

## Disputes and Complaints

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## **Procedure**

1. All formal complaints, disputes and grievances must be received in writing and addressed to the Principal at this address:

Fairbridge College  
PO Box 173  
Pinjarra WA 6208

2. If any grievance is made regarding the Principal, a written complaint can be mailed to the College and addressed to the Chairperson of the Fairbridge College Council at the same address.
3. Receipt of the complaint must be formally acknowledge, either by email or in writing within 24 hours of receipt of the complaint.
4. Depending on the nature of the complaint, the Principal will engage stakeholders' at the most appropriate level of communication and intervention for the complaint and stakeholder's situation.
5. All complaints must be logged in the complaints register form and saved in a file.
6. Depending on the severity of the complaint, the Chairperson of the College council must be formally advised in writing with the attached complaint.
7. A thorough investigation of the complaint must be undertaken within 5 working days of receipt of the complaint.
8. Failure to reach a satisfactory outcome with the parties involved will result in escalation of the complaint to the Chairperson of the College council for further clarification, investigation and determination.
9. Should there be no resolution to the complaint, dispute or grievance at this level, an external, independent arbiter will be appointed. The arbiter sought will be agreed upon by all parties, so that each member has an unbiased mediator and each view is represented.

## **Additional Information**

The following will also apply relation to this policy:

1. Principals shall advise parents, staff and students of this dispute and complaint resolution process.
2. Policies and procedures of Fairbridge College that address specific matters (eg. Child Abuse, Student Enrolment etc) shall be followed.
3. Each dispute or complaint resolution procedure followed by a College shall ensure that all relevant parties:
  - are informed in writing of the dispute or complaint;
  - have the opportunity to place their version on record; and,
  - have the opportunity to be represented if they so wish.
4. Anonymous and/or unsubstantiated complaints shall not be investigated.
5. The Principal shall maintain records of the procedure and resolution to any formal dispute or complaint. These will include any statements made by the parties involved.

6. Records of any dispute or complaint shall be maintained in accordance with a College's Privacy Policy.
7. The parties to the dispute or complaint shall be notified of the findings of the appeal.
8. At the end of any dispute or complaint procedure, actions taken shall be evaluated and procedures reviewed.

## **Student Complaints**

Fairbridge College values the input and feedback of students and for this reason, we actively encourage and empower students to have their voices heard. As a result, the principles that apply to the parental complaints system outlined in this policy are also applied to the complaints and concerns from students. Please see the Appendix ***for the FAQ that is available to students regarding the process of handing student complaints.***

## **Information for Parents/Carers: Disputes and Complaints**

Fairbridge College welcomes suggestions and comments from parents and takes seriously complaints and concerns that may be raised. This leaflet will show you how to use our complaints system.

**A complaint will be treated as an expression of genuine dissatisfaction that needs a response.**

We wish to ensure that:

- parents wishing to make a complaint know how to do so;
- we respond to complaints within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient way;
- parents realise that we listen and take complaints seriously; and
- we take action where appropriate.

### ***“How should I complain?”***

When you contact the College, ask to speak to *(this will depend on the policy of the College)*. Be as clear as possible about what is troubling you.

Members of staff will be happy to help. It may be best to start with the person most closely concerned with the issue – for example, the classroom teacher. They may be able to sort things out quickly, with the minimum of fuss. However, you may prefer to take the matter to a more senior member of staff, for example the Deputy Principal or the Principal.

### ***“I don’t want to complain as such, but there is something bothering me”***

The College is here for you and your child, and we want to hear your views and your ideas. Contact a member of staff, as described above.

### ***“I am not sure whether to complain or not”***

If as parents you have concerns, you are entitled to raise them. If in doubt, you should contact the College, as we are here to help.

### ***“What will happen next?”***

If you raise something face-to-face or by telephone, it may be possible to resolve the matter immediately and to your satisfaction.

If you have made a complaint or suggestion in writing, we will contact you within five (5) working days, to respond to your concerns and explain how we propose to proceed.

In many circumstances, the person you contact will need to discuss the matter with a colleague and consider it further before responding. You will be given a date by which time you will receive a response. If a detailed exploration of the issue is needed, a letter or report will be sent to you as quickly as possible. This will tell you of the outcome of your complaint. It will explain the conclusion, the reasons for it, and any action taken or proposed.

Parents need to be aware that in some cases the College will not be able to discuss the details of action taken as it would be inappropriate. For example if the action involved staff discipline.

### ***“What happens about confidentiality?”***

Your complaint or concern will be treated in a confidential manner and with respect. Knowledge of it will be limited to the Principal and those directly involved. The Chair of the College Council may also need to be informed. It is the College’s policy that complaints made by parents should not rebound adversely on their children.

We cannot entirely rule out the need to make third parties outside the College aware of the complaint and possibly also the identity of those involved. This would only be likely to happen where, for example, a child’s safety was at risk or it became necessary to refer matters to the Police or other external authority. If information is passed to a third party, you will be informed, unless this is prevented by legal obligation.

While information relating to specific complaints will be kept confidentially on file, we would point out that anonymous complaints might not be pursued.

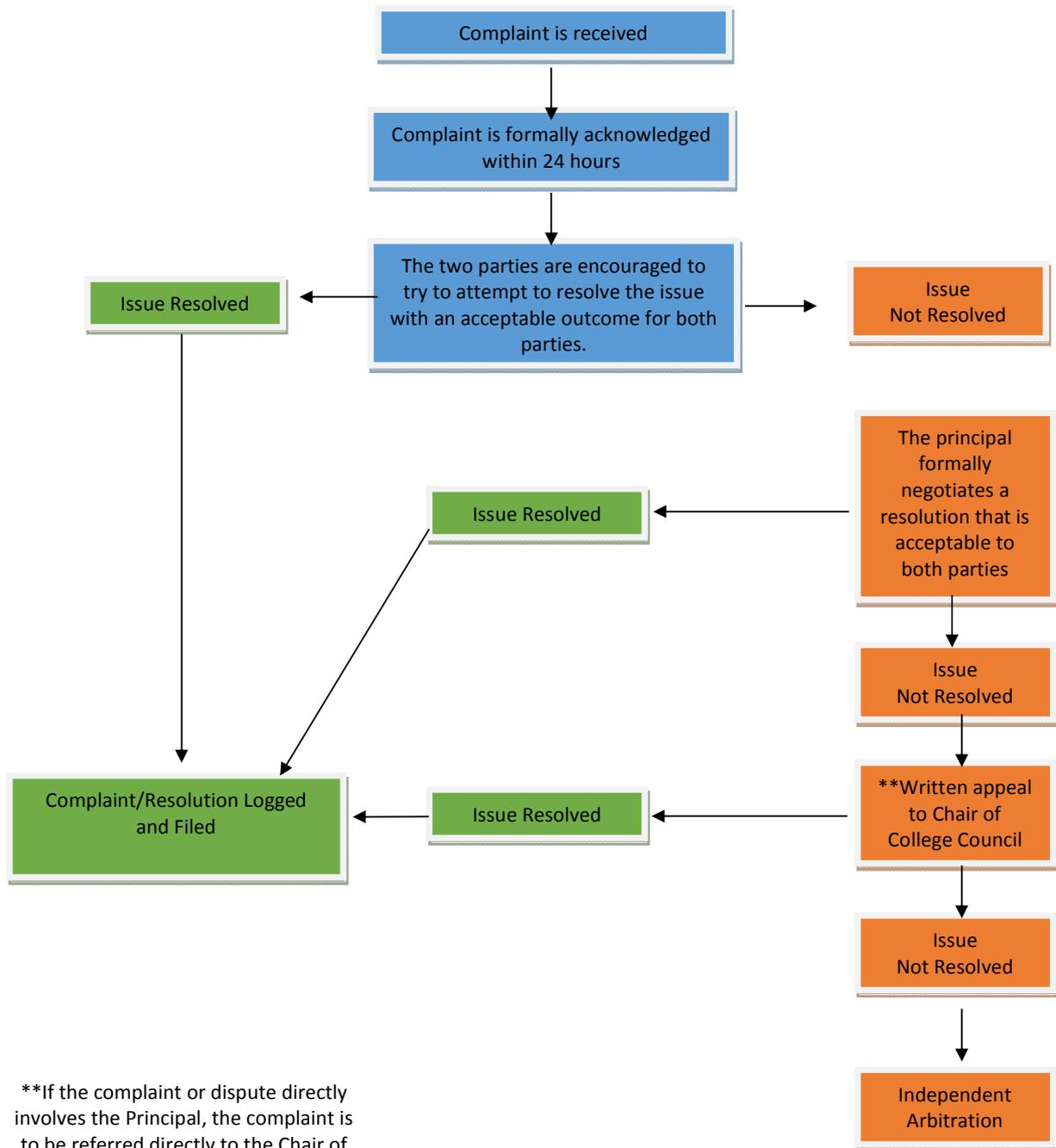
### ***“What if I am not satisfied with the outcome?”***

We hope that you will feel satisfied with the outcome, or at least that your concerns have been fully and fairly considered.

If you are not satisfied, the Principal will offer to refer the matter to the Chair of the College Council. Alternatively, you may wish to write directly to the Chair. The Chair will call for a full report from the Principal, and will examine matters thoroughly before responding to ensure that the complaint has been handled in accordance with the College’s policy and procedure as well as to give further consideration. When notified of the outcome of the Chair’s review and consideration, the opportunity of a meeting with the Chair will be offered if you remain concerned. You may wish to be supported by a friend, but legal representation would not be appropriate at this stage.

If the meeting does not bring about a resolution, the matter would be referred to, following mutual agreement, an independent arbiter. It is their task to look at the issues in an impartial and confidential manner. The independent arbiter will invite you to a meeting. You will be asked if there are any papers you would like to have circulated beforehand. As with the Chair’s meeting, you will be invited to bring a friend with you.

## Disputes and Complaints Flow Chart for Parents



\*\*If the complaint or dispute directly involves the Principal, the complaint is to be referred directly to the Chair of the College Council

## Information for Students

### **Any Problems, Complaints, or Suggestions?**

*If so, the College would like to hear.*

#### ***How do I make a complaint?***

- By talking about it – or by writing it down if you find that easier
- You can do it by yourself, or as part of a group, or through your parents.

#### ***To Whom?***

- To anyone on staff.

#### ***Does it matter what the issue is?***

- No, it can be a big problem or a small one. By discussing it, you may come up with some positive ideas.

#### ***What will happen next?***

- If possible, the staff member will deal with it in person. If not, he or she will go on your behalf to someone who can help.

#### ***Do others have to know?***

- The teacher or the person you talk to will not talk to anyone else about your issue unless they have to, for your safety and well being.

**Even if you find the issue hurtful or embarrassing, we encourage you to talk to us as we want to make sure you feel safe and happy at our College.**