

# Complaints and Disputes Policy

For use by: Board & Association Members, Students, Parents/Carers, service providers, and other stakeholders associated with Bethel Christian School.



Purpose	Policy outlining the school approach to complaints and disputes handling
Delegation	Principal / Leadership Team
First Written	June 2009
Date Approved	15 September 2023
Approved By	Board Chair on behalf of Governing Body
Review History	2014, 2019, 2020, 2023
Review Cycle	Annually

## Introduction

Our values of loving, belonging, and growing help us shape the way we do life at Bethel Christian School (Bethel). We are dedicated to reflecting the character of Christ as we create an environment where staff, students and the parent community at Bethel can flourish.

It is inevitable that in the course of human interaction issues will arise that need to be resolved. Bethel is dedicated to working together to resolve issues and restore relationships between all members of the school community.

Bethel encourages all members of the school community to communicate openly and honestly, aiming to maintain positive relationships within the school.

## Scope

This policy applies to Board Members, Association Members, parents/carers, students, service providers and other stakeholders that have a direct relationship with the school. It outlines the school's approach to the management of concern complaints and disputes within the school community.

Complaints for staff are managed under a different policy, please refer to Bethel Christian School Staff Complaints Policy for further information.

## Definitions

**Concern:** something that has made a person troubled or anxious about an issue and is usually expressed at a 'first level' i.e. to a class teacher at the classroom door or by telephone or email directly to the relevant staff member. Depending on the nature of the concern, it can often be resolved at this 'first level' in an informal manner.

*NB: It would be prudent nonetheless for the teacher or staff member concerned to make and file a brief note regarding the issue and interaction in case of future escalation and to assist in the identification of patterns emerging over time.*

**Complaint:** an 'expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organisation, related to its products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required' (as defined by the AS/NZS 10002:2014 Guidelines for Complaint Management in Organisations).

A complaint may be made if a complainant thinks that the school or someone has, for example:

- done something wrong;
- failed to do something it/they should have done;
- acted unfairly or impolitely; or
- ignored their concern.

**Dispute:** a pursued unresolved complaint that has been escalated, either internally and/or externally to the school.

## Policy Statement

Bethel will apply the following principles to the management of all concerns, complaints and disputes:

### Procedural Fairness

The complaint process will be clear, open and accessible to all members of the school community and the public.

Complainants are able to make enquiries, raise concerns or lodge complaints about the provision of education, or the conduct of Bethel Staff and have these issues dealt with efficiently, fairly and promptly. All persons will be treated with respect and courtesy.

All members of staff will be given the opportunity to respond to any complaints that are made against them. Any complaint against a staff member will not be handled by the staff member whose actions are the subject of the complaint.

Complaints from former students, and/or their parents or guardians, will be accepted and dealt with despite enrolment of the student having ceased.

### Child and Resolution Focussed

In all matters, the educational wellbeing and safety of students is the first priority. We will always respond to allegations and complaints in the best interest of the children. Complaints relating to child protection, discrimination, harassment, or bullying may be referred to Codes of Conduct, Behaviour Management, or Child Protection policies and procedures.

Complaints may be raised by students with or without the support or knowledge of their parents in the first instance

Bethel will manage all complaints from children in accordance with the guidelines provided by the Commission for Children and Young People 2013 "Are you listening? Guidelines for making complaints systems accessible and responsive to children and young people" ([report-are-you-listening-guidelines-for-making-complaints-systems-accessible-and-responsive-to-children-and-young-people-june-2013.pdf](https://www.cyp.wa.gov.au/reports-and-publications/are-you-listening-guidelines-for-making-complaints-systems-accessible-and-responsive-to-children-and-young-people-june-2013.pdf) ([ccyp.wa.gov.au](https://www.cyp.wa.gov.au))). A flow chart has been provided in Appendix 2 that is utilised by children attending the school.

### Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints will be reviewed for credibility and dealt with by the Principal/Board Chair following the standard procedures.

### Records

Bethel Leadership will keep a complaint register of all formal complaints. They must be well maintained and clear, confidential records are to be kept.

Details recorded:

- Date when the complaint or allegation was raised, and to whom;
- Name of person raising the complaint and the parties involved;
- Brief description of complaint;
- Member of staff handling the complaint;
- Name of person/member of staff responsible for reviewing decisions made;
- Brief statement of outcome including date a resolution reached;
- Whether any referral was made to the School Board; and
- Location of the detailed confidential file (if applicable)

## Response

Any individual with a concern or complaint is encouraged to first approach the person concerned and seek to promptly address the issue.

Parents/carers, students and other members of the school community:

- May raise concerns about a staff member with their immediate line manager or the Deputy Principal if they are uncertain.
- If the complaint is about the Principal, the complaint is to be directed to the Bethel School Board Chair
- If the Complaint is about the Board or Association, the complaint is to be raised with the Board Chair who will determine if mediation is required through an external agency.
- If the complaint is about the Board Chairman, the complaint must be raised in writing and addressed to the Secretary of the Board who will delegate to a suitable member of the Association for investigation.

For other community members (e.g. volunteers) all complaints should be addressed in writing to the School Principal.

Confidentiality is maintained, to the extent that is consistent with legislative requirements and the principles outlined in this policy.

The subject of the complaint is always informed of the substance of the complaint.

Vexatious, trivial or previously finalised issues will not be pursued.

## Commitment to Continuous Improvement

All complaints will be monitored and their management evaluated to reduce the occurrence of systemic and recurring problems.

## Role of the Director General

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. Any student, parent or community member is entitled to contact the Director General with concerns

about how the School has dealt with a complaint. Information is available on the Department of Education Website. While the Director General may consider whether the School has breached the registration standards, she does not have the power to intervene in a complaint or override a school's decision.

### **External Mediation, Conciliation or Arbitration**

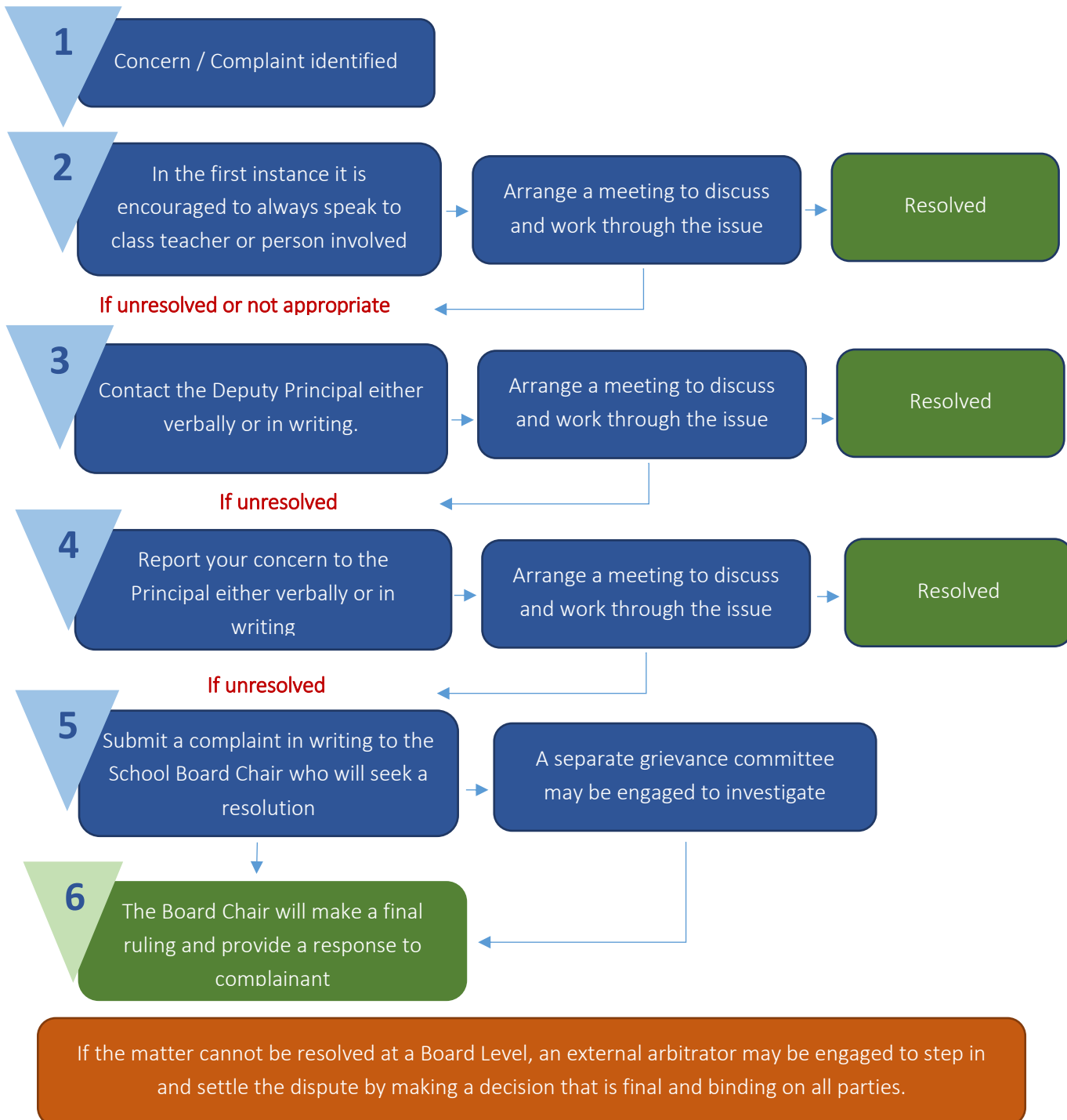
Every reasonable effort will be made to resolve internal disputes before the intervention of outside agencies or mediators.

Unresolved complaints can be referred by mutual agreement to an independent third party for final resolution.

## Appendix 1: General Complaints Flow Chart

Bethel utilises Peacewise principals to aid in dealing with any complaints, concerns or issues that may arise. We are committed to providing a fair, efficient and thorough complaints management process.

([https://peacewise.org.au/wp-content/uploads/The\\_Peacemaking\\_Principles-.pdf](https://peacewise.org.au/wp-content/uploads/The_Peacemaking_Principles-.pdf))



**Note:** Any student, parent or community member is entitled to contact the Director General with concerns about how the school has dealt with a complaint, however they do not have the power to intervene or overturn a schools decision



Appendix 2: Student Complaints Flow Chart

# Student Complaint Flowchart



**Do you have an issue or complaint? Has something bad happened at school?**

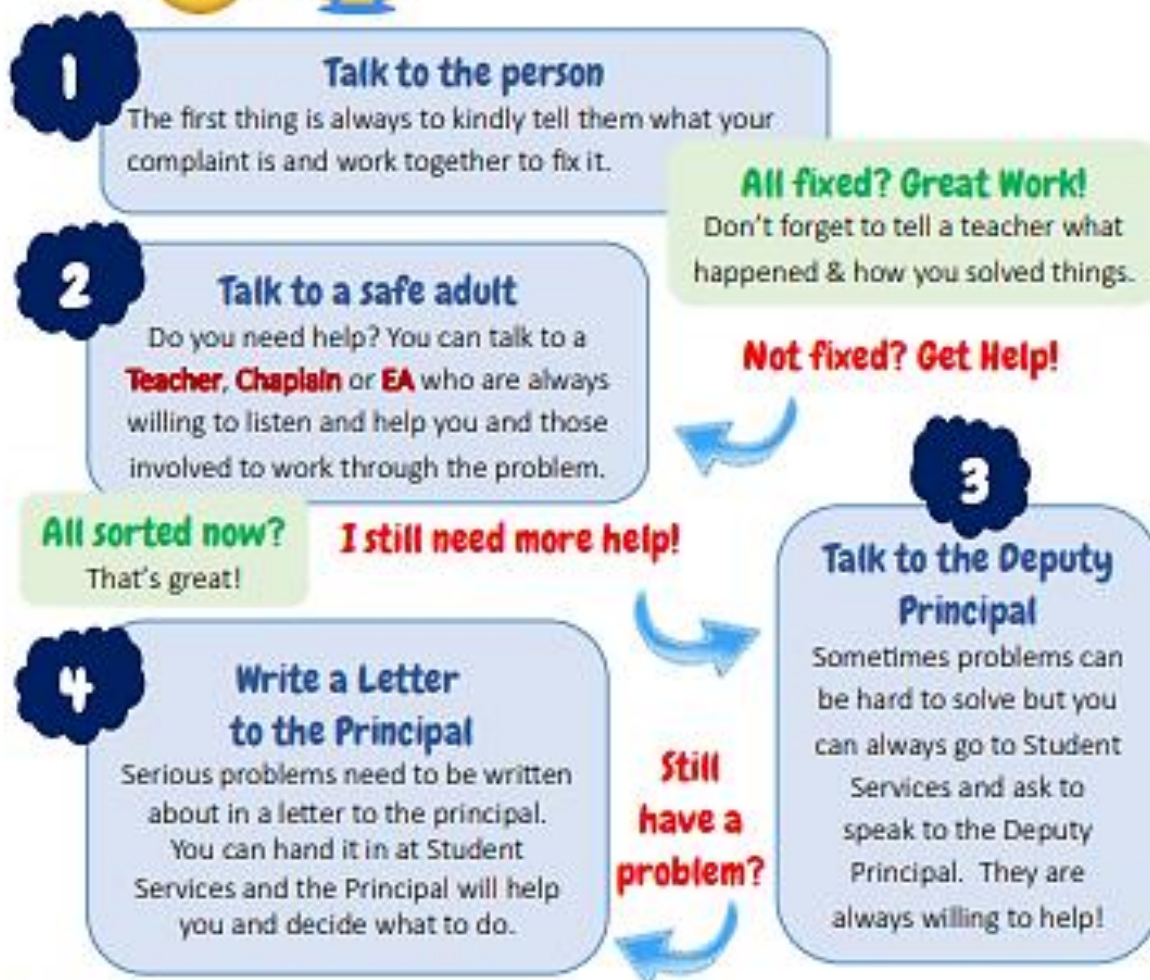
You should follow this flowchart to help you solve problems that happen at school, or between students, with teachers, or with others who are part of the school community.

Are you feeling...?



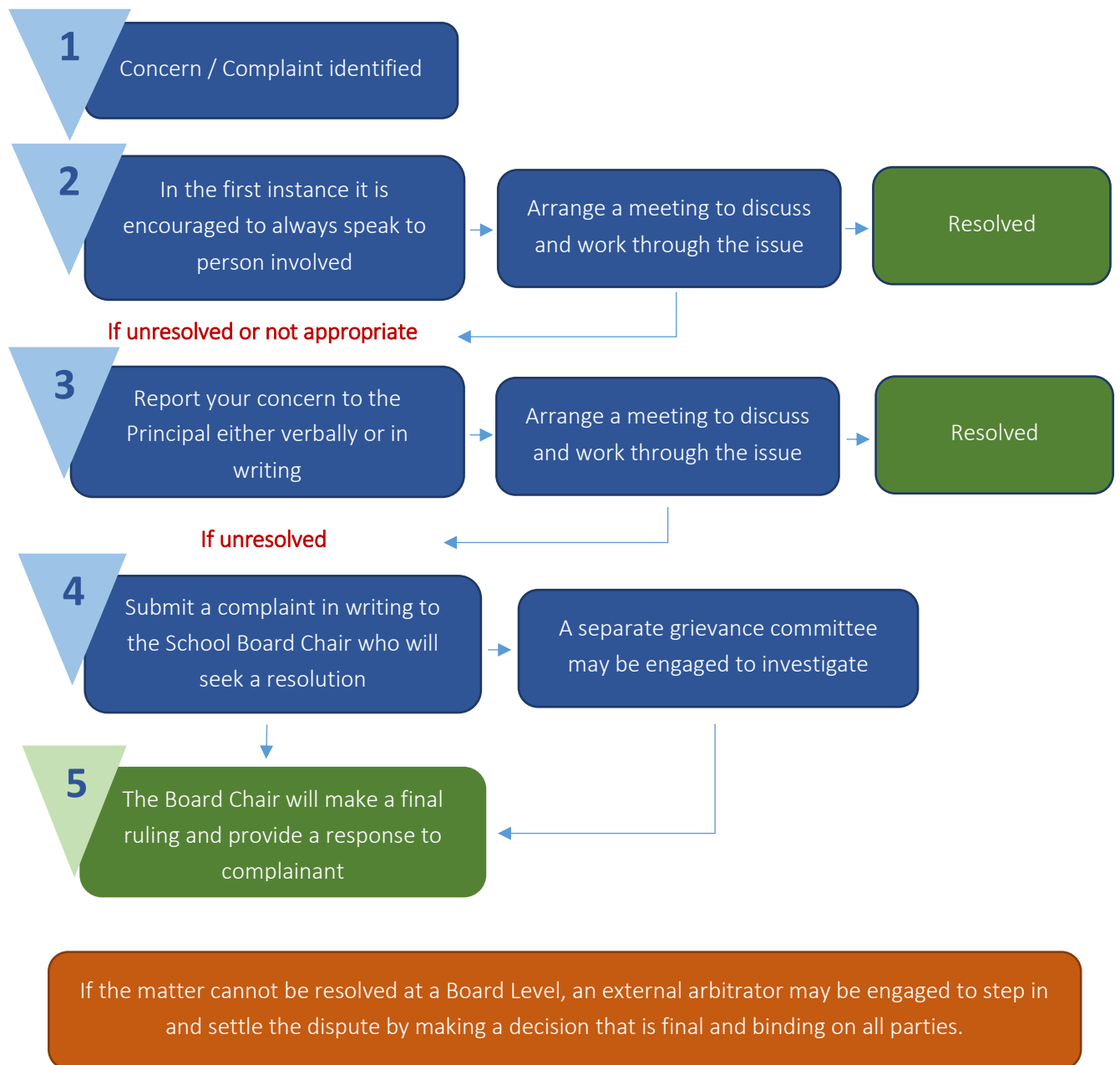
**You should always:**

1. Talk about it and tell the truth;
2. Ask an adult for help if you need it;
3. Do your part to fix things;
4. Try and make peace wherever possible.



**All fixed now?** If not, did you know you can write a letter to the School Board? Just address it to the Board Chairman and hand it in to Student Services.

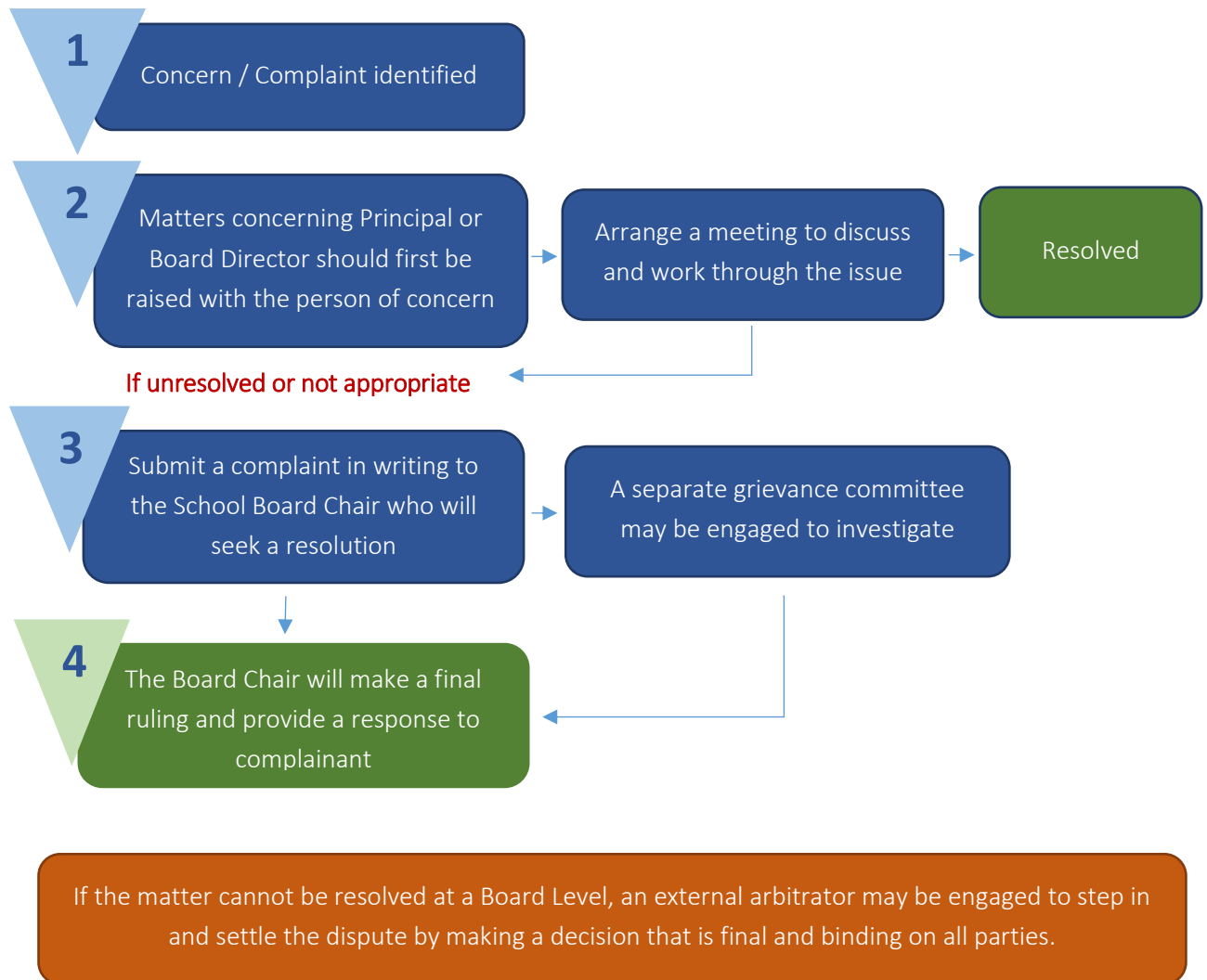
## Appendix 3: Flow Chart for Complaints regarding School Leadership



**Note:** Any student, parent or community member is entitled to contact the Director General with concerns about how the school has dealt with a complaint, however they do not have the power to intervene or overturn a schools decision



## Appendix 4: Flowchart for Complaint about Principal or Board Directors



**Note:** Any student, parent or community member is entitled to contact the Director General with concerns about how the school has dealt with a complaint, however they do not have the power to intervene or overturn a schools decision