

Unity College



GRIEVANCE/ Complaints Policy and Procedures

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this document is to provide a set of principles and procedures by which complaints will be handled at Unity College.

RATIONALE:

Unity College is committed to working with all members of the community (staff, students and parents) in a manner which upholds the importance of building and maintaining positive relationships. These relationships are valued as a gift of God, and we aim to provide an environment where each member is recognised and respected as unique individual with rights and responsibilities. We acknowledge that because of our human condition, relationships will at times become strained and disagreements or tensions will exist. In such God's word offers the following, *Love one another as I have loved you (John 15:12)*

It is recognised that parents and students have a right to raise concerns they may have and to have them addressed appropriately. Grievances should be handled with sensitivity and not in a reactive or subjective manner. This procedure is to ensure that all grievances are dealt with in a fair and transparent way.

When there is a concern from **parents or students**, the first response should be to speak to the staff member involved. If this initial discussion does not lead to a resolution, then the formal processes outlined should be followed.

The aim always is to have a fair and just resolution for all parties involved.

SCOPE:

This policy applies to staff, students, parents/carers, and members of Unity College community, and may be used either in relation to complaints raised by groups or by individuals in relation to:

- bullying
- discrimination
- harassment
- unfair treatment
- victimisation

Provision is also made for the lodging of complaints by persons external to the Unity community as the complaints/feedback form is located on our public website.

Circumstances do exist in which this policy does not apply, including:

- in relation to issues which are outside of the responsibility or scope of Unity College in its role as an employer; or
- where an existing review, appeal or complaint procedure is already in process.

GUIDELINES FOR GRIEVANCES/ Complaints

1. The preferable first option is to make an appointment to talk to the relevant person, which in most instances will be a particular teacher or other staff member. Students may wish to discuss the issue with any member of staff they most feel comfortable speaking with.

- Let the person know beforehand what subject you wish to discuss as this will facilitate the process.
- Setting aside time by making an appointment allows the person to give you and the matter at hand, his or her full attention.
- Check that all the facts are sought before the meeting.

- The teacher or staff member and parent should act together with an aim to reach a resolution.
 - If either party considers the issue raised unresolved, it is important that this is stated at the conclusion of the meeting.
2. If the issue is unresolved, make an appointment with the Year Level Coordinator, Head of Learning Area or Head of School as appropriate. Once again inform the senior staff member of the matter you wish to discuss to facilitate the process. Meet with the appropriate person. Results of the meeting may include:
- Practical changes where appropriate
 - Monitoring of the situation
 - Further discussion with the people involved
 - Outside support offered (e.g. counselling)
3. Should there still be dissatisfaction with the concern at this point, a meeting with the Principal is advised or for the issue to be communicated in writing to the Principal. A meeting or a written response from the Principal will be issued within 5 working days, on receipt of the grievance.
4. If after steps 1-3 there is still dissatisfaction, inform the Chairperson of the College Board in writing via chairman@unitycollege.sa.edu.au. The Board will acknowledge the concern within 5 days. The expectation of the Chairperson will be that the above steps have been followed. The Board will follow up as soon as practicable.
5. If the grievance is against the Principal, the College believes the first response should be to speak to the Principal but it is understood there are times when this may not be possible or desirable. In this case go to step 4.
6. Details of the meetings and their outcomes will be recorded in a secure Complaints register by the College for overseeing or managing the resolution process for grievances.

GUIDELINES FOR INVESTIGATION AND RESOLUTION

Communication and the resolution processes should always be based on the parties acting in good faith, exercising good judgement, being honest and open, and focusing on the issue and not the person(s).

- Each complaint is to be dealt with on its particular circumstances and merits and any settlement reached or determination made through the resolution process will not necessarily constitute any binding precedent for future or similar cases.
- In responding to a complaint, informally or formally, every reasonable effort shall be made to ensure that natural justice and procedural fairness are afforded to all parties.

This means, in practical terms, that:

- All parties are entitled to be treated with respect and to be heard.
- All parties should participate fully in the resolution process to achieve an outcome that is realistic and reasonable.

Unity Grievance/ Complaints Procedure

- A person who is the subject of a complaint should be informed of the substance thereof and given a full opportunity to present their perspective.
- All parties have a right to seek advice and support.
- Investigations and proceedings must be conducted fairly, thoroughly and without bias or undue delay.
- Parties should provide all relevant, material, complete and factual information, documents or other evidence relating to the complaint.
- The investigative process in relation to a formal complaint will include but not necessarily be limited to: gathering relevant and material information relating to the complaint, meetings convened of the parties to discuss the complaint and to seek a resolution. If a resolution can't be found, a determination will be made by the College, based on thorough investigation, as to whether to uphold the complaint.

Definitions:

Term	Definition
Complaint/ Complainant	A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to Unity College, related to our services or operations, or the complaints handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected. A complaint may be made by a student, parent/carer, former student, parent/carer of a former student, member of the wider College community, strategic partner, regulator or a member of the public generally. A complaint can also be made anonymously. We refer to anyone who makes a complaint as a “complainant”. They could be a natural person, an organisation, or a representative of an organisation.

Responsibilities

Principal	Ultimately responsible for dealing with complaints made in respect to most College matters; may delegate responsibility to Heads of School, Year Level Coordinators or Learning Area Coordinators.
Head of School or Business Manager	Deals with most complaints that escalate to a formal process; may oversee or advise on complaints at a less formal level upon request or where deemed helpful.
Year Level Coordinator/Learning Area Coordinator	Deals with lower-level complaints that are settled by less formal discussion and resolution.
Unity College staff	May receive complaints via informal channels; responsible for redirecting families to the formal process where informal processes fail. Should seek help or advice from their supervisors or Head of School where required, or where escalation to a formal process seems likely.

TRUST AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Grievances are best dealt with when there is a high level of confidentiality and trust between the parties involved. Criticism of teachers and/or the College in the wider community can adversely affect the resolution of the grievance and is something to be guarded against by all parties.

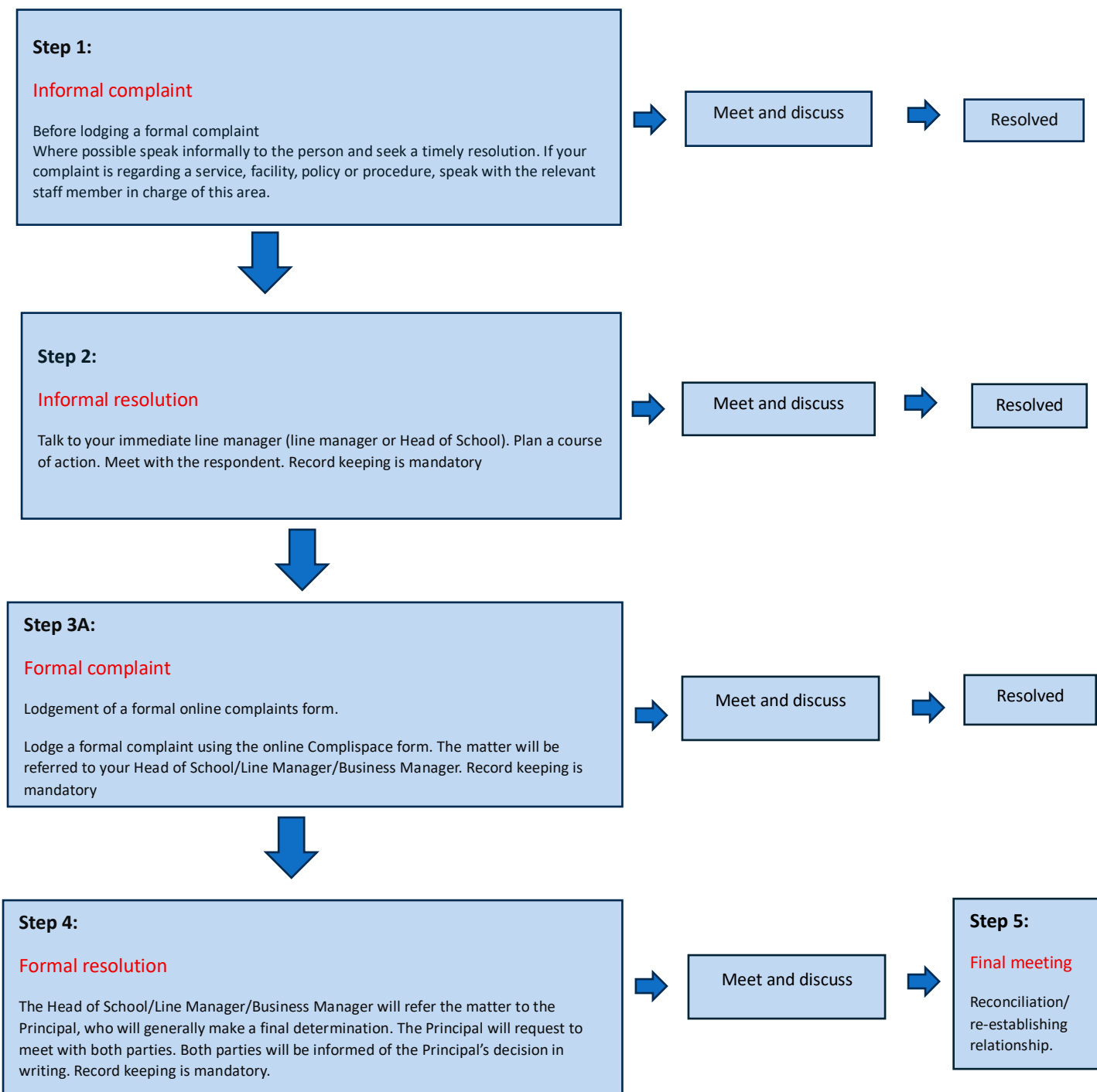
The College is committed to restorative practices in all matters where a breakdown of relationships has occurred. The College will do its best to address and satisfactorily resolve grievances in a mutually acceptable way however, it is not always possible to resolve all problems in a manner where mutual acceptance is the outcome. The welfare of any students concerned should be paramount throughout any grievance procedure

<i>Review Date:</i>	
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**Addendum
Definitions:**

Allegation	A statement of fact contained within a complaint. Such statements remain allegations until proven by supporting evidence.
Bullying	Bullying is repeated and unreasonable behaviour directed towards an individual that creates a risk to health and safety, where: - ‘Repeated behaviour’ refers to the persistent nature of the behaviour and can involve a range of behaviours over time; and - ‘Unreasonable behaviour’ means behaviour that a reasonable person, having regard to the circumstances, would see as unreasonable, including behaviour that is victimising, humiliating, intimidating, or threatening.
Discrimination	When someone is treated unfairly because they belong to a particular group of people or have a particular characteristic. For example: treating someone unfairly or differently because of their sex, pregnancy, race (including colour, ethnicity and descent), disability, sexual preference, religion, transgender, carer’s responsibilities, marital status, social origin, political belief, employee association activity, irrelevant criminal record, or age.
Indirect Discrimination	Indirect discrimination occurs when there is a requirement or rule that is the same for everyone but in effect disadvantages people from a particular group more than people from other groups - unless the requirement is reasonable in the circumstances.
Harassment	Unwelcome behaviour that makes a person feel belittled, intimidated, offended or apprehensive, and that a reasonable person, considering all the circumstances, would expect to cause offence, intimidation, or apprehension.
Victimisation	Punishing, or threatening to punish someone. It is against the law to punish, or threaten to punish someone because they have: – asserted their rights under equal opportunity law, – made a complaint, – helped someone else make a complaint, – refused to do something because it would be discrimination, sexual harassment, or victimization. Examples of victimisation can include (but are not limited to) bullying and intimidation by co-workers, being denied a promotion, or demoted to a position with lower responsibility, dismissal from work, or being refused further work. The legal definition of victimisation is when someone “subjects or threatens to subject the other person, or an associate of that other person, to any detriment” (Anti- Discrimination Act 1998; Section 18(2)).
Unity College community	For the purpose of this policy, Unity College community refers to alumni, associations (including, but not limited to, Unity College Old Scholars (UCOS), governing bodies (such as Unity College Board and LESNW), volunteers, contractors, and sub- contractors of the College. Parents, carers, and families are also covered by this designation.

STAFF: LODGING A COMPLAINT (Flowchart)



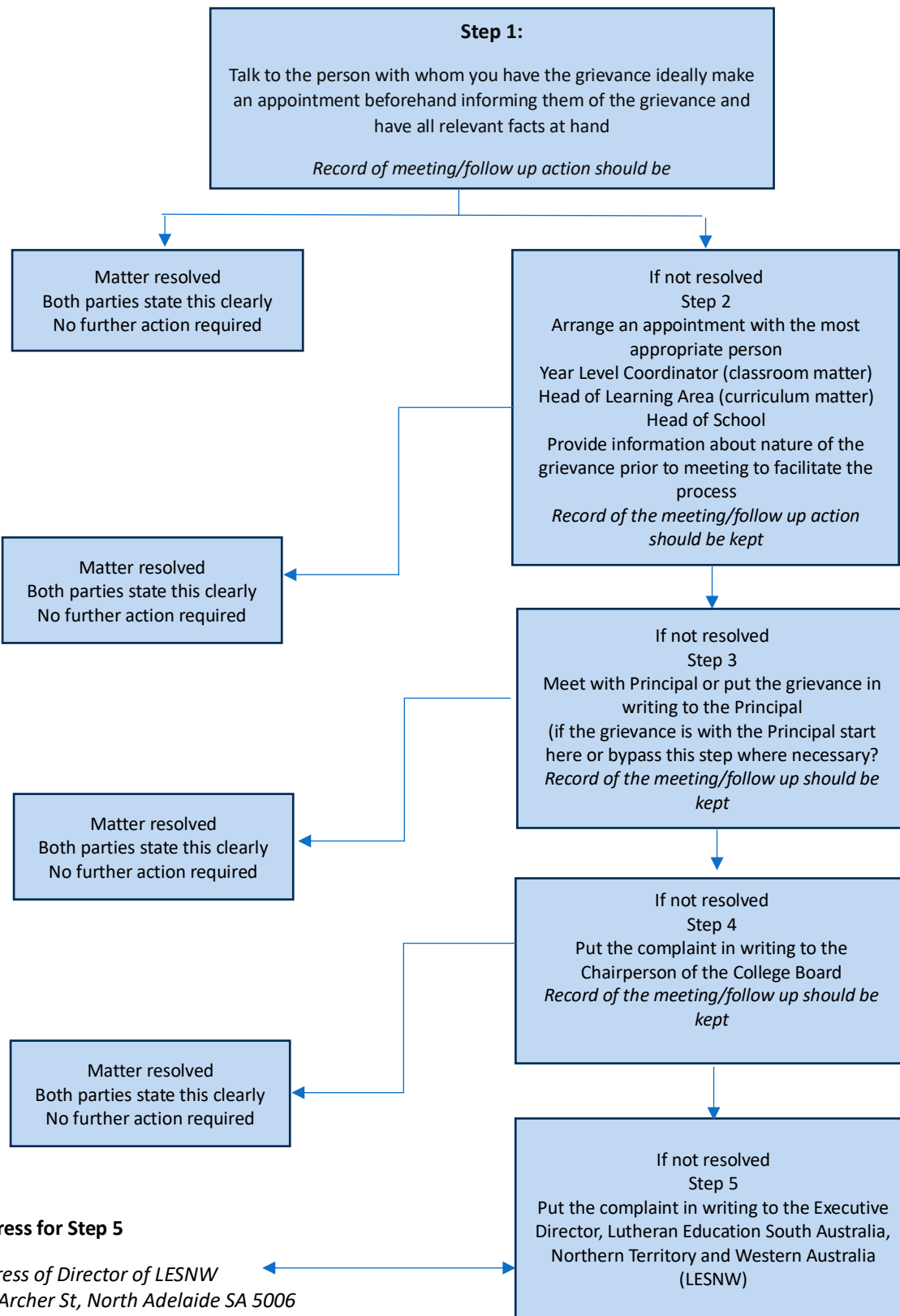
Note: External mediation and /or legal advice is available at any time during the formal complaints' procedure

If a complaint is dissatisfied with the Principal's decision in Step 4 or following Step 5:

Step 6	Further action	Formal letter to the Chair of the Board. If a complainant continues to be dissatisfied with the decision or process, they may write a formal letter of complaint to the Chair of the Board and further to that, to the Executive Director of LESNW.	Meet and discuss	Relationship restoration and building
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MANAGING Parent/Caregiver GRIEVANCES: FLOW CHART

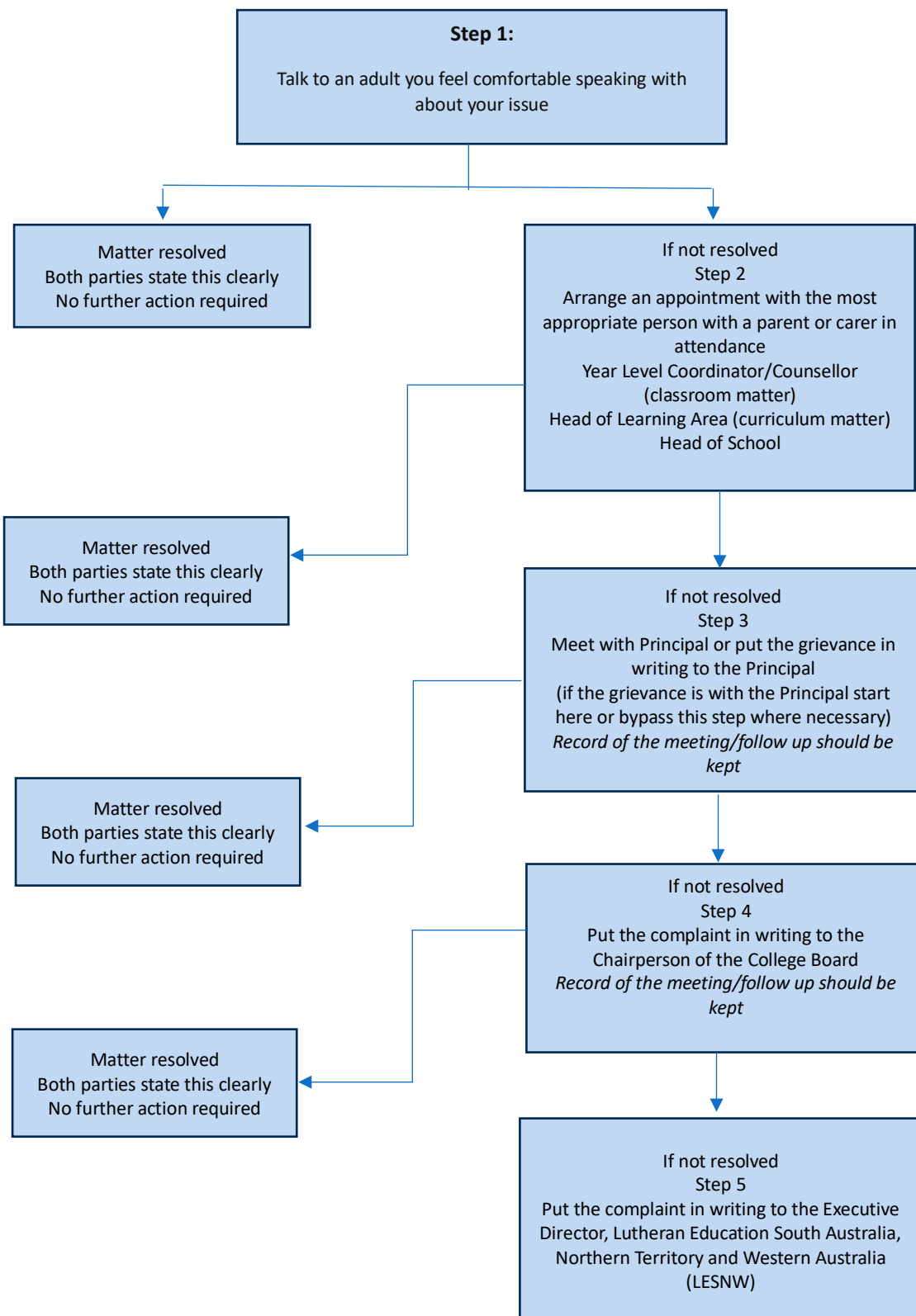
MANAGING PARENT GRIEVANCES: FLOW CHART



Should the issue be resolved at any point, ensure that this is clearly stated between parties with a stated intent and willingness to continue to work together with mutual trust.

MANAGING Student GRIEVANCES: FLOW CHART

MANAGING STUDENT GRIEVANCES: FLOW CHART



Student Complaints Procedure – Online/ “Tell Us” Feedback Form

The complaint/ concern will be directed to the relevant person/ staff member to action and follow up. Staff will endeavour to investigate, address and, if required, resolve that concern in an open and fair manner.

If a student has a concern/ complaint they would like addressed, the guidelines below should be followed:

Step 1 – Referred to a Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Concern/ complaint is raised online through the “Tell Us” form with a trusted person- Matter is investigated- Meetings with relevant parties- Resolution agreed by all parties- Matter is documented on “Tell Us” form and Daymap if needed- Monitoring and evaluation
Step 2 – Referred to Year Level Coordinator – not resolved in step 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Matter is investigated- Meetings with relevant parties- Resolution agreed by all parties- Matter is documented on “Tell Us” form and Daymap if needed- Monitoring and evaluation
Step 3 – Referred to Head of School/ Principal – if not resolved in step 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Matter is investigated- Meetings with relevant parties- Resolution agreed by all parties- Matter is documented on “Tell Us” form and Daymap if needed- Monitoring and evaluation

Students should be aware that in some instances confidentiality can't be guaranteed if the matter is serious or criminal in nature. Students need to be aware that school staff may be obliged to share information with relevant leaders and/or the social worker, police or outside agencies dependent on the nature of the concern/ complaint.

Teachers and some other employees have mandatory reporting obligations under the Children Community Services Act 2004 (WA) if they have reasonable grounds to suspect a child is at risk or harm and have current concerns about the wellbeing of the child.

Tell Us (Feedback) Form for Students

(If you need any help filling in this form, ask student Services)

Tell us about you:

First name: _____ Last Name: _____

Year level: _____

PC Teachers Name: _____

Tell us about your concern/ complaint:

Who or what are you unhappy with?

When did it happen?

What would make you happy? Tell us what you would like to happen?

Put this form in an envelope and then in the "Tell Us "Box in Student Services