

GRIEVANCE RESOLUTION POLICY

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POLICY

Mumbulla School will manage concerns, issues, grievances and complaints in a timely, fair, and confidential manner.

GUIDELINES

1. Rationale

Mumbulla School for Rudolf Steiner Education recognises that grievances and differences will arise in the life of a school community, and that issues raised through feedback and through grievance resolution provide a valuable opportunity for the school and community to learn and to grow. Mumbulla School recognises that this is not always an easy process and it is the school's intention to create a culture that welcomes discussion, feedback and dialogue.

In this spirit, the School encourages open and honest communication and is fully supportive of a respectful, cooperative and transparent approach in handling grievances. The school understands that sensitive issues will arise and it is committed to providing a confidential, non-judgmental and supportive environment to ensure that all members of the school community are treated with respect and fairness.

Formal complaints and grievances have a single point of entry and management

A clear Grievance Resolution policy and procedure provides a framework for this process.

All teachers and staff will be provided with adequate professional development to ensure effective communication within the school.

2. Scope

This policy covers complaints or grievances that are addressed through either informal or formal procedures.

Grievance resolution processes do not apply in cases where an issue is raised in the ordinary course of school life that can be readily discussed, clarified or resolved. These issues fall within the realm of dialogue, comment and feedback, and are an important part of the School's endeavour to improve the quality of the learning and community environment; they would not normally be viewed as complaints or grievances unless specific action was requested. In most cases where parents have queries or concerns relating to educational matters these should be taken to the class teacher.

The Policy does not cover grievances brought by students against other students as those matters are dealt with in the Social Behaviour policy.

3. Definitions

- **Grievance or complaint** – a statement expressing dissatisfaction about any aspect of school life that is made to a representative of the school and which requires action or response.
- **Queries and concerns** – questions or issues of a minor nature, usually expressed verbally
- **Representatives of the school** – Administrative staff and members of the College of Teachers or the Board of Directors.
- **Staff** – employees of the school
- **Grievant** – the person raising the concern or grievance
- **Respondent** – the person against whom the concern or grievance is brought.
- **Informal procedures** for handling grievances include efforts to clarify and resolve grievances through direct communication and problem solving with the relevant person. Informal dialogue would normally be the first option for the resolution of queries and concerns.
- **Formal procedures** provide the necessary support, protection and structure to all concerned if resolution has not been achieved through informal means.

- **Communication Manager** – member of College Executive whose role it is to co-ordinate the management of grievance resolution within the school (see Attachment C: Communication Manager Duty Statement)

4. Principles of grievance handling at Mumbulla School

The school's policy for handling complaints is based on principles of confidentiality, procedural fairness, substantive fairness, timeliness, record keeping and transparency.

4.1 Confidentiality means that:

- A person should be able to raise a complaint and receive advice in confidence.
- a complaint should not be referred elsewhere, formally investigated or discussed with others without the consent of the grievant.
- An anonymous grievance cannot be acted upon (except in relation to the Child Protection policy or criminal offences)
- Records must be kept securely and confidentially.

4.2 Procedural fairness in practice means that:

- The process will be fair and impartial
- Before proceeding, the grievant will be informed of the school's process for resolving grievances via the Grievance Resolution policy and of the implications of making a formal/written complaint
- The respondent has the right to know details of the complaint against them.
- The respondent has the right to put their side.
- Before they respond, the respondent has a right to know the implications for them in terms of disciplinary action if the complaint is proven.
- Persons handling the grievance should be fair, impartial and unbiased in their investigation and if there is conflict of interest, the matter should be referred to another person within the school or from outside the school should the Board deem this necessary.
- The procedure as outlined in the attached flow chart will be followed in all cases.

4.3 Substantive fairness or impartiality means that

- The person/s handling the grievance should remain impartial and not assume guilt. They should determine that the complaint is substantiated only after hearing from both/all parties, checking other relevant evidence and taking into account any mitigating circumstances.

4.4 Principles of timeliness include an awareness that:

- delays at any stage of the grievance procedure can result in a denial of procedural fairness.
- delays in determining the grievance can be critical in any appeal
- delay in addressing issues in a complaint can lead to the exacerbation of the situation, a continuation of the problem, a worsening of the relationship between the parties involved and increased distress for all parties.
- delays can also result in more time being expended in dealing with a grievance once action is taken because the situation has escalated.
- There should be an initial response to receipt of a grievance within 24 hours.

4.5 Principles of record keeping include:

- Records must be kept to avoid relying on memory about details of allegations, responses and actions.
- Records can be used for statistical purposes to identify systemic problems.

- o Records can substantiate procedural fairness in the event of an appeal against process or outcome of grievance investigation
- o If allegations are complex, record the complaint, the response, the evidence of witnesses and ask parties to sign.

4.6 Principles of transparency are related to procedural fairness and include:

- o Effective implementation of Mumbulla School policies and procedures
- o Effective communication to all parties about relevant policies and procedures
- o Effective communication to all parties of the of the outcomes, of reasons for the outcome and, where appropriate, the evidence which was relied upon
- o Principle of openness, honesty and fair dealing
- o Fair and accurate reporting if the case is referred to other persons/groups in the steps towards more formal action
- o Fair and accurate reporting particularly where disciplinary action is likely to result.

5. Responsibilities of Communication Manager, Board members, teachers, staff and parents &

carers

All representatives of the school and in particular the Communication Manager have a responsibility to ensure that the **grievant** understands the school's processes for resolving grievances and their rights and responsibilities in relation to the school's policy. The Communication Manager is also responsible for responding appropriately to concerns or grievances and managing the resolution process in keeping with the above principles and the Grievance Resolution Policy and procedures.

Staff, parents and students have a responsibility to contribute to a respectful and safe school environment. In particular, staff and parents have a responsibility to participate in any grievance resolution process in good faith, to engage constructively in the process and to not initiate complaints with mischievous or malicious intent.

It is the responsibility of the Communication Manager and of all groups to identify trends of concern, and to report on these to the Board. It is the responsibility of class teachers to report trends in queries and concerns to the College Executive.

The Board bears the final responsibility for procedural oversight of the policy and practice of grievance resolution in the school, and will regularly review this to ensure that the policy is being applied consistently and effectively, particularly in relation to conflict of interest.

6. Who to contact for assistance in making a complaint

A core principle of the grievance resolution process is that people are encouraged to raise complaints directly with the person concerned or with the person who may have the most relevant information to assist them. This is appropriate in matters where the complainant feels comfortable with making a direct approach. When that is not the case the person with the grievance or complaint should approach the Communication Manager.

The Communication Manager, if approached, is responsible for:

- accepting the grievance in a confidential and non-judgmental manner
- ensuring that the person understands the process and receives a copy of the Grievance Resolution Policy
- coordinating the management of the resolution process. (See *Attachment C: Communication Manager Duty Statement*)

7. Appointment of Alternative Communication Manager.

7.1 In the case of the unavailability of the usual Communication Manager due to illness, absence or any other reason, another member of College Executive will act as alternative Communication Manager.

7.2 In the case of any indication of conflict of interest arising, a member of College Exec will act as Communication Manager.

7.3 If there is no member of College Executive available and without a conflict of interest, the Board will appoint an alternative Communication Manager from outside the school community.

8. Grievance Resolution procedure

The Grievance Resolution procedure outlines the process for handling grievances.

The Grievance Resolution procedures are in the form of flow charts attached to this policy. (See *Attachment A: Grievance Resolution procedure – Parents* and *Attachment B: Grievance Resolution procedure – Staff*)

Date approved: Thursday 8 August 2013

Signed: Board

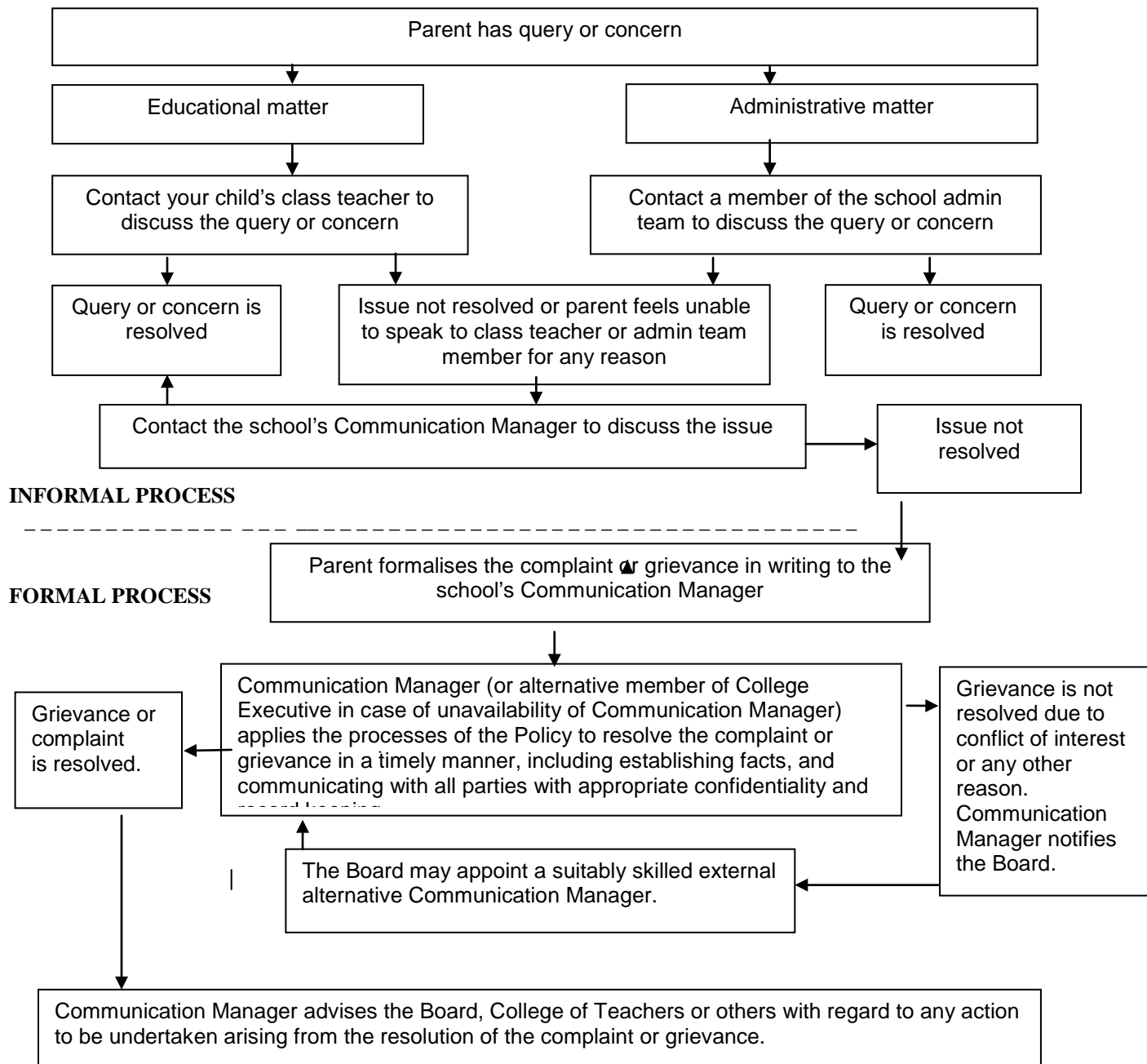
Date to be reviewed: August 2015 or before as needed

ATTACHMENT A GRIEVANCE RESOLUTION PROCEDURE - PARENTS

This flowchart outlines the key steps for resolving a parent query, concern, complaint or grievance at Mumbulla School.

The steps and process outlined are based on the detailed principles and directions set out in the *Mumbulla Grievance Resolution Policy 2010* ('the Grievance Policy').

Review processes (but not confidential details) are monitored by the Mumbulla School Board of Directors ('the Board') so that all parties can be confident that the Policy is applied consistently to the benefit of all.

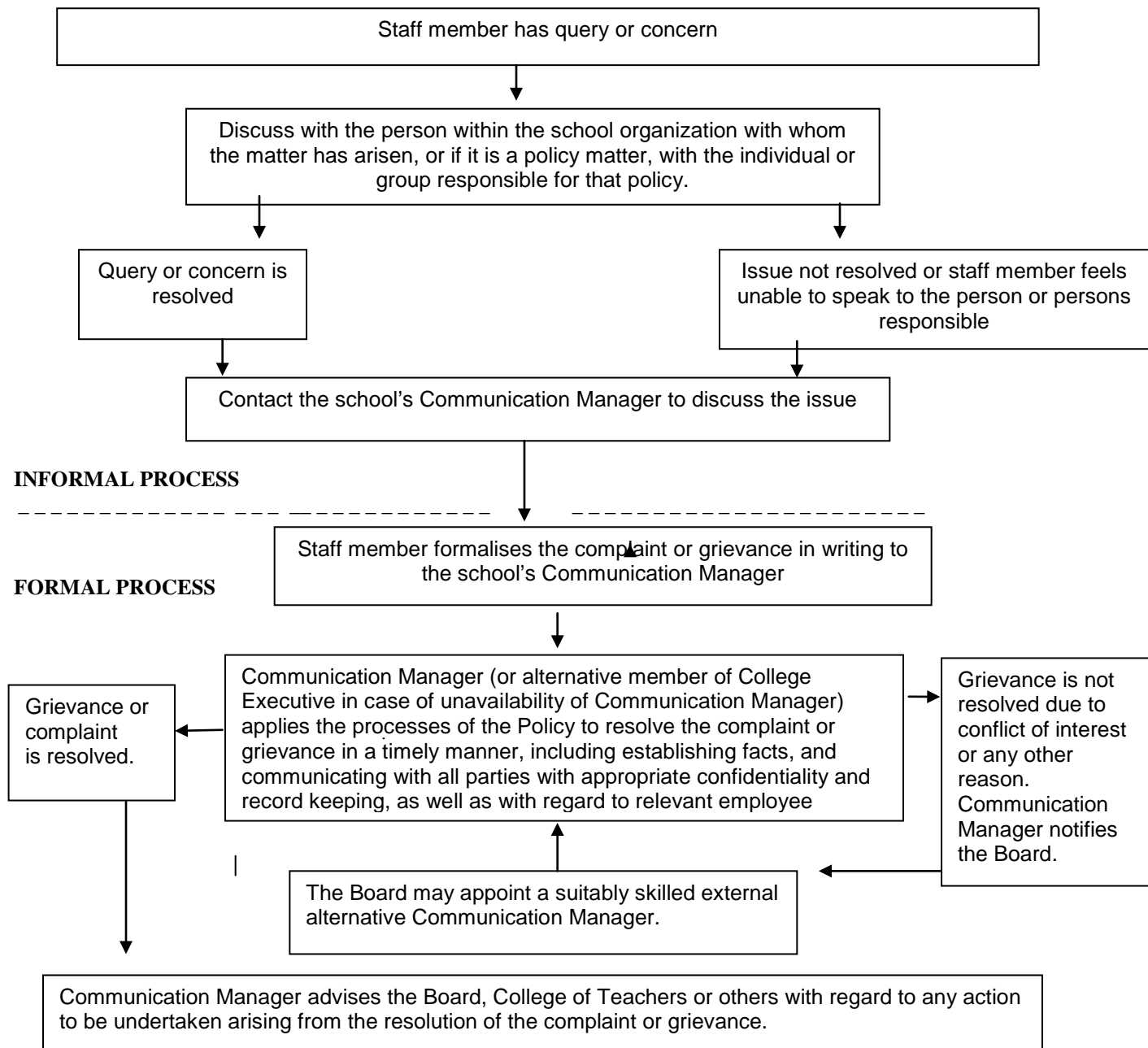


**ATTACHMENT B
GRIEVANCE RESOLUTION PROCEDURE – STAFF**

This flowchart outlines the key steps for resolving staff queries, concerns, complaints or grievances at Mumbulla School.

The steps and process outlined are based on the detailed principles and directions set out in the *Mumbulla Grievance Resolution Policy 2010* ('the Grievance Policy').

Review processes (but not confidential details) are monitored by the Mumbulla School Board of Directors ('the Board') so that all parties can be confident that the Policy is applied consistently to the benefit of all.



ATTACHMENT C COMMUNICATION MANAGER DUTY STATEMENT

The Communication Manager's duties are to:

1. take the lead responsibility for tasks related to communication and complaint handling as set out in the Grievance Resolution Policy;
2. to manage tasks related to communication and complaint handling in line with the principles of confidentiality, procedural fairness, substantive fairness, timeliness, recordkeeping and transparency;
3. provide information to members of the school community about the grievance process including providing guidance about the handling of informal queries and concerns;
4. be available to hear grievances from any member of the school community;
5. be the first point of contact for any staff or parent issues that have elevated from an informal query or concern to a formal complaint or grievance;
6. manage complaints and grievances in line with the Grievance Resolution Policy including:
 - a. receiving complaint or grievance in writing or assisting with the preparation of a written complaint or grievance;
 - b. responding in a timely manner including an initial response within 24 hours;
 - c. respecting confidentiality requirements;
 - d. informing the College Exec and the Board of any conflicts of interest;
 - e. appropriate recordkeeping;
 - f. following up to ensure outcomes are achieved;
 - g. where necessary communicating with relevant mandated groups.
7. to identify any systemic issues arising from a grievance and to bring these to the attention of the relevant group.
8. report to Board meetings with an activity summary in a de-identified format including:
 - a. information about informal and formal approaches;
 - b. outcomes and indications about severity, impact and risk;
 - c. systemic issues.