

Complaints Policy – Y Community School

1. Purpose:

The Y Community School and Y Whittlesea are committed to the rights of all stakeholders to provide feedback about any aspect of the operations or administration of the school, and for any feedback in the form of a complaint to be handled with fairness. This policy encourages an organisational culture of seeking and welcoming feedback which aims to strengthen confidence, better inform planning, and continually improve programs and services. This policy ensures that complaints or concerns in relation to Y Community school are taken seriously and dealt with appropriately, fairly, in a reasonable timeframe, and that responses as far as possible address the concerns of the relevant parties.

2. Scope:

This policy applies to the YMCA Whittlesea Youth and Community Services LTD and the school community of the Y Community School including the board, staff, volunteers, students, families and community members involved with the school.

Please note: This policy does not apply to enrolment in programs and activities run by Y Whittlesea which are not part of the Y Community School.

3. Definitions:

- **Staff:** Any person performing duties on behalf of the Y Community School be they an employee, volunteer, trainee or contractor.
- **School:** Refers to the Y Community School, noting that the legal entity through which the school is registered is YMCA Whittlesea Youth and Community Services LTD. Where the phrase 'at the school is used in this policy it refers to any activity or function that is organised by the school including excursions, events, and activities at other locations and which may not be during school hours.
- **Parent:** The term parent is used to refer to parent(s), and legal guardians. In the case of students who are adults or who have been deemed to have independent status the parent refers to the student and they should sign this agreement in their own right. There may be instances where a disengaged young person resides with an adult carer who does not have legal status as their legal guardian. In this instance, where all reasonable attempts to contact a parent have been undertaken, and an Informal Carer Statutory Declaration has been completed, that carer may sign documents in the place of the parent.
- **Complaint:** Any form of feedback, informal or formal, expressing a concern in regard to some aspect of the operation or administration of The Y Whittlesea, it's services, staff, volunteers or people associated with The Y Whittlesea, where the complainant's interest has been, or appear to have been, adversely and unjustifiably impacted by such conduct, and the complainant wishes to seek redress. Note: A manager may choose to treat a matter as a complaint where feedback is received indicating a concern, even where the complainant does not explicitly state that this is a complaint.
- **Complainant:** A person or organisation making the complaint.
- **Dispute:** Differences arising from the management of feedback that cannot be resolved at the current level.

4. Policy:

Where any feedback received is in the form of a complaint, The Y Whittlesea will ensure it is handled in an open, transparent and timely manner, and will provide clear procedures and guidelines to enable disputes and incidents to be managed in a fair and equitable manner.

4.1 Types of complaints:

Complaints, whether formally presented as such, received as feedback or otherwise brought to the attention of the school leaders may constitute one or more of the following:

1. Allegations of abuse or harm towards a child, young person or other vulnerable person at or associated with the school.
2. Failure to report or respond to significant concerns for the safety of children, young people and students at or associated with the school.

3. Breaches of the school and / or Y Whittlesea Code of Conduct.
4. Failure to follow the documented policies and processes relating to the school.
5. Concerns regarding the delivery of curriculum and support programs at the school.
6. Concerns regarding the level of support provided at the school.
7. Concerns regarding the presentation or professionalism of staff at the school.
8. Failure of the school or its staff, including volunteers or external providers, in complying with the codes of conduct for teachers (VIT Code of Conduct) or any professional code of conduct relevant to the person involved.
9. Failure of the school to comply with the legislative requirements required of a registered school.

Note: The list above is not exclusive of any other matter which may be considered a complaint or concern.

4.2 Determining the seriousness of a complaint:

When a complaint or concern is received a consideration of the impact of the matter will be made and the complaint or concern will be categorised as either:

- Very Serious – these will be dealt with by the Principal who will brief the CEO regarding receipt of the complaint and progress in managing it.
- Serious – these will be dealt with by the Campus Principal or Wellbeing Leader who will brief the Principal regarding receipt of the complaint and progress in managing it.
- Moderate – these will be dealt with by a member of the school’s leadership team.
- Minor – these will be dealt with by a member of the school’s leadership team.

In determining the level of seriousness of a complaint the Principal, Campus Principal or Wellbeing Leader will consider the following:

- All complaints or concerns relating to items 1 or 2 above will be regarded as Very Serious and will be managed in line with the YCS Safeguarding Procedure.
- Complaints or concerns in relation to items 3 – 8 above will be considered such that:
 - Matters that have the potential to impact the ability of students to complete course requirements, participate in activities or cause students to cease attending the school will be considered as Serious.
 - Matters that cause upset, angst or conflict but do not compromise the ability of students to participate, meet course requirements or attend school will be considered as Moderate.
 - Matters that cause little or no impact or only a brief period of difficulty with no ongoing effects will be considered as Minor.
- Complaints in relation to item 9 will be considered such that:
 - Matters that indicate deliberate or negligent errors or omissions, systemic failures or omissions or systemic incompetence will be considered as Very Serious.
 - Matters that arise as a result of inadvertent errors, misunderstanding, or require development of staff capacities will be considered as Serious.
 - Matters that require simple amendments to policy and procedure or a one off correction and monitoring to staff performance, will be considered as Moderate.

The categorisation of a complaint may be reviewed as details emerge. Where this is the case, the person managing the complaint must escalate this the Principal to ensure that the correct level of management and oversight is in place.

Complaints relating to a staff members employment and conduct may involve actions taken in line with Y Whittlesea’s employment policies.

4.3 Receiving complaints:

The school is committed to ensuring that a student, or their family, has the right to raise the complaint and expect that every effort will be made to resolve it in accordance with this policy, without prejudice or fear of reprisal or victimisation. The student, and / or their family, has the right to present the complaint personally as well as in writing.

Where a person provides feedback which may be considered a complaint, they will be encouraged and supported to provide information including the nature of their complaint, the details of the time place and people involved, the details of anyone who they believe may be able to provide additional information or be a witness, their contact details and the contact details of any other relevant person.

Where the Principal, Campus Principal or Wellbeing Leader become aware of information which may be considered a concern or complaint, they will treat this as such regardless of whether or not this is presented

as such by the party(s) concerned. In doing so they will, wherever appropriate, consult with and advise the relevant parties that they are taking this matter as a complaint and exercise due regard for privacy and confidentiality in doing so.

To enable this The Y Whittlesea will ensure:

- This policy is easily accessible to students, families and community members. This will be facilitated by publishing this policy on the school's website, advising families of this at the time of enrolment, and ensuring information about making a complaint is displayed at the school.
- The Principal ensures that all staff are educated and supported to understand their role in encouraging feedback and responding to complaints and other feedback in an open and transparent manner.
- All parents and guardians on enrolment of their children at the school will be provided with the YCS Feedback and Complaints handout, to ensure a clear understanding of how to easily provide feedback to the school.
- All students and their families or carers are provided with the contact details including, name, phone number and email address of the person to whom they should make a complaint. It is the responsibility of the Principal to ensure this is available and published.
- A link is available on the website to enable participants to make complaints through an online form.
- Complainants are provided with information regarding any available avenues of appeal should they not be satisfied with the outcome of their complaint.
- A register of all complaints which includes a summary of actions and resolution of each complaint is kept. This will also be aggregated to the organisational level.
- Any external reporting and accountability requirements regarding any complaint are performed within the required timeframe.

4.4 Responding to complaints:

- The school will manage all complaints fairly, equitably and as efficiently as possible. It will encourage all parties to approach the complaint with an open mind and to resolve problems through discussion and conciliation.
- All feedback should be handled at the appropriate staff level according to complexity as defined in 4.2 above.
- When handling complaints and feedback, each staff member and volunteer will:
 - Consider situations from all perspectives and respond in a manner which promotes an environment conducive to collaborative problem solving.
 - Resolve, where possible, complaints to the mutual satisfaction of those involved.
 - Use fairness and equity when dealing with disputes, complaints and complainants.
 - Comply with all legislative and statutory requirements.
 - Keep confidential, where practicable, the information provided by any person involved with a complaint.
- Where a complaint is not able to be resolved at the appropriate level as identified above, it will be escalated to the manager above that level. Should that manager be the CEO, this will escalate to the Chair of the Board.
- Where a complaint cannot be resolved through discussion and conciliation, a mediator or counsellor may be arranged at the discretion of the CEO.
- Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the process of making and resolving complaints. The school and Y Whittlesea seek to protect the rights and privacy of those involved and to facilitate the return to an amicable and productive environment.

4.5 Communication and timing:

Once a concern or complaint has been raised, it will be dealt with in a timely manner and a communication with the complainant will be maintained as follows.

- Complaints which are deemed Minor may be dealt with through verbal processes with file notes recorded of the relevant conversations and a record in the complaints register. It is expected these will be resolved within 2 weeks.
- For all other complaints received, the complaint will be acknowledged in writing within 5 working days and any required investigation will be commenced. The complainant will be advised of any factors which may impact the progress of the complaint, such as the involvement of external parties.

- The complaint will be resolved in the shortest timeframe possible, having consideration for the availability of relevant parties, the complexity of the matter under consideration, and constraints from external parties. The expected timeframes are:
 - Very Serious complaints – within 6 weeks.
 - Serious complaints – within 4 weeks.
 - Moderate and Minor complaints – within 2 weeks.
- Where these timelines are not met, the complainant will be advised in writing of the delay and reasons for this.
- At the conclusion of a complaint process, the complainant and any other relevant parties, will be advised in writing of the resolution and any further action.

5. Concerns or complaints requiring external reporting:

Certain complaints, e.g. those involving suspected child abuse, those involving other breaches of the law, or those where there are reasons to consider the professional registration of a teacher, require reports to be made to external bodies. In those cases the school will:

- Meet its obligations to report as quickly and comprehensibly as possible.
- Cooperate as fully as possible with any police investigation into any alleged activities,
- Work constructively and cooperatively with other bodies, such as the Commission for Children and Young People, or the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, to support and / or undertake any investigations required to the extent permissible by law.
- Advise the relevant parties as appropriate of the requirement to report externally and the progress of any external investigations.

Where matters are under investigation by police or involve protective action by the Department of Families Fairness and Housing, the school will be guided by those authorities as to what information may be shared and of the best way the school can meet its internal complaints processes without compromising any investigations or endangering children or vulnerable parties. It should be noted that at times this may extend the timelines for the school's complaint resolution.

6. Concerns or queries regarding our privacy statement or breach of privacy:

If you have any concerns or queries about our privacy statement, or if you have reason to believe there is a breach of privacy regarding information the school collects and holds about you, please contact The Y Whittlesea and direct these to the office of The Y Whittlesea CEO, who will handle your complaint in accordance with this policy.

Email: Contact@ywhittlesea.org.au

Phone: (03) 9407 6200

Address: PO Box 375, South Morang, VIC 3752

We may be able to assist with an inquiry over the telephone but, if not, you will be asked to put your question or complaint in writing and send to the above address. All written correspondence will be responded to within five (5) business days of being received. If you are not satisfied with our response to your complaint, or at any time, you may refer your complaint to the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (www.oaic.gov.au).

7. School Registration and the Victoria Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA):

Like all Victorian schools we are registered with the VRQA as an independent school. This means we must comply with the Minimum Standards and Requirements for School Registration.

If you have made a complaint to us and are not happy with the way it has been dealt with, or if you believe we are not complying with our requirements as a school, you can contact the VRQA to discuss your concerns. Information about school registration and contacting the VRQA can be found at:

<https://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/schools/Pages/default.aspx>

8. Related policies:

- YCS Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.

9. Related procedures and supporting documents:

- YCS Complaints and Feedback Handout.
- YCS Safeguarding Procedure.

10. Legislative and Industry Requirements:

- [Link](#) to Legislative Compliance Register

11. Consequences of breaching this policy:

All elements of this policy must be adhered to, and any breach will be dealt with in accordance with the [YMCA Whittlesea Disciplinary and Termination Policy](#).

12. Variations:

Y Whittlesea reserves the right to vary, replace or terminate this policy from time to time.

13. Policy owner:

The Executive Director Y Schools is responsible for keeping this policy current - including making amendments as required, and regular reviews as scheduled.

14. Document Control:

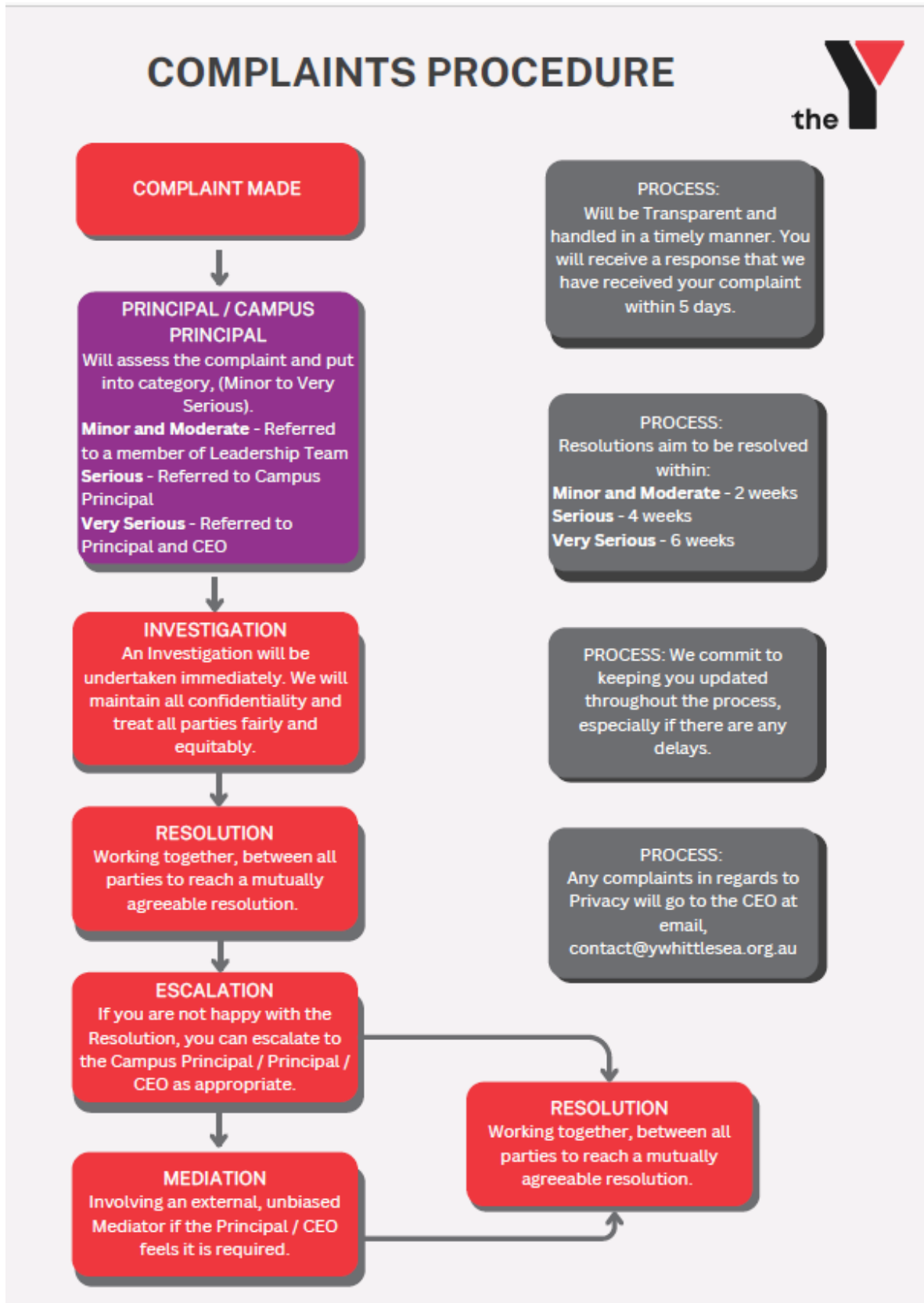
Review of this policy will be undertaken every 2 years, or prior as required by law, in consultation with appropriate Y People.

Policy available on Y-MAC>Communication>Manuals and Files>Policies and Procedures

This document is due for review on 1/03/2026.

Version:	Description of Amendment	Amended by	Approver and date	Release Date
3.0				
2.0				
1.0	Policy created as stand-alone school policy	Executive Director Y Schools	Board	1/12/2023

15. Appendix 1 – Child Friendly Complaints Diagrams



What happens when you make a complaint or tell us about a concern at the Y?

