

SRE COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

This policy outlines the current complaints handling procedures when a complaint is made against Special Religious Education (“SRE”) organised by the Anglican Diocese of Armidale. This includes complaints made against SRE Teachers or helpers, the Anglican authorised curriculum or SRE coordination.

It is expected that Armidale Anglican Vicars, Teachers and Coordinators will act in an honourable way in any conflict resolution process. This includes the way we communicate with the school and the way we speak about the school.

It is best if the issue can be resolved at a local level between the Church and the School as quickly as possible. The Registry Office will provide support and advice to enable a suitable resolution as required. Please contact the Registry Office via email if required – office@armidaleanglicandiocese.com

The Vicar of the parish where the school is located is responsible for managing the complaints process. This Vicar will appoint a single contact to manage the complaints process. This will normally be their SRE coordinator but may include appointing themselves. This person is called the **Anglican Representative** in this policy. The Anglican Representative must ensure that proper procedures have been followed using the steps outlined below. They will update the Vicar in writing on the complaint process. They have the authority to write to the school on behalf of the Vicar.

Combined SRE arrangements

- The authorising provider deals with complaints made against their authorised teachers. For example Anglican providers deal with Anglican Teachers, Baptist with Baptist etc.
- The Anglican Representative ensures that all complaints and the outcomes are communicated with all providers in the combined arrangement.
- The Vicar will communicate with other Vicars who authorise Anglican SRE teachers in the particular school if required.

Privacy and support

It is expected that the Vicar will take reasonable steps to support those involved in the complaint and arrange further support when appropriate. It is expected that the Vicar will maintain an appropriate level of confidentiality about complaints and the people involved. They are to ensure that information is restricted to those who genuinely need to know.

Five key steps for resolving complaints

For each complaint, the five steps should be followed. These are based on the NSW Department of Education [School Community and Consumer complaint procedure](#) (Jan 2017). The complaint process should be clearly documented using the SRE Approved Provider Complaint Form (available on the Diocesan website) and saved in a secure place. Documentation will include the initial contact with the complainant, how the local church managed the complaint, the outcome of the complaint, including how and whether any concerns were substantiated and the actions taken in response and the steps taken to follow up any outcome actions.

1. Acknowledge the complaint with the school in person, on the phone or in writing within 3 days.
2. Gather information from the School, SRE teachers and relevant policies.
3. Resolve the complaint within 20 work days. Ensure any delays are communicated with the school.
4. Inform the School, other providers in a combined arrangement and the SRE Office of the resolution.

5. Implement action and review the resolution within 2 months.

Procedures to resolve different complaints

a) Complaint regarding Teaching Inefficiency

The school raises an issue concerning a specific SRE teacher.

- The Anglican Representative listens to the complaint and identifies the teacher and the specific concerns.
- The Anglican Representative confirms the complaint in writing with the school.
- The Anglican Representative reviews the complaint with the Vicar.
- The Vicar takes primary responsibility to achieve resolution in partnership with the Anglican Representative. They have a variety of options:
 - Meet with the teacher and school to resolve the issue.
 - Feedback and training with the SRE teacher.
 - Remove the teacher temporarily or permanently.
- The Anglican Representative communicates the action plan with the school in writing.
- The SRE coordinator observes the Teacher within two months of the complaint.
- If a teacher is removed from teaching SRE, the authorising Vicar will rescind the teacher's SRE Authorisation card and communicate this information with the Registry Office via email.
- If the complaint concerns allegations of abuse, it is expected that the Department of Education will follow its procedures in regards to this matter. The Vicar, in conjunction with the DPS (Director of Professional Standards), will cooperate with the Department.
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b) Complaint regarding inappropriate lesson content

The school or a parent raises an issue concerning a specific SRE lesson.

- The Anglican Representative listens to the complaint and identifies the specific lesson, the content and when the lesson was taught.
- The Anglican Representative confirms the complaint in writing with the school.
- The Anglican Representative asks the Registry Office to review the lesson, via email.
- The Registry Office reviews the material in conjunction with the publisher of the SRE curriculum.
- The Registry Office provides a response to the complaint to the Vicar and the Anglican Representative within 1 week.
- The Anglican Representative provides the response to the school in writing. It is expected that the school will communicate directly with any parents involved.
- If the lesson needs to be updated, the Registry Office in conjunction with CEP releases an update within one month.

c) Complaint regarding SRE organisation

The school raises an issue concerning the organisation of SRE in a school.

- The Anglican Representative listens to the complaint and identifies the specific issues.
- The Anglican Representative confirms the complaint in writing with the school.
- Where possible, the Anglican Representative quickly resolves the issue. The resolution is communicated in writing to the school.
- For complex situations the Anglican Representative:
 - Contacts the Registry Office for advice and support.
 - Meets with the school to discuss a resolution.

d) Complaint regarding Teacher compliance

The school raises an issue concerning the compliance of an SRE Teacher.

- The Anglican Representative listens to the complaint and identifies the teachers and the issue.
- The Anglican Representative confirms the complaint in writing with the school.
- Where possible, the Anglican Representative resolves the issue with the teachers concerned. For example getting a replacement SRE name tag or ensuring the approved curriculum is being used.
- For significant non-compliance, the Anglican Representative raises the issue with their Vicar and the Registry Office for support and resolution.
- The resolution is communicated in writing to the school.
- The SRE Teacher must be fully compliant before returning to the school to teach SRE.

APPENDIX

The content below outlines the current complaints handling procedures for NSW Education.

[Special Religious Education Procedures \(effective from 30th Jan 2019\)](#)

3.2 Provision of SRE

Schools are responsible for ... student behaviour management and retain duty of care, including for student supervision, health, safety and wellbeing, during SRE. Schools intervene in cases where it is necessary to maintain good order and conduct. It is the responsibility of the principal to manage such cases with the representative of the approved provider. Class teachers are not required to attend classes in SRE, but may, with the agreement of the teacher of SRE or at the request of the principal, remain in the classroom to assist with and monitor student behaviour. This is at the discretion of the principal and should be negotiated with the SRE provider.

3.5 School managed complaints

Principals determine whether complaints are to be managed by the school or by the provider. Principals make clear to complainants what issues are the responsibility of the school to resolve and what are the responsibility of the provider to resolve. For example, alleged teaching inefficiency or inappropriate lesson content are managed by the provider. School managed complaints follow the department's Complaints Handling Policy. If a principal receives allegations of improper behaviour or other complaints of a serious nature, it must be managed in accordance with the department's policies and procedures. Any allegations of a child protection nature must be referred to the department's Employee Performance and Conduct Directorate which will determine how the matter should proceed

[NSW Education support material \(26th June 2017\)](#)

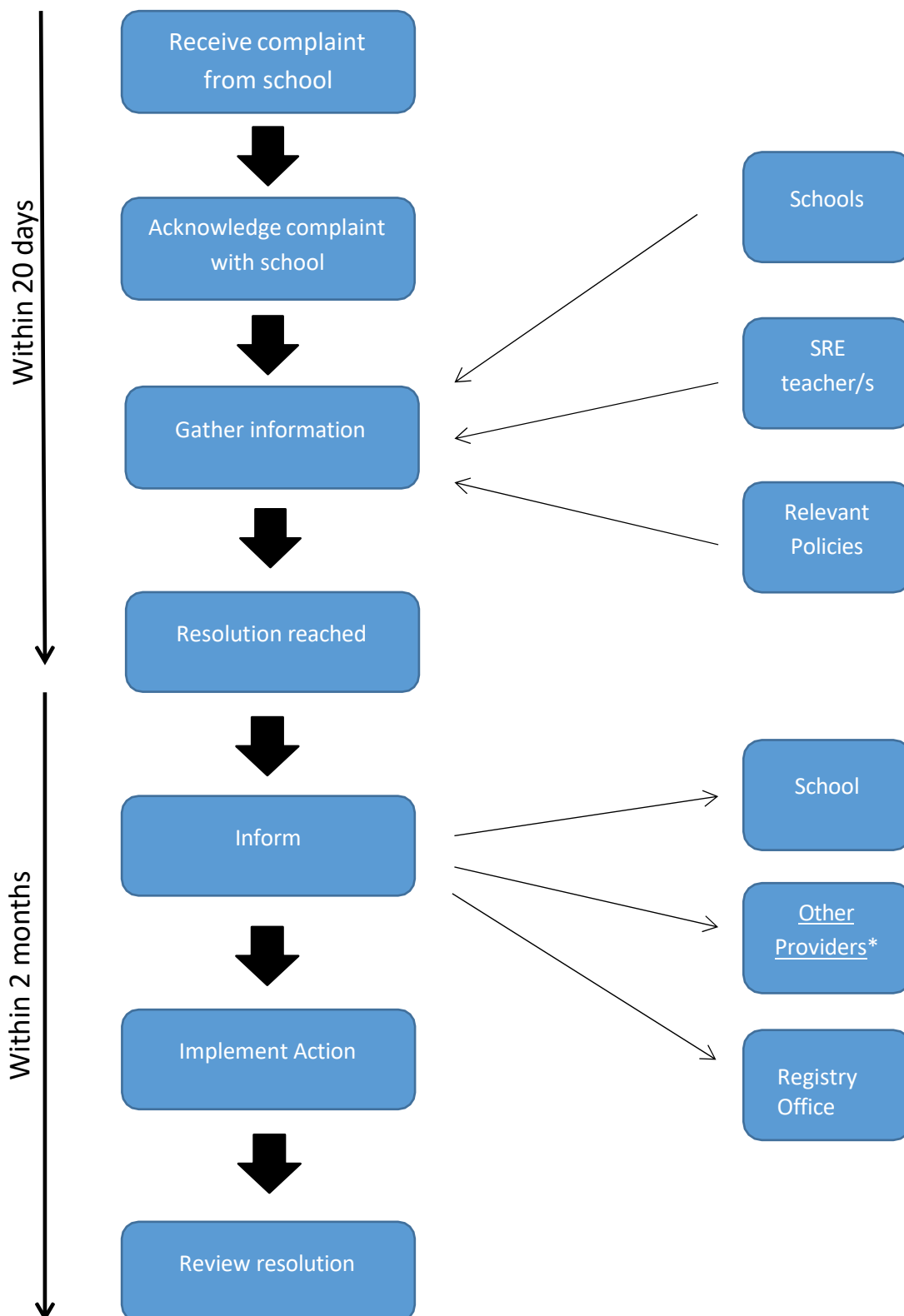
Principals who have received complaints concerning alleged teaching inefficiency or inappropriate lesson content take appropriate steps and notify the representative of the approved provider that authorised the teacher. If a principal receives allegations of improper behaviour or other complaints of a serious nature it is managed in accordance with the Department's policies and procedures. The principal must refer allegations of a child protection nature to the Department's Employee Performance and Conduct Directorate.

Further information can be found on the [Complaints Handling Policy website](#).

[NSW Education School Complaint Procedure \(Jan 2017\)](#)

This procedure outlines how complaints will be handled by the Department of Education. Our complaint policy is based on the information in this document.

COMPLAINTS HANDLING FLOWCHART



* A list of approved providers can be found at <https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/learning-across-the-curriculum/religion-and-ethics/approved-sre-providers>