





# Concerns and Complaints Management Policy

## Parents, Community and Staff

	Ratified by Council	Reviewed by Principal
Date	27 July 2020	July 2021
Name	Justin Coombs	Jenny Dougan
Signature		

*West Coast Steiner School is committed to being a Child Safe Organisation, taking a preventative and participatory stance on child protection issues and promoting a child safe environment based on the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.*

PROVENANCE					
<b>Review Cycle</b>	1 year	<b>Last Review</b>	July 2021	<b>Next Review</b>	July 2022
<b>Responsibility</b>	School Principal				
<b>Related Policies and Procedures</b>	Communication Guidelines Student Complaints Policy Code of Conduct for Staff Code of Conduct for Parents Staff Grievances Policy Child Protection Policy Pastoral Care Policy Whistleblower Policy				
<b>Relevant Legislation and Authority</b>	School Education Act 1999 School Education Regulations 2000 The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care The Privacy (Enhancing Privacy Protections) Act 2012 The Privacy Act 1988 Ombudsman Western Australia -The Principles of Effective Complaint Handling				
<b>Appendix</b>					

VERSION MANAGEMENT		
Date	Changes Made	Author
July 2019	Minor changes ratified by Council	D Backshall
July 2020	Renamed from Managing and Recording Complaints Policy. Revisions from AISWA Concerns, Complaints and Disputes Version 7 updated June 2020 incorporated	L Lane
July 2021	Minor edits	L Lane
May 2023	Chane School Coordinator to Deputy	J Dougan

# Policy

## Background

At West Coast Steiner School, we acknowledge that differences of opinion, understanding and feelings inevitably arise in human relationships, including in schools. We strive to deal with these in a way which is helpful for all those who are involved and in line with our school values as a community guided by goodness, beauty and truth. This policy applies equally to parents, community members and staff. We understand that each situation is different, and these are guidelines to assist with resolution.

West Coast Steiner School is committed to providing a supportive working and community environment. The School values direct communication between individuals and expects that individuals will bring concerns directly to the parties involved. We urge everyone to try to address any misunderstandings, unclear communication, or other incidents by firstly communicating with the person involved, whether a teacher, another staff member or someone else in the School community.

## Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to explain what to do should a parent or member of the community have a concern or complaint. West Coast Steiner School takes all complaints seriously. Guidelines and procedures are set out to ensure all stakeholders are aware of the process for managing concerns and complaints and that such claims are dealt with in a fair, transparent and consistent manner. All reasonable efforts will be made by all parties to resolve the issue using the appropriate internal school processes in a sensitive and timely manner. The School will apply the rules of procedural to any investigation. Confidentiality is respected and maintained so far as is possible.

## Application

This policy applies to and is binding upon all members of the West Coast Steiner School staff, parents, and community. For the purpose of this policy 'parent/s' includes legal guardians, step-parents, foster parents, grandparents and carers.

## Definitions

A **concern** will be treated as a less serious matter that may be resolved with a more informal approach.

A **complaint** will be treated as an expression of genuine dissatisfaction that requires following a formal process as detailed below. A complaint may be made about the whole school, about a specific class, about a specific school activity, about an individual member of staff, about a parent or about one or more students.

**Procedural fairness** is about the fairness of the process used to reach a decision. Procedural Fairness as set out in the Registration Standards for Non-Government Schools requires:

- A. A hearing appropriate to the circumstances
- B. Lack of bias
- C. Evidence to support a decision
- D. Inquiry into matters in dispute.

# Guidelines for Handling of Concerns and Complaints

We encourage parents to first treat any issue or problem as a concern when approaching the School, and then only to lodge a complaint if this is not handled to your satisfaction. Regardless, all concerns and complaints are taken seriously and treated as constructive suggestions that can facilitate improvement. Even concerns and complaints that are deemed 'unjustified' can indicate an area that can be improved on.

A concern or complaint may be made by a parent, student, staff member or a member of the wider community. While parents will often wish to raise issues on behalf of their children, there are other issues which pupils may choose to raise on their own behalf and which are best raised by them. Separate policies and procedures are in place for students wishing to raise a concern or complaint themselves. Complaints relating to staff employment matters are managed through appropriate statutory provisions and the Schools' Staff Grievances Policy.

- Concerns and complaints are always treated seriously and confidentially.
- All parties involved with or impacted by the complaint will be treated with procedural fairness and respect.
- Complaints made by parents or guardians will not adversely impact their children.
- The substance of the complaint is provided to the subject of the grievance.
- The Complaints Officer is the School Principal. If the School Principal is the subject of the complaint, then the Council Chair should be contacted.
- Action that is being taken by the Complaints Officer is communicated to the Complainant.
- A clear record is kept of the complaint, including the actions taken and the outcome.
- Actions in relation to the complaint are evaluated and procedures reviewed.
- Where appropriate, and where complaints are of a serious nature, the Chair of Council will be informed about the nature of the complaint.
- A third party, where necessary/appropriate, will be involved to mediate and/or act as independent arbiter. The Complainant can invite a third person into the meeting(s) for additional support.
- Where required, depending on the nature of the complaint, a referral will be made to an external authority such as an AISWA representative (legal representative), Child Protection or the Western Australian Police Force for advice or immediate action.
- Any student, parent or community member is entitled to contact the Director General with concerns about how the School has dealt with a complaint. 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. While the Director General may consider whether the School has breached the registration standards, the Director General does not have power to intervene in a complaint or override the School's decision. Information is available on the Department of Education website <https://www.education.wa.edu.au/non-government-school-concerns>

# Procedures

A flowchart for addressing concerns and complaints is available. Further clarification of these procedures is outlined below.

- A concern should initially always be taken to the person involved directly. Parents should always take any concern related to their child or children to the teacher.
- If a concern cannot be resolved directly with the person concerned, then contact the School Principal or Deputy according to the nature of the concern to see if they can resolve the concern. The concern will then be recorded on the Concerns and Complaints Register.
- If the concern cannot be resolved, you may wish to escalate it to a complaint by putting it in writing on a Complaint Form and sending it to the Complaints Officer. When a complaint is put in writing, the complaint should be based on an identifiable instance or instances and should record actual information and events.
- The Complaints Officer will contact the Complainant as a matter of priority within three days to respond to the complaint and explain how to proceed.
- The Complaints Officer will undertake an investigation.
- If appropriate, the person who is the subject of the complaint is advised of the complaint and invited to submit their own account of the incident/s to the Complaints Officer.
- The Complaints Officer will respond to the Complainant outlining any action taken or facilitate a meeting between both parties to explore the incident/s.
- In the same meeting or in a further meeting, options for action are explored and agreement is reached upon those actions which need to be implemented. This process may extend beyond one meeting and may be more or less formal depending on the situation and events under discussion.
- If any action requires sanctioning from the College of Teachers, then ratification is sought from the appropriate body.
- Action/s are implemented and followed up as agreed by parties involved in the mediated meeting.
- Where an aspect of a complaint includes an issue about a staff member's professional performance or conduct, the issue will be referred to the School Principal. If required, support will be offered to the staff member to explore these issues and to address any concerns through professional development, mentorship or by agreement.
- The Council Chair or School Council are not to be contacted directly to resolve concerns or complaints. Should a formal complaint be unresolved after following the process, it may be escalated to the Council Chair. The Complainant can ask (in writing addressed to the School Council Secretary) for the matter to be referred to the Council Chair. In this situation further professional assistance may be sought.

## **Exceptions**

When the nature of the complaint concerns issues of safety for themselves or a child or if the same issue has been the subject of an earlier complaint and one party has failed to keep their commitment/s then the Complainant should bring the matter to the attention of the School Principal as a matter of urgency.

## **Resolution of Complaints**

Resolution of a complaint may come from any of the following:

- knowing that changes have been made and that matters will be different in the future
- knowing that the school is now alert to a possible problem
- feeling that the complaint has been considered seriously
- an outcome which may be different to what was sought, but which is perceived as well-considered and fair
- a considered letter
- an apology.

It should be noted that the Complainants may not receive explicit information on what action has been taken. This is especially important when the complaint is related to another student, or a staff member.

## **Record Keeping**

The School will keep an effective record of complaints and other significant parental concerns. Teachers and Deputy responding to a significant concern should ensure that the process and outcome are documented. The Complaints Officer, upon receiving a Complaint Form, is responsible for recording the details of the complaint in the Concerns and Complaints Register.

All relevant information is sealed in an envelope which is kept in the Complaints folder in a locked cabinet for the duration of the child's enrolment at school. Once a complaint has been resolved, records concerning students will be kept for 7 years after graduation from West Coast Steiner School.

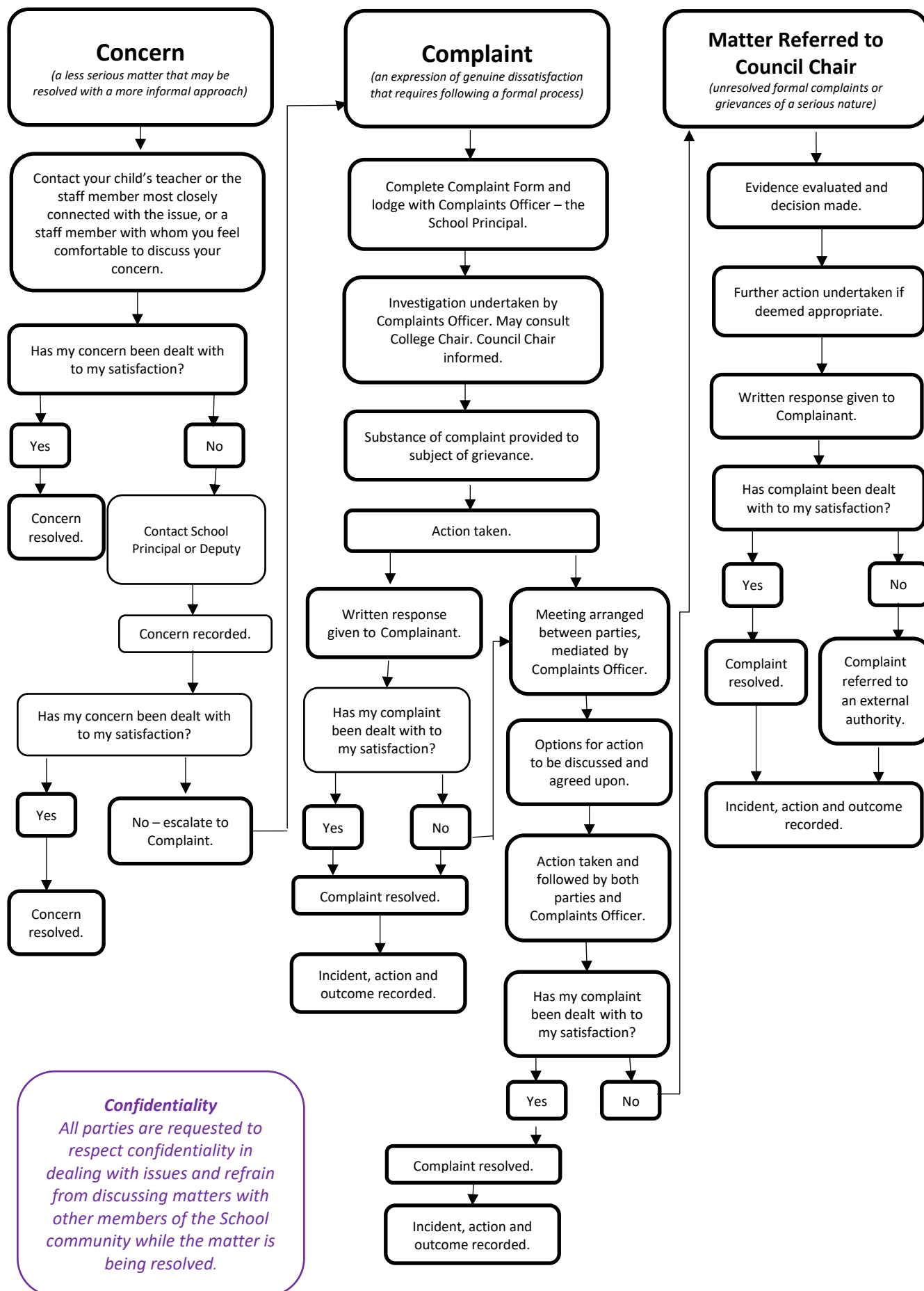
## **Policy Review and Dissemination**

This policy and related procedures will be made available to the public and staff members on the School website and is available in both the Staff and Parent Handbooks.

The School will provide ongoing training to ensure that staff understand the complaint management process and are skilled in managing complaints and responding to complainants.

The School may, at any time, make amendments to this policy to ensure continuous improvement. The policy will be reviewed annually by the School Principal.

## Flowchart for Resolving Concerns and Complaints



# Information for Parents and Community Members

West Coast Steiner School welcomes suggestions and comments from parents and community members and takes seriously any concerns and complaints that may be raised. A full copy of the Concerns and Complaints Management Policy is available on the School website at <https://www.wcss.wa.edu.au/index.php/school-policies/> or a hardcopy can be obtained from the School reception. If you are unable to attend the School in person you are welcome to ring us on 9440 1771 and request a copy to be sent to you by email or mail.

Please see below for information related to communicating with the School and frequently asked questions about our concerns and complaints management process.

## Frequently Asked Questions

**“I don’t want to complain as such, but there is something bothering me.”**

The School is here for you and your child, and we want to hear your views and your ideas. Contact your class teacher or a member of staff, as described in the policy above.

**“I am not sure whether to complain or not.”**

If, as parents, you have concerns, you are entitled to raise them. If in doubt, you should contact the School as we are here to help.

**“How should I raise a concern or lodge a complaint?”**

When raising a concern, we suggest contacting the School and asking to speak to the class teacher or person most closely concerned with the issue, or to a member of staff with whom you feel comfortable. At times, a simple face to face discussion or phone call may be all that is required to clarify a misunderstanding or resolve an issue quickly, with the minimum of fuss. Members of staff will be happy to help – please ask if you require some assistance in expressing your concern.

If you feel your concern has not been dealt with satisfactorily by that member of staff, you may wish to take your concern to the School Principal or Deputy. If you still feel it has not been addressed adequately you may wish to lodge a complaint. A complaint should be made in writing, using the Complaint Form available on the School website, and lodged with the Complaints Manager.

**“How long will it take to receive a response from the School?”**

If the concern is raised face-to-face or by telephone, it may be possible to resolve the matter immediately and to your satisfaction. If you lodge a complaint in writing, we will make a written response within three working days to acknowledge your complaint and detail what action is proposed or will be taken and the timeline for this action.

**“What if I am not satisfied with the outcome?”**

We hope that you will feel satisfied with the outcome or, at least, that your concerns or complaints have been fully and fairly considered. If you are not satisfied, the School Principal will offer to refer the matter to the Council Chair. West Coast Steiner School recognises and acknowledges your entitlement to complain and we hope to work with you in the best interests of the children and young people in our care.

**What if I wish to make an anonymous complaint?**

West Coast Steiner School is committed to responding to concerns and complaints in a confidential and respectful manner. Parents and students are encouraged to give their names and are given reassurance on the issue of confidentiality. If they persist in wishing to remain anonymous, it is at the School Principal’s discretion as to what action, if any, will be taken, depending on the nature of the complaint.





## Complaint Form

Please provide a detailed statement of your complaint, including:

- dates and time of events;
- names of any people you have approached in relation to your grievance;
- copies of any documents relating to this complaint;
- the effect the grievance has had on you and what you would like to see happen.

Once completed, return to the School Principal, marked **COMPLAINTS OFFICER (PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL)**.

Name of person filling in this form \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Person filling in this form is a (please circle): Parent/Guardian      School visitor

Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**Statement** (Add additional pages if more space is needed)


*Thank you for filling out this form. The Complaints Officer will let you know how your complaint is being addressed.*