



St Margaret's School
Berwick Grammar School



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RAISING CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

(previously Grievance Policy)

Definition

St Margaret's School is defined as St Margaret's Berwick Campus (SMS) and Berwick Grammar School Officer Campus (BGS).

Rationale

St Margaret's School's approach to handling concerns and complaints is based on our values of:

- providing a safe and supportive learning environment where students are 'known' and feel a sense of belonging
- building relationships between students, staff and parents characterised by mutual respect, trust and support
- providing a safe working environment for staff
- collecting and using personal information in accordance with the Australian Privacy Principles contained in the Commonwealth *Privacy Act 1988*.

For the purpose of the policy St Margaret's School defines:

- **'parent'**¹, in relation to a child, includes a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for the child including parental responsibility under the *Family Law Act 1975* of the Commonwealth and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides.
- a **'concern'** is an issue of interest (because of its importance and effect) which is raised informally in order to improve or change a situation.
- a **'complaint'** is an expression of grievance or resentment where the complaint is seeking redress or justice.
- a **'child'** is anyone under the age of 18.

Concerns and complaints covered by the policy and procedures

These procedures cover concerns and complaints about:

- general issues of student behaviour that are contrary to the school's *Responsible Behaviour Policy*
- incidents of bullying or harassment on the classroom or school yard
- a situation arising within the school
- the management of an incident between students at school
- learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
- the educational or other progress of their child
- any decisions, act or omission which is considered unjust or wrongful.

These procedures do not cover matters for which there are existing rights of review or appeal. Those matters may include:

- student discipline matters involving expulsions
- complaints about employee conduct or performance and complaints that should be dealt with by performance management, grievance resolution or disciplinary action
- student critical incident matters

¹ 'Parent' in the policy has the same meaning as in the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*.



- other criminal matters.

St Margaret's School expects a person raising a concern or complaint to:

- do so promptly, as soon as possible after the issue occurs
- provide complete and factual information about the concern or complaint
- maintain and respect the privacy and confidentiality of all parties
- acknowledge that a common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
- act in good faith, and in a calm and courteous manner
- show respect and understanding of each other's point of view and value difference, rather than judge and blame
- recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced.

The school will address any concerns and complaints received:

- courteously
- efficiently
- fairly
- promptly, or within a timeframe agreed with the person with the concern or complaint
- in accordance with due process and principles of natural justice.

Raising concerns or complaints

In the first instance, a concern or complaint should be made to the school.

The complainant should telephone, visit or write to:

- the student's teacher or CARE teacher about learning issues and incidents that have taken place in their specific class or CARE group
- the Year Level Coordinator if students from more than one class are alleged to be involved or the if the issue or incident has not satisfactorily been resolved by the student's teacher or CARE teacher
- the Head of Department, Deputy Head of School (Teaching and Learning) or Deputy Head of School (Wellbeing) about issues relating to staff members or more complex student issues
- the Head of School or Principal about issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members or very complex student issues.
- If required, complaints can be escalated to external authorities: Victorian Institute of Teaching (email: vit@vit.vic.edu.au or phone: 1300 888 067) or Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (email: vrqa@education.vic.gov.au or phone: +61 3 9637 2806)

Managing parent concerns and complaints information

St Margaret's School will only collect and record personal and sensitive information that is reasonably necessary for the purpose of managing the complaint received, even if the complaint appears to be minor. Such information may include:

- name and contact details (with permission) of the person with a concern or complaint
- the date the concern was expressed or complaint made
- the form on which the concern or complaint was received e.g. face-to-face, telephone, email etc.
- a brief description of the concern or complaint
- details of the member of staff dealing with the concern or complaint
- action taken on the concern or complaint
- the outcome of the action taken on the concern or complaint
- any recommendations for future improvement in the school's policy or procedures
- records of concerns or complaints will be filed on Teacher Kiosk under confidential student notes.

In relation to managing information provided to the school regarding a concern or complaint, St Margaret's School is bound by the Australian Privacy Principles contained in the Commonwealth *Privacy Act 1988*. The school's staff are required to respect the confidentiality of students' and parents' personal information and the privacy of



individuals. The school will only use or disclose personal information it collects for the primary purpose of collection, and for such other secondary purposes that are related to the primary purpose of collection and reasonably expected, or to which they have consented or there are specified law enforcement or public health and public safety circumstances. If the information provided is sensitive, the uses or disclosures allowed are more limited. A secondary purpose within reasonable expectations must be directly related to the primary purpose of collection.

Addressing concerns or complaints

St Margaret's School will make every effort to resolve concerns and complaints. During such time the school will provide the complainant with a copy of its *Raising Concerns and Complaints Policy and Procedures*. The school will then determine whether a concern or complaint should be managed through the school's concerns and complaints process or through other complaints processes.

All concerns and complaints will be noted and acted on promptly by the member of staff who receives the complaint and within an agreed timeline. Due to the nature and complexity of a concern or complaint the length of time to address it may vary from time to time. In most cases, however, the school will make every effort to resolve the concern or complaint within 20 days.

The school will acknowledge, in writing, all complaints made and will provide the complainant with a timeline for investigating the complaint. The Deputy Head of School, Head of School or Principal will investigate all complaints and provide a response to the complainant. Concerns and complaints about general school matters will be addressed by the relevant member of staff.

Concerns or complaints resolution

A concern or complaint is considered by the school to be resolved when the complainant agrees on an appropriate response or remedy.

Possible responses and remedies may include:

- an explanation
- an acknowledgement of each other's perspective and agreement on ways to manage differences
- an apology
- an admission of fault
- a change of decision
- a review and change of policy, procedure or practice
- agreement on what constitutes acceptable and appropriate behaviour
- an undertaking that the unacceptable or inappropriate behaviour will change
- the provision of counselling or other support.

The school will:

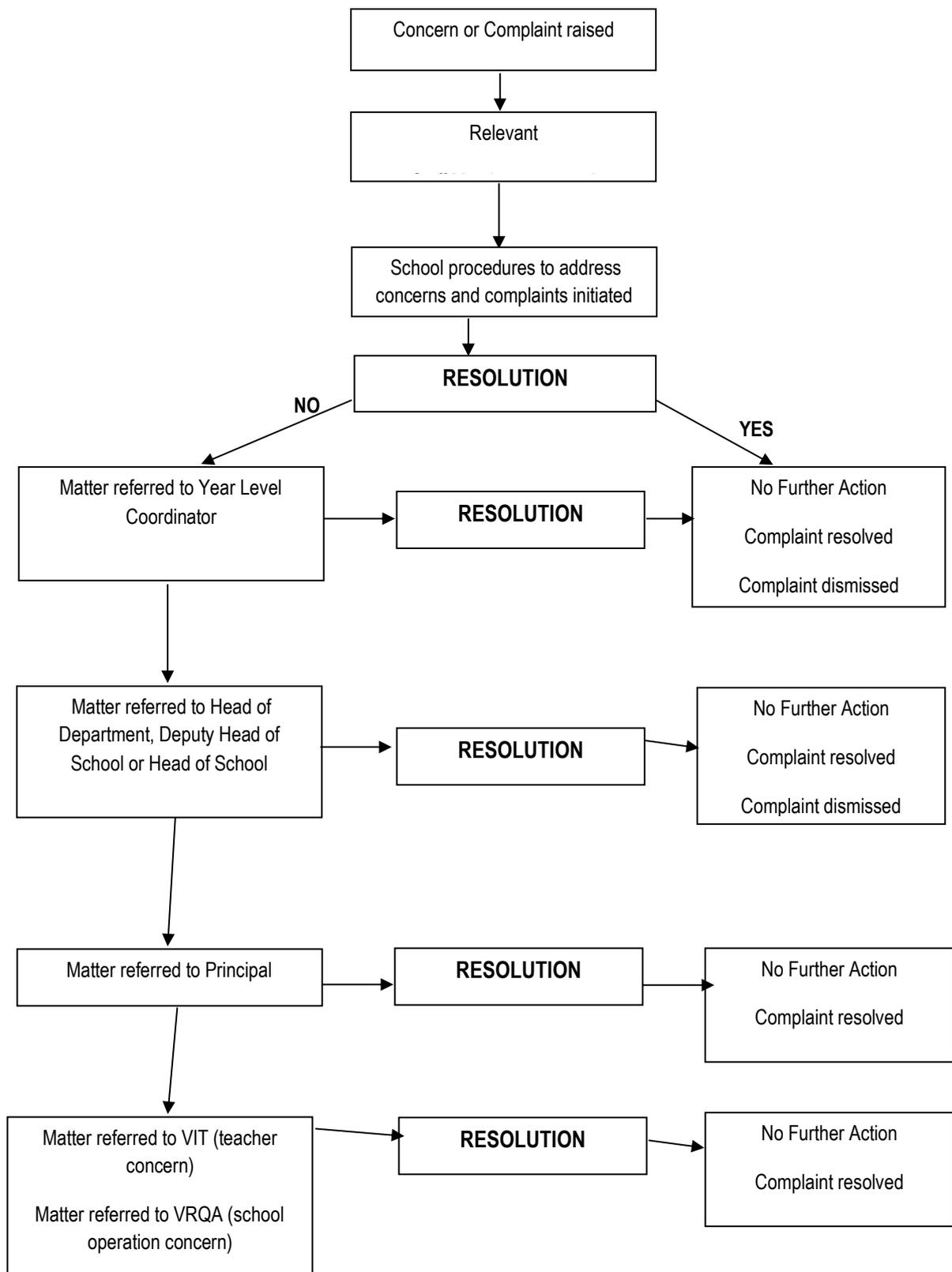
- brief all members of staff (including volunteers) about its procedures to address concerns and complaints annually
- provide staff with (or provide access to) training and support appropriate to their responsibilities under the procedures
- ensure staff who manage complaints demonstrate the personal attributes to manage them effectively and efficiently.

The school will monitor parent concerns and complaints and consider issues raised through the parent complaints process, and any other relevant information from the surveys, when undertaking a review of the school's policies and procedures.

The School Council and Principal will regularly review its policy and procedures to effectively address parent concerns and complaints as part of its review schedule.



Flow chart of the St Margaret's School Raising a Concern or Complaint process



Related Policies

Whistleblower Policy, Raising Concerns and Complaints Policy

Responsibility for this Policy

Principal

Policy Location

This Policy is published on Teacher Kiosk, Parent Lounge and Student Café

Policy Review

Triennially or as circumstances dictate.

Issued: February 2008
Reviewed and Updated: March 2011
March 2014
August 2016
December 2019
May 2020

