



Complaints and Disputes Policy & Procedures

This *Complaints and Disputes Policy* applies to Bold Park Community School.

Bold Park Community School may, from time to time, review and update this *Complaints and Disputes Policy* to take into account new laws and technology, changes to schools operations and practices and to make sure it remains appropriate to the changing school environment.

[This information is based on *Complaints Procedures* provided by AISWA].

How does this apply to the school?

Bold Park Community School is responsible for managing the resolution of enquiries, concerns, complaints and disputes lodged by parents, students, the public and staff. The school will make every effort to promptly resolve these enquiries, concerns and complaints.

How does this apply to parents¹ and staff?

All parents and staff must follow the following procedures when seeking resolution for any complaint or dispute.

Definitions

What constitutes a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem.

A complaint may be made about the school as a whole, about a specific area of the school or about an individual member of staff.

Policy

Bold Park Community School has a climate and culture of an open organisation, and seeks to maintain this by receiving complaints in a positive manner. The school provides guidelines to parents outlining the complaints and disputes policy and procedure on the school website.

The school acknowledges the need for complaints and disputes to be resolved as quickly as possible. All complaints are recorded and handled seriously. Complaints made by parents will not rebound adversely on their children and similarly complaints raised by students will not rebound on them or on other students.

BPCS has a clear line of approach, or chain of communication, for any parent who wishes to pursue a complaint.

¹ Wherever the word *parent* is used, it is interchangeable for *staff*, if it so applies in that instance.

Lines of Approach (Chain of Communication)

1. Classroom Teaching Staff

If you need further information ask your teaching staff for a meeting to include their Team Leader².

2. Team Leader for the appropriate learning area

(If your child's teacher is the Team Leader for that area ask them to involve a Team Leader from another area of the school).

If you need further help ask for the advice of either -

3. The Director of Teaching & Learning and/or the Director of Business & Administration (Co-Principals).

If approached about a matter that lies outside their remit, staff should refer it to the appropriate person and inform the parents.

The Principal(s) will share serious complaints with the Chairperson of the BPCS Advisory Council. Written responses should always be discussed with the Principal(s), who would sign the response.

Reducing Anxiety

The school understands that a person who complains may feel vulnerable and therefore works to reduce anxiety by taking the matter seriously and dispelling uncertainty about how the complaint will be handled through the chain of communication.

Recording

The school keeps an effective log of complaints and other parental concerns.

Confidentiality

The school understands that confidentiality is an important issue for students, parents and staff. Therefore all complaints are treated in a confidential manner and with respect.

If there is a situation involving the Police, the Principal(s), or next most senior staff member if the Principal(s) is unavailable, must take responsibility for action in the school and the Chairperson of the BPCS Advisory Council should be informed as soon as possible.

² *If the complaint or dispute involves an OSH issue, the appropriate Team Leader is the OSH Coordinator. In the event of the issue being unresolved with the OSH Coordinator this issue is to be referred to the OSH Committee (in consultation with the BPCS Principal/s). If still unresolved, the issue is referred to the BPCS Advisory Council. If still unsolved, the issue is lodged as an Intractable Complaint and will follow this procedure as detailed in the flowcharts below.*

Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints may be where there is no indication of either name or address, or where the complainants say that they do not wish to be identified. They may come from members of the public, from parents or from students.

Parents and students are encouraged to give their names and should be reassured on the issue of confidentiality. If they persist in wishing to remain anonymous, it is at the Principal(s)'s discretion as to what action, if any, should be taken, depending on the nature of the complaint.

Anonymous allegations about child abuse should be monitored closely but no action taken until there is more certainty about the veracity of the allegation.

Resolution

If time has been needed to consider matters, parents should receive a report letter.

Intractable Complaints

Most complaints can be resolved if approached positively. However, if a complaint becomes intractable, these procedures are to be followed.

There are different stages of action to be taken with intractable complaints:

1. Referral to the Chairperson of the BPCS Advisory Council

In most cases, the procedure will be that the Principal(s) refers the matter to the Chairperson and informs the parents that this stage has been reached. However, a situation may arise where the complaint seems to the parent to have been mishandled by the Principal(s). In those circumstances, the parent should be able to write direct to the Chairperson.

The Chairperson should discuss the matter fully with the Principal(s) and be provided with relevant documentation. If a briefing is required from a member of staff, this should occur in the presence of the Principal(s).

The Chairperson should respond to the parents, notifying them that he/she is reviewing the matter, asking them if they wish to add anything further and providing a date by which they may expect a response.

The Chairperson may be able to offer a new approach to the matter, and this may satisfy the parents. The Chairperson's response should be clear and detailed, and should offer a meeting if the parents remain troubled.

2. Meeting with the Chairperson of the BPCS Advisory Council

If a meeting is requested, the Chairperson offers to meet the parents at a time convenient to them. Those involved are:

- *the Chairperson of the School Council*
- *the Principal(s) and, at the most, one other member of staff*
- *the parents*

Parents should be permitted to bring with them a supportive friend who is not involved with the complaint. Legal representation is not appropriate at this stage.

The Chairperson, after questioning and listening to the parents and the Principal(s), may be able to find a solution. If this is not possible, and the parents wish to take the matter further, the Chairperson may refer the case to the BPCS Advisory Council.

3. Meeting with the BPCS Advisory Council

If the case is referred to the Advisory Council, those involved in the meeting are:

- *up to five Committee members, including the Chairperson;*
- *the Principal(s), and possibly a key member of staff; and*
- *the parents, who are invited to bring a supportive friend, as for the meeting with the Chairperson of the School Council.*

A sufficient amount of time is committed to the meeting, in case it is needed.

The parents and the Principal(s) are asked in advance whether there are any papers they would like to have considered at the meeting, bearing in mind the need for all to keep the proceedings confidential. The papers are copied and distributed before the meeting.

The Chairperson emphasises that he or she is concerned to reach a positive conclusion and invites first the parents, then the Principal(s) to speak. After this, the Chairperson encourages questions and general discussion.

The Chairperson may find it helpful at some point to invite the Principal(s), the parents and their friend to withdraw from the discussion for a time, leaving the Committee alone.

If more time is required, it may be necessary to convene a second meeting. If so, Committee members must commit themselves to attend, as continuity is essential.

If a positive solution is reached, the Chairperson should summarise the outcome and confirm the nature of the agreement before the meeting disperses. The agreement should be recorded, copied and circulated as soon as possible.

At the end of the Council's deliberations, the Chairperson informs the parents that this is being done.

Where the Council is unable to reach an agreed conclusion to the dispute they will inform all parties to the complaint of the fact. The Council may contact AISWA or other external bodies for advice. Following the advice, the Council will reach an agreed conclusion.

Resolutions of BPCS Advisory Council are binding on all parties to the dispute.

Training

Given the diverse nature of complaints, BPCS will provide staff training on how to carry out their responsibilities. Training should cover:

- *the complaints procedure*
- *communication skills, such as listening, questioning and calming*
- *handling complaints, negotiation and mediation skills*
- *skills in observing, recording and reporting*
- *the benefits of handling complaints well and the consequences of handling them badly.*

In some circumstances, the training for child protection purposes may be appropriate.

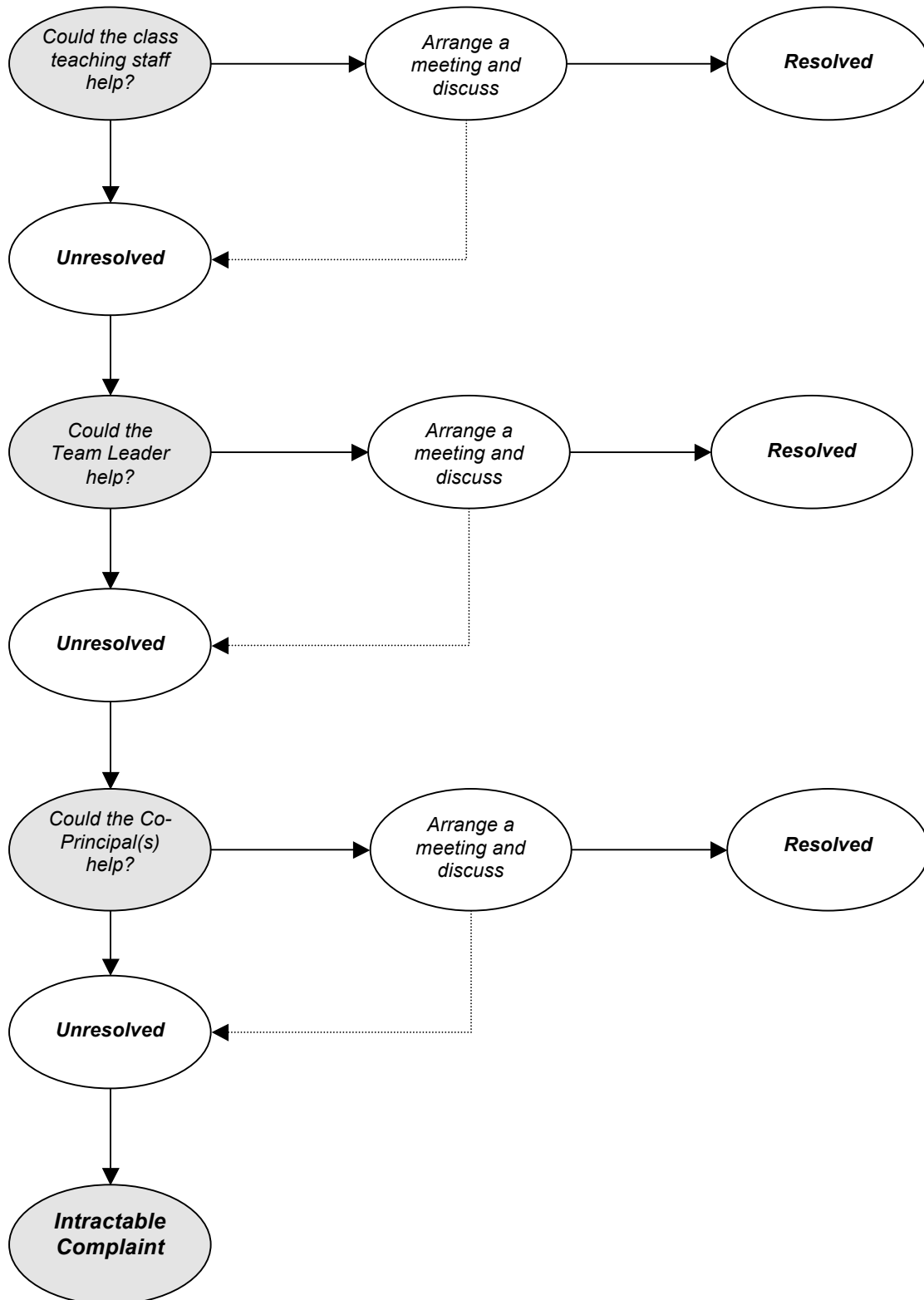
Student Complaints

The principles that apply to parental complaints also apply to complaints and concerns from students. There are, however, differences in approaches. One important difference from the handling of parental complaints is that students are able to raise concerns with any member of staff with whom they feel comfortable.

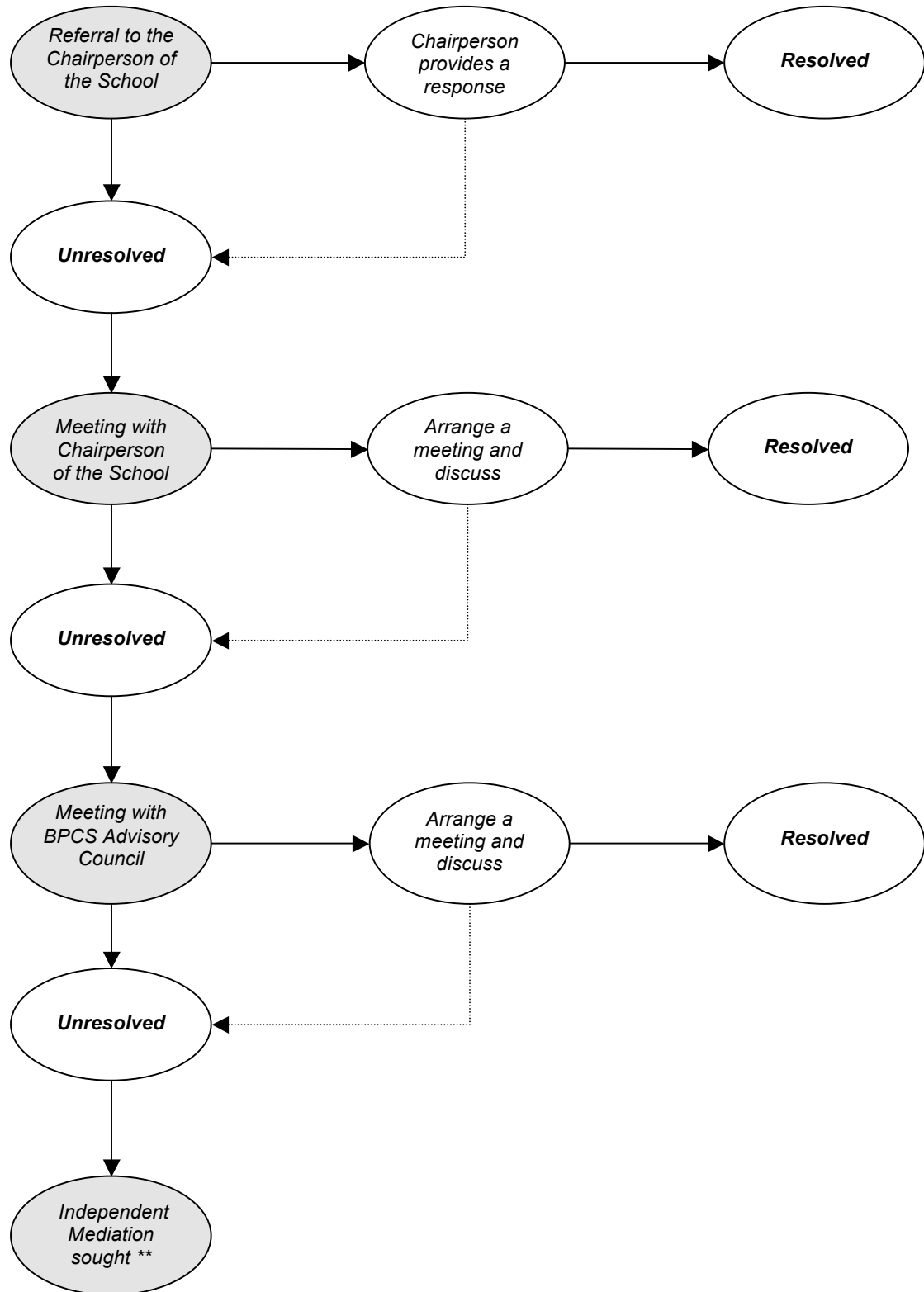
In more complex situations, once the matter is resolved, a member of staff should discuss the outcome with the student. To make sure that it is fully understood, a written record may be shared.

If the issue is a painful one, or if exploration of it is taking time, a student may need support from another student or from an adult. Students are encouraged to choose a person with whom they feel comfortable to provide support.

Disputes & Complaints Summary Flow Chart

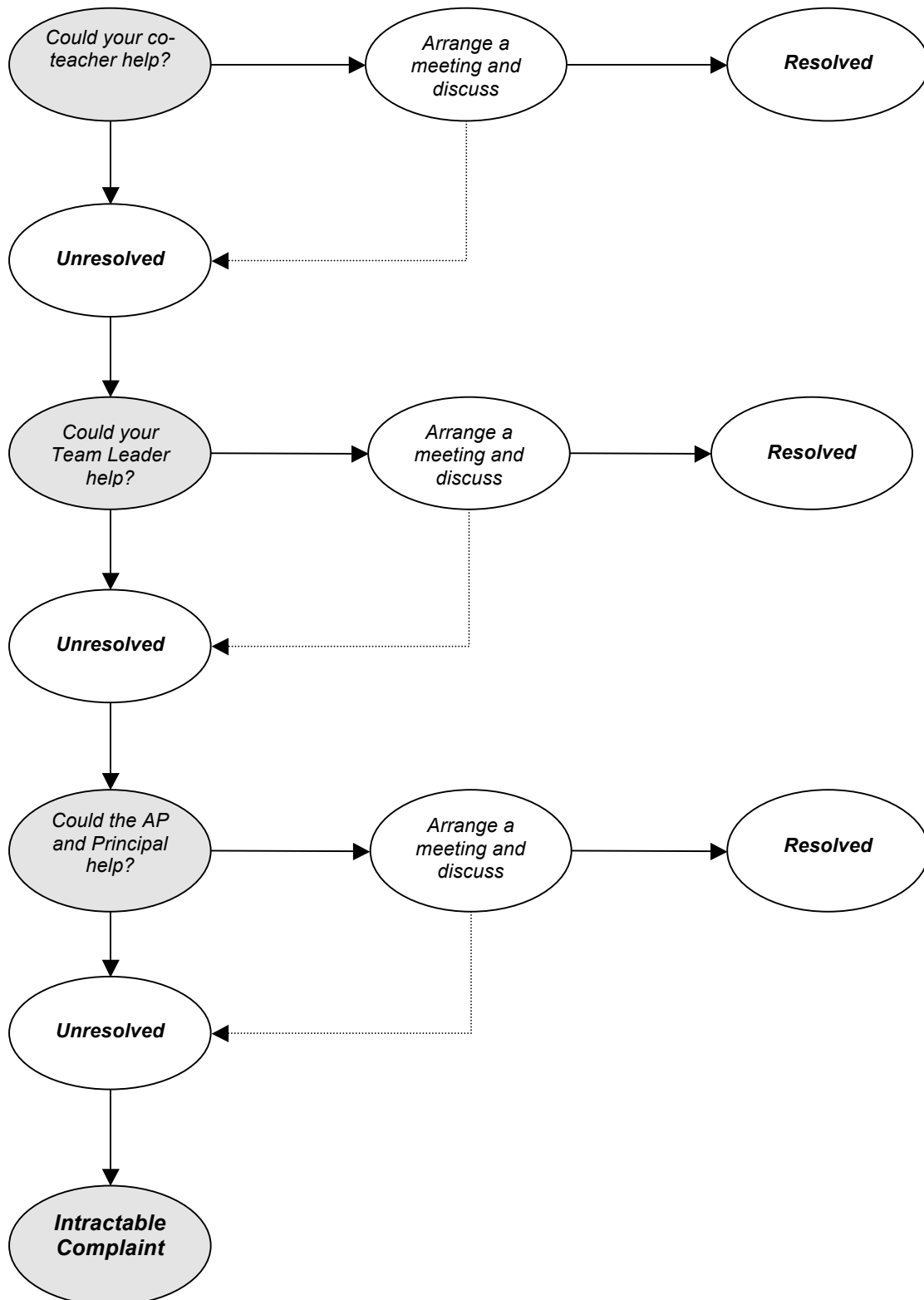


Intractable Complaints Flow Chart

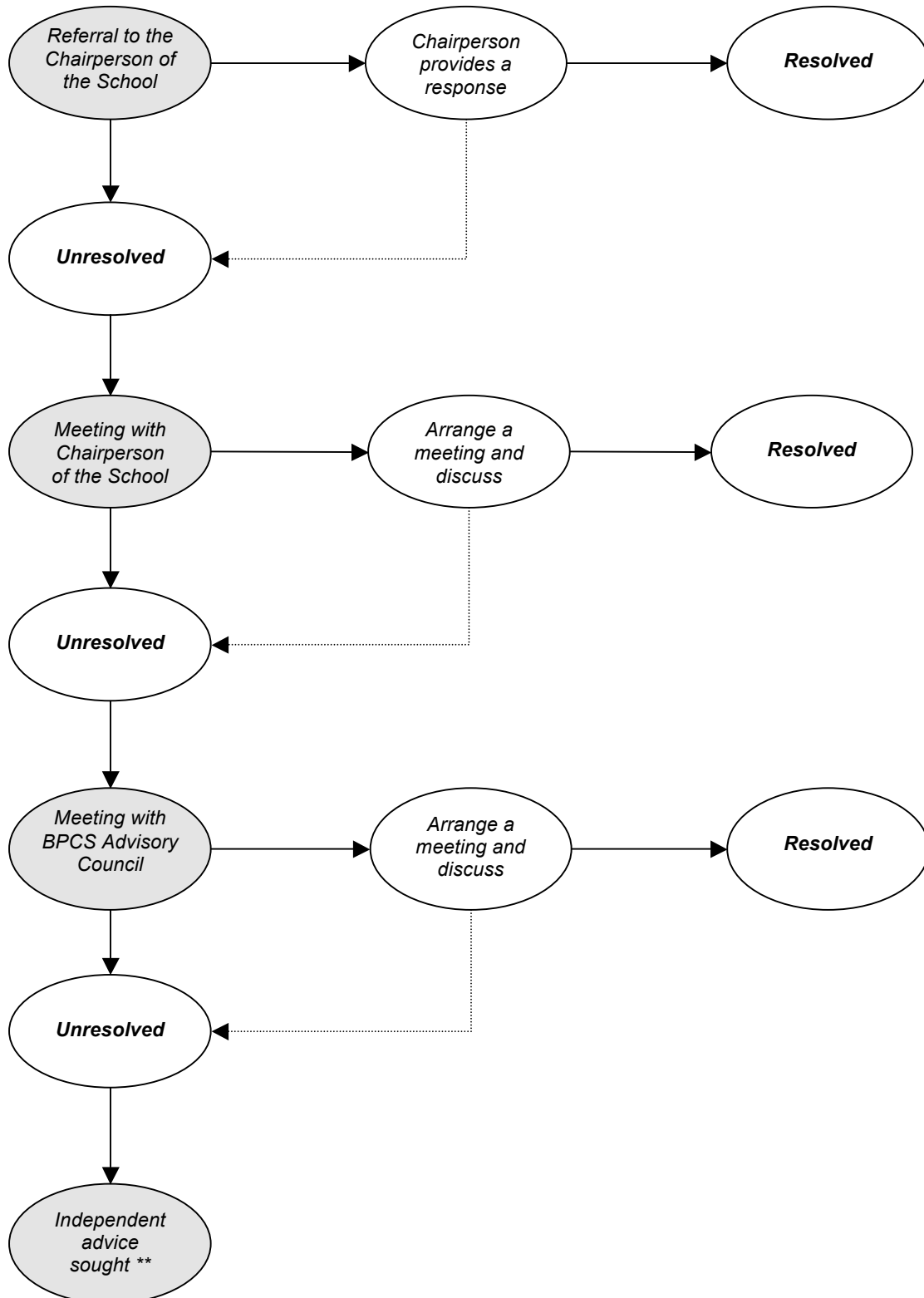


**** Lorraine Day – Educational Consultant is BPCS nominated mediation consultant sourced from AISWA Consultants. Her details are 23/82 Royal Street, East Perth WA 6004. ABN: 85937052584**

Staff Disputes & Complaints Summary Flow Chart



Intractable Complaints Flow Chart



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Policies relating to Disputes and Complaints

Child Protection

Discrimination – Disability, Racial, Sexual

Relevant Legislation or Authority

School Education Act 1999 (WA)

School Education Regulations 2000 (WA)

Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (WA)

Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986 (Cth)

Date of review: February 2010

Date of next review: February 2012