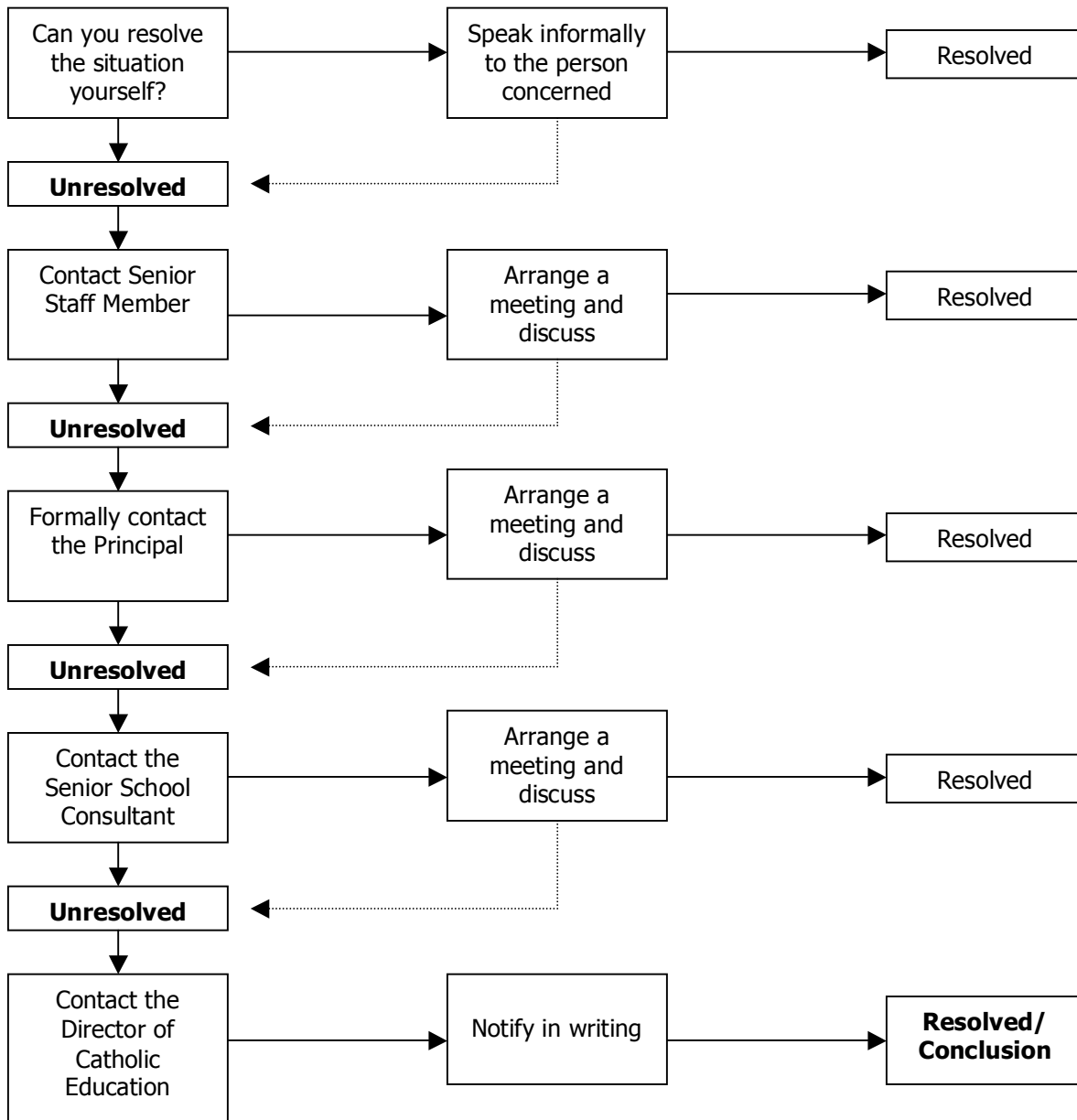
- If the matter has still not been resolved, notify the Director of Catholic Education stating your concerns in writing. If no resolution has been achieved, the Director will arbitrate after thorough examination of the grievance and related issues.
- If matters still remain unresolved you have the right to seek arbitration through the courts, ombudsman, legal representation and other government commissions such as Workplace Safety, Anti-Discrimination and Human Rights Commissions. These might entail some financial cost to you.

**Note:** The School Registration Board and the Secretary of the Department of Education **do not** deal with complaints within the Catholic Education system.

**When you decide to make a complaint:**

- If a complaint is made against a person, that person will be informed of the nature and content of the complaint and will have the right to respond.
- Discussions of complaints are confidential.
- Complaints may be made verbally or in writing.
- All complaints, the actions taken to resolve them and outcomes of those actions will be fully documented.
- A person who has made a complaint may withdraw it at any time. If the complaint is in writing, the withdrawal should also be in writing.
- No one will be victimised as a result of taking out a formal grievance.
- At the formal stage, a person who has made a complaint has the right to be represented and supported by another person eg his/her union, work colleague, friend or other person of his/her choice as a support person.
- A process of mediation may be available if a complaint is not satisfactorily resolved.

## FLOW CHART FOR COMPLAINTS – STAFF IN PARISH SYSTEMIC SCHOOLS



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 complainant and the person to whom the complaint is directed so agree. Normally, mediation is facilitated by the Senior School Consultant.

## **COMMUNITY INFORMATION – PARISH SYSTEMIC SCHOOLS**

At our school, we believe that open, friendly and constructive relationships with our community are vital to our growth and the good of the community.

### **What to do if you have a concern or 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 matter is clear to the school.
- Decide whether the problem is a concern, enquiry or complaint. This will help in finding a solution.
- Make an appointment to meet with the Assistant to the Principal/Deputy Principal or Principal. The best way to do this is to contact the school office to arrange a mutually convenient time for a telephone call or meeting.
- After this initial contact, if you do not feel that the matter has been resolved or if your complaint is about a serious matter, send your complaint in writing to the Principal.
- If this does not resolve the issue, send your complaint in writing to the Senior School Consultant at the Catholic Education Office, New Town.
- If the matter has still not been resolved, notify the Director of Catholic Education stating your concerns in writing. If no resolution has been achieved, the Director will arbitrate after thorough examination of the grievance and related issues.
- If matters still remain unresolved you have the right to seek arbitration through the courts, ombudsman, legal representation and other government commissions such as Human Rights Commission etc. These might entail some financial cost to you.

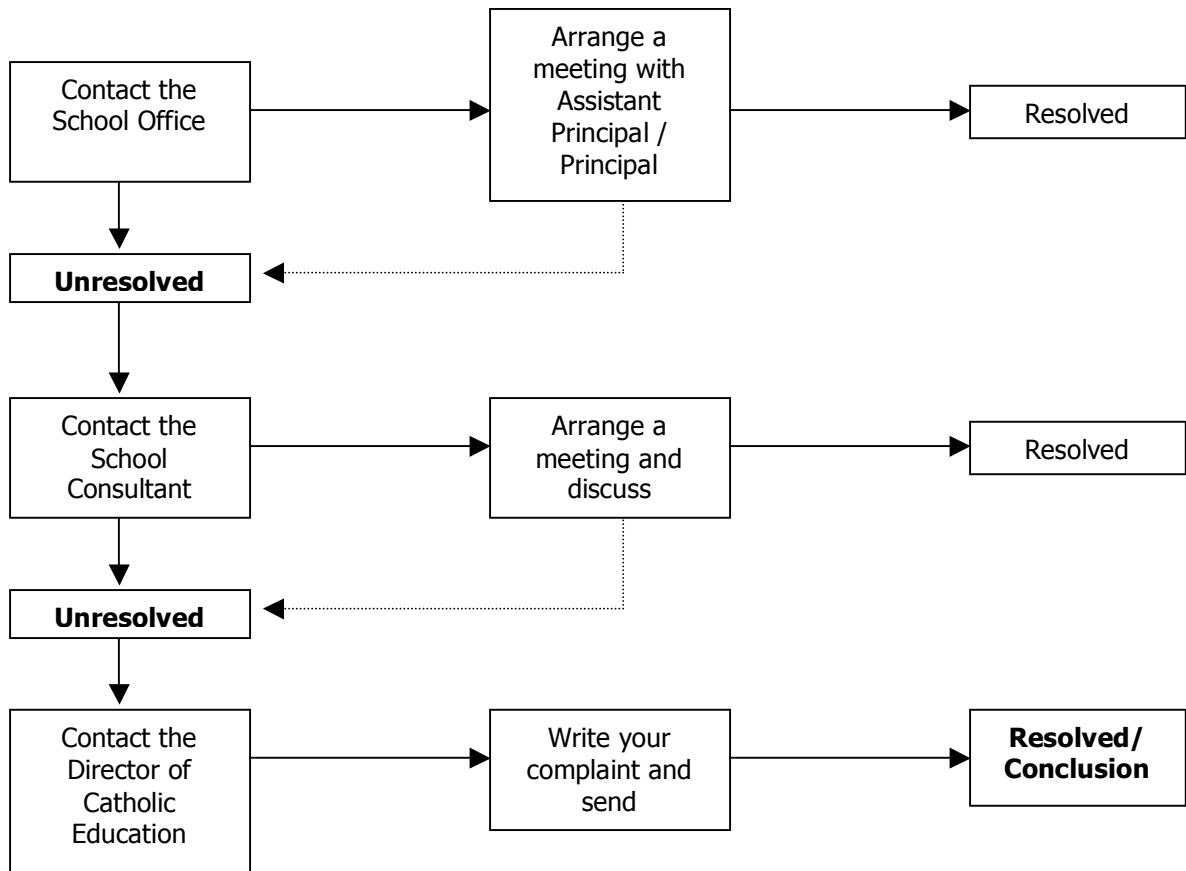


**Note:** The School Registration Board and the Secretary of the Department of Education **do not** deal with complaints within the Catholic Education system.

**When you make a complaint:**

- If a complaint is made against a person, that person will be informed of the nature and content of the complaint and have the right to respond.
- Discussions of complaints are confidential.
- Complaints may be made verbally or in writing.
- All complaints, the actions taken to resolve them and outcomes of those actions will be fully documented.
- A person who has made a complaint may withdraw it at any time. If the complaint is in writing, the withdrawal should also be in writing.
- No one will be victimised as a result of lodging a formal grievance.
- 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 as a support person.
- A process of mediation may be available if a complaint is not satisfactorily resolved.

## FLOW CHART FOR 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 complainant and the person to whom the complaint is directed so agree. Normally, mediation is facilitated by the Senior School Consultant.

# 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:	Surname:
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 eg 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 etc.)

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

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

---

**For school use only:**

Date form received: \_\_\_\_\_ Received by: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

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

Other notes: