



Rockingham Montessori School Incorporated
 ABN: 68 115 270 695

POLICY TITLE: Complaints and Grievance Policy

BOARD APPROVAL DATE: May 2020

SIGNED BY CHAIR:

BOARD REVIEW DATE: May 2023

1 INTRODUCTION

Rockingham Montessori School has developed this Complaints and Grievance Policy to:

- Guide people in the process of raising, handling and resolving complaints
- Develop skills and experience within the School for raising, handling and resolving complaints
- Support and protect members of the school community and the School through complaint processes
- Improve outcomes of complaint processes.

This policy is not intended to be used to:

- Restrict cooperative problem solving, if a situation seems to call for a different approach
- Deflect attention from actual problems onto issues of process.

The School acknowledges that not all complaints can be resolved to the full satisfaction of all parties, but clear processes followed with skill and respect do help.

2 LEGISLATION

Formal grievance procedures are a requirement of the *Education Act 1999*, the *Associations Incorporation Act 2015* and the *Fair Work Act 2009*.

3 DEFINING 'COMPLAINT' AND 'GRIEVANCE' FOR THIS POLICY

A complaint or grievance is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be referred to, for example, as a concern, problem, issue, conflict or suggestion. Complaints and grievances may, intrinsically or in context, be of different complexity, urgency, sensitivity, significance or ease of resolution.

In this policy, the term:

- 'Complaint' will be used in a generic sense to describe any concerns raised
- 'Grievance' will refer specifically to complaints which are formally escalated to the Principal or Board Chair, or are specifically presented in writing as a formal grievance by the complainant.

4 SCOPE OF POLICY

This policy addresses complaints and grievances:

- Relating to the operation and governance of the School

- Raised by parents, students, staff members, board members or members of the public, in this policy referred to as ‘complainants’ or ‘parties’
- Handled by staff or board members.

5 AIMS OF THE SCHOOL IN IMPLEMENTING THE POLICY

Rockingham Montessori School aims to create a culture of open communication, respect and shared problem solving, indicated when:

- Members of the school community feel comfortable raising complaints
- Staff and board members feel comfortable and supported when handling complaints or being the subject of a complaint
- Parties approach complaints positively as opportunities for shared problem solving
- Complaints are handled by the parties directly whenever possible
- Communication leads to mutual understanding and possible options for action even if the complaint cannot be fully resolved
- Relationships between parties, and between parties and the School is preserved
- Complaints raised are used to provide the School with useful information, to improve operations and governance
- Negative impacts on other people and the School are minimised. Students, individually or as a group, are not disadvantaged because of a complaint being raised.

6 COMMUNICATION

A key factor in raising, handling and resolving complaints successfully is good communication.

People use each instance of communication to make sense of a situation, to intuit motives and intentions, judge what they believe to be true and most relevant, and to decide what actions to take.

Making sense of situations is an iterative process; each step builds on previous interactions, actual and imagined. Clear and respectful communication can de-escalate conflict and generate creative solutions.

6.1 BENEFITS OF GOOD COMMUNICATION

Good communication skills and an intention to communicate openly and respectfully can help to:

- Reduce tension and defensiveness
- Reduce the likelihood of escalation
- Preserve relationships
- Clarify the problem
- Understand the point of view of both parties
- Identify creative ways to resolve the problem
- Decide on actions to be taken
- Assess the success of the resolution strategy

6.2 Clarity and timeliness of communication

It is the responsibility of the staff or board member handling the complaint to manage communication. Clear and timely communication can ease uncertainty and tension about:

- Confidentiality; who a complaint may be discussed with or referred to for handling
- Roles and responsibilities each party has in the process of resolving the complaint
- How the problem is understood by all parties
- Strategies and actions agreed on

- The timeline and process of review
- If all parties are not involved in the formulation of an action strategy
 - What parties can expect to happen, and in what timeframe
 - What is happening with a complaint, especially if some time is needed to investigate or put a plan into action
 - What will happen in the meantime, if the current situation is of serious concern
 - What the resolution of the complaint has been

Effective communication can help people feel heard, and understand why their preferred outcome or a resolution fully satisfying both parties may not be feasible.

6.3 Acts of communication

During the raising, handling and resolving of a complaint, many acts of communication will occur; all can be used mindfully to have a positive effect. Acts of communication can be:

- Formal or informal
- Direct or indirect
- One-to-one or in a group
- One-way or two-way
- Verbal (face to-face or by technology), written (eg, email, text, letters or meeting minutes) or symbolic (eg, body language, tone of voice or avoiding contact)

6.4 Meetings, facilitation, mediation and arbitration

Meetings are a common and useful method of communicating, and can vary widely in purpose, formality and format. It is helpful to understand the difference between meetings in a general sense, facilitation, mediation and arbitration.

There is often a correlation drawn between the level of escalation of a complaint and the use of facilitation, mediation or arbitration, but this is not necessarily the case. Any of these aids to conflict resolution may be used at any time, in different contexts. If help is sagely accessed early in the process, escalation can often be avoided.

6.4.1 Meetings

Meetings can provide the opportunity to ask as many questions as necessary, clearly define the problem and desired outcomes, gather and share information, explore different options, and agree on a course of action.

Face-to-face meetings, and even phone calls, enable non-verbal cues to improve understanding. These are 'richer' forms of communication, compared to email or text messaging, and useful for avoiding misunderstandings and resolving complex or sensitive problems.

As part of raising, handling or resolving a complaint, the complainant or complaint handler may ask for or arrange one or more meetings.

6.4.2 Meetings involving just the parties to the complaint

The vast majority of problems are solved by people informally or formally meeting with each other, sharing information, goals or concerns and deciding on a course of action.

Parties to a complaint are encouraged to do this, especially in the first instance.

6.4.3 Meetings with other parties present

If help is needed, the parties may invite others to help them, by mutual agreement. The invited parties may be present:

- As a support for either party

- To provide information or expertise
- Because the complaint involves or affects them
- To formally act as facilitator or mediator.

6.4.4 Facilitation and mediation

Facilitation and mediation is typically believed to improve meeting conduct and outcomes, and to mitigate the effect of power imbalances. The facilitator or mediator is often chosen because they are perceived to be objective or neutral and have the capacity to create a meeting space which is safe, productive, positive and equitable for all parties.

Facilitation and mediation are overlapping skills. Mediation is particularly used when parties have been unsuccessful in reaching an agreement but are both still willing to negotiate, and the goal of a mediation session is usually to help parties reach a binding agreement. Facilitation has a wider interpretation. For example, a meeting facilitator may be a skilled consultant experienced in helping groups with strategic planning, or they may be a colleague who can sit quietly in a meeting between two people and help them listen to each other.

If all parties to a complaint agree, they may ask a third party to facilitate or mediate a meeting, to help them achieve the process and outcomes they want.

In the case of a formal grievance, as defined by this policy:

- Any party to the grievance may request that a meeting be facilitated or mediated
- The facilitator or mediator will be appointed by the complaint handler, usually the Principal or Board Chair
- The facilitator or mediator may be a member of the school community or be a person external to the School.
- If a cost is incurred for facilitation or mediation, this cost will be borne equally by the parties.

6.4.5 Arbitration

Mutual problem-solving processes, including mediated and facilitated meetings, are usually used when:

- Parties feel there is a benefit to shared problem solving or
- It is expected according to school governance or operation processes, and
- There is a possibility of a negotiated solution.

There may be times when a situation is arbitrated rather than negotiated. Arbitration is when a person or institution with formal authority makes a decision or formal ruling about what is to happen. Typically the parties can put forward their arguments, but they do not have control over the final outcome.

A situation may be arbitrated for various reasons. The most obvious is when parties are unable or unwilling to negotiate, or when there are legal arguments involved. However, the complaint does not need to be escalated for arbitration to be the most appropriate method of handling. For example, School policies may clearly direct the resolution strategy, there may be an obvious solution, the situation may be urgent, or there may be confidentiality constraints on open negotiation.

The arbitrator can be a staff member, the Principal, Board Chair, Conciliation Committee, State Administrative Tribunal or Fair Work Commission.

6.5 Confidentiality

Confidentiality is an important issue for everyone, including the complainant, the subject of the complaint, the complaint handler, other members of the school community and sometimes the School itself. What should be communicated and to whom are sensitive questions and rarely straightforward. Experience and skill in complaint handling includes exercising judgement about the sharing of sensitive and confidential information.

It is important that all grievances are treated in a confidential manner. However, complete confidentiality is not possible in many situations.

- Equally important is that the complaint handler has all the support and information they need, and that a just and effective resolution is sought.
- It may be possible to deal with a problem without naming individuals. However, even if no names are given, the source of the complaint may be surmised.
- Depending on the nature of the complaint and the circumstances, it may be impractical to investigate or take action without identifying individuals.
- Staff members are rightly concerned that they should know about complaints that may be damaging to their reputation, livelihood or capacity to do their job well. The existence of such complaints and details of their content may be made known to them, and to others who may need to be consulted, at the discretion of the Principal or Board Chair.

People often seek an assurance of confidentiality before expressing their concerns. The question of confidentiality should be discussed on an individual basis with the person raising the complaint and the School's policy carefully explained.

Confidentiality should not be used as a weapon, for example, to keep a person excluded from issues that involve them, or to hold power over another person.

See also Section 7.3 Anonymous complaints.

6.6 Communicating with the media

The Principal or Board Chair, or their nominated representative, will represent the School when speaking with the media. This is sometimes called 'speaking with one voice' and can avoid many problems, such as inconsistent information, inappropriate disclosure of information, advancement of personal agendas, inflammation of conflict, and damage to the School's reputation in the wider community.

7 INTRACTABLE, VEXATIOUS AND ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS

7.1 Intractable complaints

An intractable complaint is one that appears impossible to resolve, especially if multiple attempts have been made over time, and in good faith.

Most complaints can be resolved if approached positively and skilfully by both parties. If a complaint becomes intractable, it can be because of the way it is handled, by either party.

However, there are some problems which are intractable by their very nature. In this case, skilful handling may enable the preservation of the relationship between the parties. It can be helpful to:

- Remember to appreciate the aspects of the School that are valued
- Be willing to accept the limits of what is possible, and
- Acknowledge that everyone is doing the best they can in the interests of their child and/or the School.

7.2 Vexatious or nuisance complaints

There may be a small number of persistent or aggressive complainants who are difficult to satisfy. The School may find on investigation that a complaint is without foundation or motivated by malice or another agenda.

The School has the right to protect staff members, board members, the Principal, other families and the School itself against unwarranted accusations, or attempts to cause a fracture in the School community.

7.3 Anonymous complaints

Anonymous complaints are where the complainant does not want to be identified or the complaint is made without providing a name at all.

Complainants are encouraged not to make anonymous complaints because:

- It is difficult to investigate, understand and act on a complaint without context or the opportunity to ask questions, or the capacity to negotiate or mediate between the parties.
- Ongoing, problematic situations cannot be resolved without the active participation of all parties to a complaint.
- Anonymous complaints indicate an unwillingness to be involved in shared problem solving, rather the desire for the complaint handler to ‘fix’ the problem. This becomes a serious problem when ‘fixing’ implies removing another member of the school community.
- It is important to protect members of the school community and the School from anonymous nuisance, unsubstantiated, or vexatious complaints.

The complainant should be given information and reassurance about confidentiality. If they persist in wishing to remain anonymous, it will be at the complaint handler, Principal or Board Chair’s discretion as to what, if any, action will be taken.

Anonymous complaints from the public about the behaviour of a group of students will normally be dealt with on a general basis, with reminders to all about School expectations.

Anonymous allegations about child abuse will follow Rockingham Montessori School policies and procedures for child safety.

8 SUPPORT FOR PARTIES TO COMPLAINTS AND PROMOTING IMPROVED OUTCOMES FOR THE SCHOOL

Complaints can have wide-reaching ramifications, both positive and negative. One purpose of a formalised complaints process is to support and protect parties involved in the complaint, innocent bystanders in the school community, and the School.

The process of being involved in a complaint is challenging and can affect people personally. Often people do not have experience in being in such a situation. Emotions can be intense, and cognitive function affected, with the ability to see other perspectives and generate creative solutions diminished.

People can benefit from support and guidance, and sometimes protection. At the same time, being involved in the successful resolution of a conflict is empowering and helps people build skills and confidence for handling problems in future,

8.1 Students

Every effort will be made to protect the interests of students during the course of any complaint; they are the core purpose of the School.

8.1.1 Students as innocent bystanders

Students are particularly vulnerable bystanders. It is the School's policy that complaints raised must not rebound adversely on students.

Most obviously, this applies to individual students whose parents or siblings may be a party to a complaint.

However, there can be unwanted ramifications on a class of students, for example, when a staff member is a party to a complaint. The whole school community can be adversely affected when grievances affect relations at the leadership level of the School.

8.1.2 Complaints from students

The principles of this policy apply to all complaints, however complaints from students may warrant extra care.

- Students may raise concerns with any staff member with whom they feel comfortable.
- In complex situations, once a matter is resolved, the outcome will be discussed with the student. To make sure it is fully understood and to avoid misunderstandings, a written record will be provided.
- Complaints that appear trivial still need to be handled seriously. Young people may test the complaints procedure on relatively minor issues before finding the confidence to raise something painful, like bullying.
- If the issue is a painful one, or if investigation is taking a long time, a student may need support from another student or an adult. Students will be encouraged to choose a person with whom they feel comfortable to provide support.
- Complaints, and ways of dealing with them, will be explained to students.
- Students can learn: how to support and mentor others; conflict resolution skills including communication; and specific processes such as Restorative Practices.
- Student can be encouraged to believe their views matter,

8.2 Complaints raised against staff members

Complaints made about staff members need particularly sensitive handling. They can impact a staff members' professional reputation and career, and their capacity to do their job effectively. The School will provide support and guidance for a staff member who has had a complaint made against them.

Complaints made about school principals have far-reaching, long-term implications for schools. Principals have few avenues of support within the school community. It is the responsibility of the Board Chair to support the Principal. It is appropriate for the Principal to access support outside the school community, with respect for confidentiality and the reputation of the School.

8.3 Support for complainants

Complainants may not always have experience or skill in bringing complaints. It is the responsibility of the staff member receiving the complaint, and the eventual complaint handler, to support and guide them if necessary.

This may mean putting aside feelings of defensiveness, and even the perception of personal attack, to listen to the complainant for the purpose of helping them communicate and resolve their problem.

The raising of a complaint should not prejudice staff or board members, or the School, against the complainant in future.

8.4 Training

Skills for handling complaints can be improved through training and experience. Support and guidance, and formal training, will be available to staff members.

9 TYPICAL STEPS IN RAISING, HANDLING AND RESOLVING OF COMPLAINTS

A typical complaint procedure involves a number of logical steps, as well as human, ethical and practical considerations. Different people have different responsibilities at different times and in different contexts.

This section of the policy breaks down the typical steps taken in the process of resolving a complaint. Every situation is different, and people may use their best judgement, but using a process is helpful because people can be guided about what to do, what to expect and what is reasonable.

9.1 Formulating and presenting the complaint

9.1.1 Clarify the problem

When a member of the school community feels ‘something is not right’ it can be hard to work out what the problem really is, even if it appears obvious at first glance. Complainants are encouraged to take the time to clarify their thoughts and feelings about the situation, gather information, identify what the core problem is for them, and how their needs or wants may be met in various possible scenarios.

9.1.2 Be mindful of ‘car-park chatter’

Other people may be able to help clarify concerns if they are unclear. However, mindfulness is warranted. ‘Car-park chatter’ can play an important role in sharing ideas within the school community but it can be destructive. There is a difference in both intent and effect between having a conversation to help to clarify a problem, and spreading discontent through the school community. There is a particular danger when a complainant feels they need other people to support their position, in order to be taken seriously. The School can mitigate this by taking all complaints seriously.

9.1.3 Choose who to approach

When considering who to approach, it is reasonable, and human nature, to consider ‘approachability’. But it is also prudent to consider who has the power to actually help make the desired changes. This is usually the person most directly involved, or whose area of responsibility is involved.

If the person perceived as approachable is chosen over the person with the power to effect change, this is not necessarily the ‘wrong thing to do’. There are many factors to be considered. The School’s aim is that people feel comfortable raising complaints, and the School ultimately benefits from complaints which are brought forward rather than festering simply because a complainant feels nervous or intimidated. Furthermore, the person initially approached may be able to help the complainant better formulate and present their complaint to the appropriate person, and ultimately result in a better outcome.

However, choosing approachability will increase the likelihood that the person approached cannot act to resolve the complaint and will need to refer the complaint to the appropriate person. This will increase the number of people party to the complaint, complicate communication, potentially take more time, and reduce the degree of confidentiality.

9.1.4 Make a positive approach

One of the biggest barriers to change and resolving problems is defensiveness. The initial approach will strongly influence whether the person feels like a partner in problem solving, or whether they feel they need to defend themselves or the School.

Having said that, if the complainant has trouble with the approach, it is the responsibility of the staff member, whenever possible, to guide and support them and resist their own defensive reaction.

9.2 Who is the most suitable person to handle the complaint?

9.2.1 A direct approach

Cooperative problem solving is most effective when undertaken directly with the person involved in the situation, who has the capacity to make changes and actively work to resolve the issue.

This policy recommends a direct approach to the person involved, or best placed to resolve the complaint, and every effort being made by the parties to resolve the complaint without escalation.

9.2.2 Escalating the complaint

Escalating the complaint tends to create a situation where parties are more defensive or oppositional. This can result in win/lose or compromise solutions, rather than win/win outcomes. Escalation increases the probability the outcome will be decided by arbitration, that is, out of the control of the parties. Escalated complaints also tend to have longer resolution periods.

However, there are times when referring or escalating a complaint is perceived to be the only or best approach. This may be if the parties are genuinely unable to resolve the issue and need help, if either party is failing to participate constructively, or if there is a power imbalance. It can also be if only a person in a position of more authority has needed information or can take necessary actions.

9.2.3 Typical stages in making, referring and escalating a complaint

Keeping the above in mind, below is a list of parties to approach with a complaint. Escalation or referral typically occurs down the list but not always. The right person or institution to approach will be different in each circumstance, and complainants are urged to use their best judgement.

Initial approach:

- Staff member perceived as most approachable, if perceived as necessary; especially appropriate for complaints raised by students
- Staff member most directly involved or responsible
- Board Chair if related to governance and not operations

Solicit advice from, refer to or escalate to:

- Program Coordinator or Deputy (education related)
- Business Manager (administration related)
- Principal (all operations)
- Board Chair (governance related)
- Conciliation Committee (see Section 9.6.3)
- State Administrative Tribunal, State Schoolteachers Union or Fair Work Commission

9.2.4 Unhelpful escalation

It is never appropriate or helpful to escalate a complaint to the Association of Independent Schools of WA (AISWA) or the Department of Education and Training (DET). Their response will be to refer it back to the Principal.

Neither is it helpful to allow the complaint to spill over into the local community via, for example, letters to the local paper. This can have a direct negative effect on outcomes for students, and can threaten the School's reputation and financial viability or create a fracture in the school community.

9.3 Receiving the complaint

An expression of concern or a simple query may grow into a major matter if people feel they have not been taken seriously. Matters with the potential to become problematic can fade into insignificance if they are handled well in the initial stage.

People need to feel their views matter and they have agency to resolve problems. It may be the person raising the complaint is upset or unclear, or unskilled in communication in a conflict situation. The person receiving the complaint will make every effort to resist defensiveness, and make a genuine attempt to listen, understand the problem from the complainant's viewpoint, and guide and support them in the complaints process.

Staff members will determine soon after receiving a complaint if they are the appropriate person to handle it, perhaps with advice or support, or if they should refer it.

9.4 Referring the complaint to the person best placed to handle it

If a staff or board member is approached about a matter that lies outside their area of responsibility they should refer it to the appropriate person. This is the person whose responsibility includes the issues raised, and who has the authority to act on the complaint.

When a complaint needs to be referred, this will be made clear to the person who raised the complaint. Perceived confidentiality needs should be considered. If the complainant does not wish the complaint referred, no action may be possible (see Section 7.3 Anonymous complaints).

The complainant will be introduced to the person now handling the complaint, if necessary. A clear handover of responsibilities, information, insight and expectations will aid resolution of the complaint.

9.5 Resolving the complaint

Both parties may be actively involved in developing a resolution strategy, or a complaint may be mainly handled by a representative of the School.

All reasonable efforts will be made to resolve complaints to the satisfaction of both parties.

Resolutions to complaints will be in line with School policies and procedures.

Resolution of a complaint may not necessarily mean major changes are made; satisfaction may come from any of the following:

- Feeling a concern has been taken seriously
- The opportunity to discuss a concern and share different perspectives and possible solutions or outcomes
- A better understanding of School procedures, policy or philosophy
- Knowing that changes have been made
- Knowing the School is now aware of a possible problem
- A solution that is not the one sought but is perceived as well-considered

- A simple act of acknowledgement
- A considered response
- An apology

9.5.1 Communicating the resolution of a complaint

A clear sense of a resolution being reached, or ‘closure’, helps people to move on.

Clear communication between the parties is key to reaching a mutual understanding that the complaint is either: resolved; cannot be completely resolved to full satisfaction of all parties at this time; or a potential solution has been put in place with a time set for review. This communication is the responsibility of the complaint handler.

For formal grievances, as defined in this policy, parties will receive a written summary of the complaint, within the demands of confidentiality. This summary may include: a shared understanding of the problem, who was involved, the process undertaken, the resolution strategy, and the outcome or future time to review.

This written summary should form part of the grievance records (see Section 10 Records).

If the complaint is unresolved, escalation may be warranted.

9.6 Escalating the complaint to a formal grievance

If attempts at resolving the complaint have been unsuccessful, either party may escalate the complaint to the Principal or Board Chair.

Once a complaint is escalated to the level of the Principal or Board Chair, it becomes a formal grievance, according to this policy, and records should be kept (see Section 10 Records).

Complaints escalated to formal grievances will typically be considered by the Principal or Board Chair only if the Principal or Board Chair considers reasonable efforts have been made by the parties to resolve the complaint themselves.

9.6.1 Escalation to principal

A matter may be referred or escalated to the Principal:

- If the complaint involves their direct responsibilities
- If the complaint is about a staff member
- At the request of the staff or board member handling the complaint
- At the request of the complainant
- Members of the public should bring complaints directly to the Principal

If escalated to the Principal, the Principal will typically discuss the matter fully with the staff member handling the complaint and be provided with relevant documentation.

The Principal may:

- Offer a new problem-solving approach to the parties, or a possible resolution
- Seek a meeting with all relevant parties, including specifically structured meetings such as Restorative Practices
- Arbitrate the grievance
- Refer the complaint to the Board Chair
- Seek external expertise or advice
- Refer the matter to the Fair Work Commission

9.6.2 Escalation to board chair

A complaint may be made, referred or escalated to the Board Chair in some circumstances, for example:

- If the complaint involves the School's governance and not operations
- If the complaint is about a member of the Board, or the whole Board
- If the complaint is about the Principal
- At the request of the Principal

If escalated to the Board Chair, the Chair will typically discuss the matter fully with the Principal and be provided with relevant documentation.

The Board Chair may, for example:

- Suggest a new problem-solving approach to the parties, or a possible resolution
- Seek a meeting with all relevant parties
- Arbitrate the grievance
- Appoint a Conciliation Committee
- Seek external expertise or advice

9.6.3 Escalation to a conciliation committee

The Board Chair may escalate a grievance to a Conciliation Committee.

Members of the Conciliation Committee are appointed by the Board Chair. Committee members will include two or three Board Members (other than the Chair) and may include an external facilitator. One person will act as the Convenor, with the responsibility to arrange and facilitate the meetings.

The Convenor will arrange a meeting with committee members, the Principal, relevant staff members, and the complainants, who may bring a supportive friend (legal representation is not considered appropriate at this stage). Parties will be asked if they have any documentation they wish considered and this will be distributed to all attendees.

Committee members commit to:

- Read all relevant documentation before the meeting
- Attend for the full meeting and attend follow up meetings if required, as time and continuity are essential
- Keep the proceedings of the meeting confidential
- Aim for a positive outcome

At times during the meeting, the Convenor may request the withdrawal of non-committee members from the room, to give the Committee the chance to speak in private.

Any agreements reached will be summarised at the end of the meeting, then recorded and circulated to all attendees as soon as possible, by the Convenor.

The Conciliation Committee will report to the Board Chair, who will typically endorse the Committee's negotiated agreement or arbitrated decision.

9.6.4 Escalation to state administrative tribunal or fair work commission

In extreme cases, complainants may be dissatisfied with the process followed by the School, or the outcome of this process. In this case, they have the option to appeal to the State Administrative Tribunal (SAT) or the Fair Work Commission (FWC).

The School is an independent legal body, which is self-governed. This means that, given the School's own legal process is properly followed, it is unlikely SAT would interfere in a decision made via this process. If, however, the School did not comply with its own Constitution (or Rules), then SAT may make a contrary ruling in the matter.

In the case of FWC being involved, it is likely a staff member has raised a complaint against the School which has been unsatisfactorily resolved. The State Schoolteachers' Union would have a role to play in this case, as an advocate for the staff member.

9.7 Complaints involving police

If there is a complaint involving the police, the Principal (or appointed delegate) will:

- Represent the School in liaising with the police
- Be responsible for actions taken within the School, in line with relevant School policies
- Inform the Board Chair of the situation as soon as possible.

10 RECORDS

The School will keep a confidential record of all grievances which are escalated to the Principal or Board Chair. Records of a grievance will be held as per the guidelines within the RMS Records Management Policy and will be securely stored and safely preserved.

The purposes of a record are to:

- Provide a written record for possible future use including legal action
- Allow the Principal and Board Chair, with consideration for confidentiality, to review grievances
- Highlight patterns of complaints indicating a need for action.

The record will usually include:

- Date when the grievance was raised
- Name of person raising the grievance, and relevant other people
- Copies of communications, including notes of verbal communications, as misunderstandings and lapses of memory are common
- Brief statement of the issue, resolution strategy and outcome.

11 REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed every five years, or more often if required.

The Principal is responsible for the periodic review of this policy but either Principal or Board may initiate a review if deemed necessary.

In particular, review may be required if the policy does not meet the needs of handling a particular grievance or a novel situation, or if a pattern of unsatisfactory grievance handling or resolutions is perceived.

12 Appendix: Summary of complaints process

Step	Action taken	Party Responsible
1	<p>Clarify Complaint</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Thoughts and feelings Accurate information Core problem Get advice but don't gossip 	Complainant
2	<p>Make complaint</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Make complaint to person most directly involved (or person deemed approachable) Approach positively as shared problem solving 	Complainant
4	<p>Receive Complaint</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Listen for understanding and resist defensiveness Guide complainant in complaints process Refer complaint if necessary 	Complaint handler
3	<p>Refer or escalate according to Section 9.2.3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program Coordinator or Deputy (education) Business Manager (administration) Principal (operations) Board Chair (governance) Conciliation Committee State Administrative Tribunal, State Schoolteachers Union or Fair Work Commission 	<p>Referring the complaint: complaint handler.</p> <p>Either party may escalate the complaint.</p> <p>Conciliation Committees appointed by Board Chair</p>
4	<p>Resolve complaint</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Aim for resolution satisfactory to all parties. Accept this is not always possible Involve complainant where possible Protect and support parties to the complaint, other members of the school community and the School Ensure resolution is in line with School policies and procedures 	<p>Complaint handler</p> <p>Both parties are involved in resolving the problem</p>
	<p>Communicate</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Manage the entire complaints process. Communication is key. Keep people apprised. Convene and facilitate meetings. Use a facilitator, mediator or arbitrator if required. Include relevant third parties. Communicate the selected resolution strategy Produce a written record of grievances Be sensitive to confidentiality needs of all parties, as well as who needs to be informed of pertinent information 	<p>Complaint handler</p> <p>Good communication by complainant greatly improves outcomes</p>