

**Woodbury Boston Primary School
Policies and Procedures**

COMPLAINTS, CONCERNS AND DISPUTES POLICY

Woodbury Boston Primary School welcomes feedback from parents and students. We take seriously any complaints and concerns that are raised.

The school will direct complaints to the relevant person within the school, and ensure that they are managed positively, fairly, with cultural sensitivity, and in a timely manner. Our goal is to resolve issues effectively and maintain good working relationships with members of our community.

In this policy and its procedures, the following definitions are used:

Concern: An issue of interest or concern which is raised informally in order to improve or change a situation.

Complaint: An expression of genuine dissatisfaction made to the school about its services, decisions and actions or about the complaint management process itself.

Dispute: A disagreement between individuals.

Guiding Principles

Concerns and Complaints are handled in the same way.

Both *concerns* and *complaints* are managed and recorded in the same manner, as described in this policy and procedures. Where one term is indicated, both are implied.

Confidentiality is maintained wherever possible.

The school is committed to providing a confidential complaints process. As far as possible the investigation and resolution of complaints will be limited to those people with direct involvement in the matter.

Confidentiality may be limited where the law requires disclosure or there are concerns for a person's safety or wellbeing.

Acting in a respectful and fair way is expected from all people involved.

All people will have the opportunity to express their point of view in a manner which is respectful and in the interests of seeking a resolution. All parties are required to act with respect even in circumstances where they feel aggrieved.

Procedural Fairness

All complaints must follow procedural fairness. When investigating, those affected have the right to be heard (opportunity for voice). The process is transparent, and any decisions made must not be biased in fact or reason, and based on all available evidence. All involved will be fully informed. During interview(s) the person(s) have a right to the presence of a support person, and any decision made is subject to appeal.

Vexatious Complaints

Frivolous, malicious, or vexatious complaints seriously undermine the trust necessary for successful participation in the concerns and disputes process, as well as impacting on the operation of the school. Action may be taken by the school in circumstances where an individual or individuals' actions are deemed to be harmful to the school or other persons.

Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints will still be accepted, recorded, evaluated, and actioned. The action and resolution will be limited by the available details. All complaints are to be treated in a confidential manner and with respect. Knowledge and discussion of the complaint is limited to the Initial Respondent and those directly involved. The Chairperson of the Governing Body may be informed depending on the nature of the complaint.

Last reviewed: February 2024
Endorsed by GB: February 2024
Next review due: March 2026

COMPLAINTS AND DISPUTES PROCEDURES

Complaints Register

The school maintains a Complaints Register, to record details of complaints received and actioned, and to analyse and identify trends or recurring issues.

All complaints received by the school, whether received verbally or in writing, are recorded in the school complaints register. Details of action and resolution are also recorded.

While most complaints will be dealt with by school leadership, all staff have a responsibility to respond to any complaints they receive, and to direct the complaint to the Principal or relevant person within the school. Staff are obliged to report breaches of relevant policies or the Staff Code of Conduct, and teachers and some other staff may have mandatory reporting obligations under the Children and Communities Services Act 2004 (WA) where a complaint involves sexual abuse of a child. See *Code of Conduct Section 3 (in Staff Handbook pages 22 and 23)* for more information on required reporting, including when to report to outside agencies or law enforcement.

Any volunteers who may receive or become aware of a complaint whilst volunteering at the school must report that to the Principal.

If a complaint results, or may result, in a report to the Department for Communities Mandatory Reporting Unit, and / or to Police, the school should not take any further steps to investigate the complaint without consulting with those agencies first. See *Child Protection Policy* for more information.

Complaints Procedure

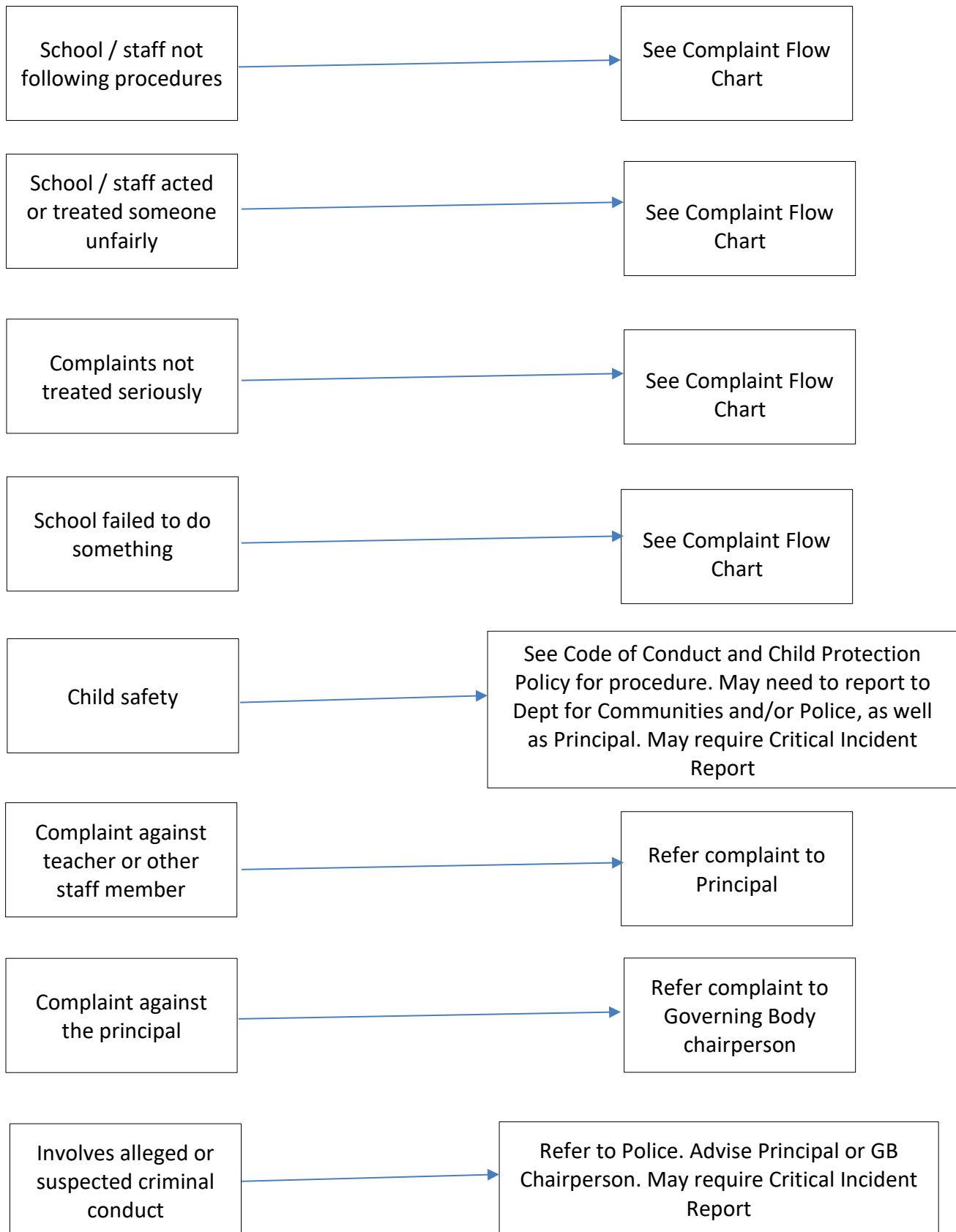
- School administrator receives a complaint and records in complaints register. (The complaints register is maintained by administration staff. If the complaint is received by another staff member, they must communicate the complaint as soon as possible to administration staff so that it can be recorded in the register.)
- The person who receives the complaint determines the best person to address the complaint (the Initial Respondent). Usually this is a classroom teacher, administration staff member or the Principal.
- School administrator refers the complaint to the Initial Respondent
- Initial Respondent acknowledges receipt of complaint within 24 hours and provides information regarding complaint handling process and anticipated response time to the Complainant.
- Initial Respondent investigates as required, responds to the Complainant and records details of action and response in the complaints register. This initial response must occur within 5 working days of receipt of the complaint. If this timeline is not sufficient, the Initial Respondent is to contact the Complainant and advise of the delay and an approximate response time.
- If the Complainant is not satisfied with the response from the Initial Respondent, they may refer the complaint to the Principal (or Governing Body Chairperson if the Initial Respondent was the Principal or the complaint is about the conduct of the Principal).
- This Second Respondent examines the matter and responds in writing to the Complainant.
- If the Complainant is not satisfied with the response from the Second Respondent, the matter will be referred to the Chairperson of the Governing Body.

- Investigation and action by the Governing Body Chairperson or Governing Body representatives will finalise the matter unless, at the discretion of the Governing Body, alternative resolution processes are sought.
- Details of actions and resolution of the complaint to be recorded in the complaints register.
- The Principal and Governing Body will monitor the complaints register to identify any causes and systemic failures so as to inform improvement, and to fulfil its governance requirements.

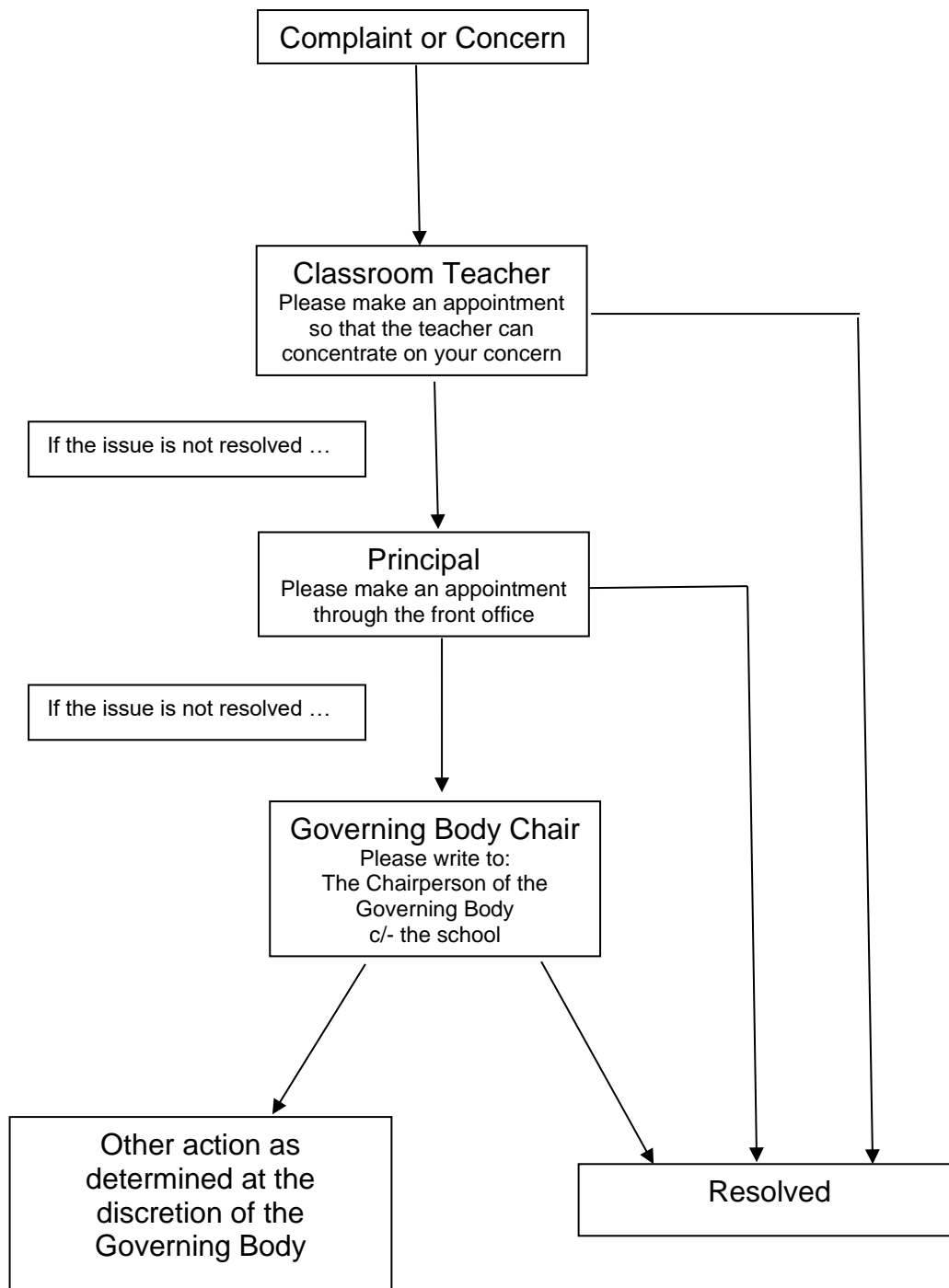
Handling of Different Types of Complaints

Types of complaint

Action



Complaint Flow Chart



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 (www.education.wa.edu.au/non-government-school-complaints). 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.

Student Complaints

Our school culture encourages all students to have a voice, and to know that they will be heard, regardless of the perceived degree of seriousness of the matter they raise. This is supported by the following:

Non-Violent Communication

Non-Violent Communication (NVC) (developed by Dr Marshall B Rosenberg) is a process of communication designed to improve compassionate connection to others and is explicitly taught to staff and students at the school. While primarily used as a communication and negotiation tool, a side-bonus of the program is that children are comfortable and practiced in identifying and articulating their feelings and needs, and in making their needs known to those around them.

Parliament

Parliament is a fortnightly meeting of the whole school. It is an expression of the principles of active citizenship whereby each child is invited to be involved in discussions about school issues which affect them. At parliament, the whole school (students kindy-year six, and all available adults) gather together. Each person present has the opportunity to raise anything that they would like to celebrate with everyone, or concerns or comments to share with the rest of the community.

The result of this ongoing process is that even the very youngest students develop the confidence to speak up, and the knowledge that their voice will be valued and heard.

Class circles

Class circles are like mini parliaments, conducted as needed in the classroom to address class issues.

Playground carers

Each week a few of the senior students are identified as playground carers, who will attempt to negotiate a resolution to playground matters. If this is not successful, the carer then involves a staff member. As well as giving the students ownership of the resolution of their problems, this process also helps the children learn to distinguish who is the best person to go to with a concern, depending on the nature or severity of the issue.

Protective Behaviours curriculum

The school uses evidence-based protective behaviours curriculum to support student learning relevant to their developmental stage. Learning protective behaviours assists students to access appropriate help when feeling unsafe.

Child Friendly Complaints Process

Students are encouraged to raise any concerns or complaints they may have. Complaints and concerns may be raised face-to-face with school adults. This can be their classroom teacher or education assistants, or any other school adult with whom they feel comfortable. Or students may want to enlist the help of a trusted non-school adult to approach the school. Students able to read and write their complaints and concerns may prefer to use the Student Feedback form available in the office.

The ability to raise complaints and concerns, and the available methods to do so, are explained to all students at the beginning of the school year, with regular reminders and discussions throughout the year during Parliament, class circles and general class time.

Procedure on receipt of a student complaint

- If the complaint is in writing, respond verbally to the student as soon as possible, acknowledging receipt.
- If approached by a student in person
 - If unable to sit with the student immediately to hear their concern, explain why and follow up as soon as a suitable time is available,
 - Allow the student to talk freely and listen to what is being said,
 - Reassure the student, however remain conscious of limits on confidentiality,
 - Explains limits of confidentiality where applicable.
- If the complaint is a disclosure of abuse including sexual abuse, or other harm, refer to the Child Protection policy for more information, including the procedure to follow for Mandatory Reporting.
- Give the student the option to choose how they will be kept informed of the investigation or resolution of the complaint.
- Investigate and if possible, resolve the complaint. Where appropriate, refer to the Principal for resolution.
- Ensure the student understands the outcome of the process, and how their perspectives have informed this outcome.
- Where applicable, ensure the complaint and resolution is recorded in the school complaints register.

Dispute Resolution

General procedure for resolving disputes

- Step 1 Meet with the other person at a mutually convenient time. Try to resolve the issue between yourselves. If unable to resolve the issue, go to step 2.
- Step 2 Write to the Principal outlining the facts as you know them and request an appointment to discuss the issue. The Principal will arrange to meet with all parties either separately and/or together as they deem appropriate. Detailed records, including agreements made, will be kept and signed by all parties and a future appointment made if required to follow up on the agreements made. If you are not satisfied with the outcome, go to step 3.
- Step 3 Write to the Governing Body Chairperson again outlining all facts and request that the Governing Body help in reaching a resolution. Investigation and action by the Governing Body Chairperson or Governing Body representatives will finalise the matter unless, at the discretion of the Governing Body, alternative resolution processes are sought.

Parent Disputes

Follow General Procedure for Resolving Disputes

All disputes a parent has with a staff member should be brought to the Principal if unable to be resolved between the parent and staff member as per step 1. If the dispute concerns the Principal then the concern should be taken to the Chairperson of the Governing Body.

Parents with a complaint about a student at the school should make an appointment through the office to see the teacher of the student. Where necessary the matter may be referred to the Principal. **Parents should never approach or question another child, or the parent of another child, about an issue.**

Staff member Disputes

Follow General Procedure for Resolving Disputes

Staff members are encouraged to attempt to settle disputes between themselves by arranging a suitable time and place to discuss the issue.



Child Friendly Complaints Procedure

1. What is a complaint?

At school you have the right to feel safe and secure and to tell someone how you feel, including if you are unhappy or have a concern about your care.

If you are not happy with something that happened, or is happening, at school, you have a right to complain about it. This means explaining and describing something that happened to you that you didn't like.



2. What should I do before I make a complaint?

You might talk to someone else about it first – to another student or friend or to a teacher or adult at the school – someone you trust.

Making a complaint can be scary, so you could ask them to come with you when you make the complaint if you like.

3. How can I make a complaint?

There are several different ways that you can make a complaint.

- You can talk to someone like your teacher or the Principal (Nick)
- You can go to the office and ask Whitney or Victoria
- You can email admin@woodburyboston.wa.edu.au
- You can fill in the form at the end of this booklet and put it in the box in the office.



4. Steps in making a complaint

Step 1 Plan what you want to say

- Write down what you are not happy with
- Or what happened that you didn't like and when it happened
- Write how it made / makes you feel

Step 2 What would you like to happen?

What would make you happy?

Step 3 Go and see the person you want to talk to or make a time to talk to them later

Step 4 Be calm

Try not to get upset or cry because they won't clearly hear what you are saying

Step 5 Ask questions

Such as:
What will happen next?
When will you get back to me?
Will you tell my Mum and Dad?
Can you talk to my Teacher / Mum please?

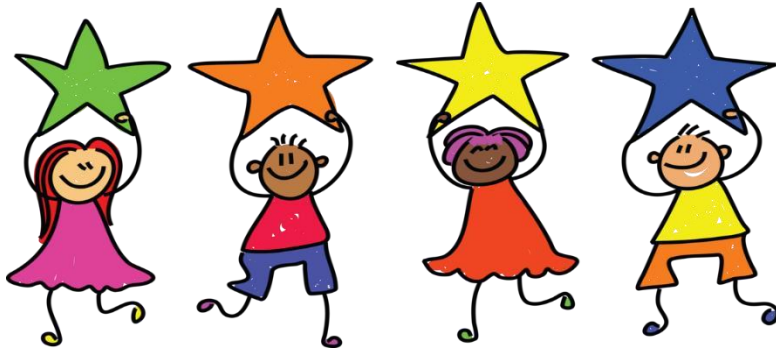


Step 6 Keep notes

Write down information that you remember

- Who you talked to
- The date and time
- What they promised they'd do
- When they said they'd get back to you
- How you feel about what they said
- Anything else you remember

This will help you to know that they listened to you and are doing what they said they would do.



5. Keep at it

If you are not happy with what happens next (or if nothing happens), you can talk to another person like Nick

We care about what happens to you!

Complaint form for children and young people

When you make a complaint we will try and help you, be kind to you and tell you how long it will take. If you need help when using this form, you can ask one of the school adults.

1: Tell us your name (you don't have to if you don't want to)

Your name _____

2: Tell us about your complaint



Who or what are you unhappy with? Tell us what happened.

When did it happen?



Please turn page over

What would make you happy?



Tell us what you would like to happen.

We might need to talk to you to help fix your problem. Are you okay with this?

Circle your answer



Yes



No

Which school adult would you like to talk to you about this?

You can put this form in the box in the office, or you can give it to a school adult.

Your privacy

We won't use or disclose what you tell us for any other reason than dealing with your complaint.