

# SRE Schools & Curriculum Handling Complaints Policy

## Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT

As an approved provider it is expected that all people engaged with SRE within our organisation always maintain the highest level of professionalism. This includes both in the way we speak about, or refer to, a local school and or their staff. We expect that there will always be a substantial effort in trying to resolve issues at a local level first, with courtesy and respectfulness. As an approved provider we are committed to supporting our SRE teachers, open communication, and responsibility.

SRE teachers, helpers and seminar presenters authorised by the Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT (Baptist Union of NSW) are required to be familiar with both this document and the accompanying flowcharts.

Below is a more detailed explanation of the various roles and interactions that can take place when trying to resolve a matter, as well as the types of concerns and complaints that can arise.

### Churches and SRE Boards

Wherever possible, any concerns or complaints should be dealt with at a local level and as quickly as possible, but coordinators/churches/ boards must keep the main approved provider of the teacher/s informed. If the matter is minor, coordinators/churches / SRE Boards become the main point of contact in resolving initial and ongoing concerns or complaints. If the matter is of a more serious nature, the Approved Provider must become the main contact point with the school and handle the matter directly, following its complaints process. Some of the people at a local level who may be involved in resolving a matter include:

- SRE Teachers, SRE board chairperson or SRE board representative
- School Representatives – Principal, Deputy Principal, School SRE coordinator.

**Note-** churches, coordinators or boards **should never deal with a complaint against a teacher without the direct involvement of the Approved Provider of that teacher.** Written records and dates of interactions, discussions and meetings must be kept as all involved parties work together to resolve the issue. The approved provider may ask a board member to represent the approved provider at a school level.

### SRE Approved Providers

Approved Providers play the significant role in raising complaints. It is their responsibility to pursue the complaint through the Department of Education complaints processes. It is assumed that when the provider speaks with schools it does so in partnership with the local church/board. People who may be involved in resolving a matter include:

- Local SRE Coordinator
- Principals
- Church Representatives
- Department of Education's program manager for SRE & SEE
- Regional Director and above

## Types of Complaints

### **A. Parents may have concerns about the SRE curriculum or the SRE teacher.**

Approved providers will fully co-operate with any concerns a parent may have in regard to reportable conduct or allegations of abuse attributed to an SRE teacher or alternatively their concerns regarding the contents of the SRE curriculum. Approved providers will follow its procedures in regard to any such matter, including reporting to relevant authorities.

### **B. Schools may have concerns about the conduct of an SRE teacher.**

Approved providers will fully co-operate with any concerns a school may have in regard to reportable conduct or allegations of abuse attributed to an SRE teacher. It is expected that the Department of Education will follow its procedures in regard to any such matter, including reporting to relevant authorities.

### **C. Approved providers may have concerns about the conduct of a student or a parent or a professional classroom teacher.**

It is expected that a school will fully co-operate with any concerns an approved provider may have in regard to positive behaviour for learning. We would expect the school to follow its procedures in regard to any such matter, including reporting to relevant authorities.

### **D. SRE teachers may have concerns in regard to the implementation of SRE at a local school.**

Approved providers must follow the Department of Education Complaints handling and Community complaint procedures:

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/policies/pd-2002-0051>

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/policies/pd-2002-0051-01>

The Community complaint procedures provide significant detail on how the Department of Education handles complaints and provides guidance complaint management.

## Managing Complaints: Key Stages for the Approved Provider

### 1. Acknowledge concern or complaint

As an approved provider we will acknowledge a concern or complaint as soon as possible. Preferably within seven days. This can be done via a church representative, SRE coordinator, local SRE board representative, SUA (Scripture Union Australia) field officer. It can be in person, by telephone, email or formally in writing. Where the acknowledgement was made verbally, it should be documented in writing and dated. All parties that the concern or complaint relates to, will be kept up to date with the progress. This includes the principal of the school if that matter was raised by the school. The matter will be kept as confidential as possible by only sharing information with those who need to know about the concern or complaint issues. Each party involved will be listened to carefully with resolution happening at the local level and as quickly as possible in most cases.

### 2. Gather Information

Information will be gathered to allow a proper assessment of concerns as quickly as possible. The information to be gathered could include:

- Special Religious Education Procedures
- Relevant Department of Education policies and procedures e.g., Code of Conduct
- SRE curriculum teacher's manual
- Information from the Baptist Union of NSW SRE Team Leader
- Written documentation from various involved parties
- The bringing together of all relevant email communication

### 3. Resolve

Ideally complaints should be finalised within 4-6 weeks. Keep the principal updated on the progress of the complaint. If a delay is anticipated, inform the principal and provide reasons for the delay.

Consider any reasonable outcomes suggest by the principal. However, ultimately the local provider representative determines how a complaint is to be resolved.

Outcomes will depend on the circumstances of each complaint and take into account the role of SRE teachers as volunteers in a school and subject to the Department's policies and procedures and the principal as its appointed site manager.

### 4. Inform

The approved provider will provide information about the outcome to the relevant people involved and other providers in the case of a combined arrangement. When giving the outcome information, explain:

- The outcome of the complaint and any action to be taken, by whom and when
- The reasons for the decision
- Any internal or external options for review

In any case, the concern or complaint outcome should be confirmed in writing. Email is acceptable. Complex complaints may require additional record- keeping e.g. notes of contentious meetings. While it is good practice to provide as much information as possible about outcomes, it is also important to keep confidential specific personal details.

If an SRE teacher is the subject of a complaint, he/she should be provided with information about the outcome.

## Managing Complaints: Key Stages for the Approved Provider

### 5. Implement Actions

Take all reasonable steps to implement and monitor the outcomes of the complaint. Where the outcomes involve a combined arrangement, other providers should be given the same information as the other parties involved.

### 6. Record Outcome

The approved provider should document:

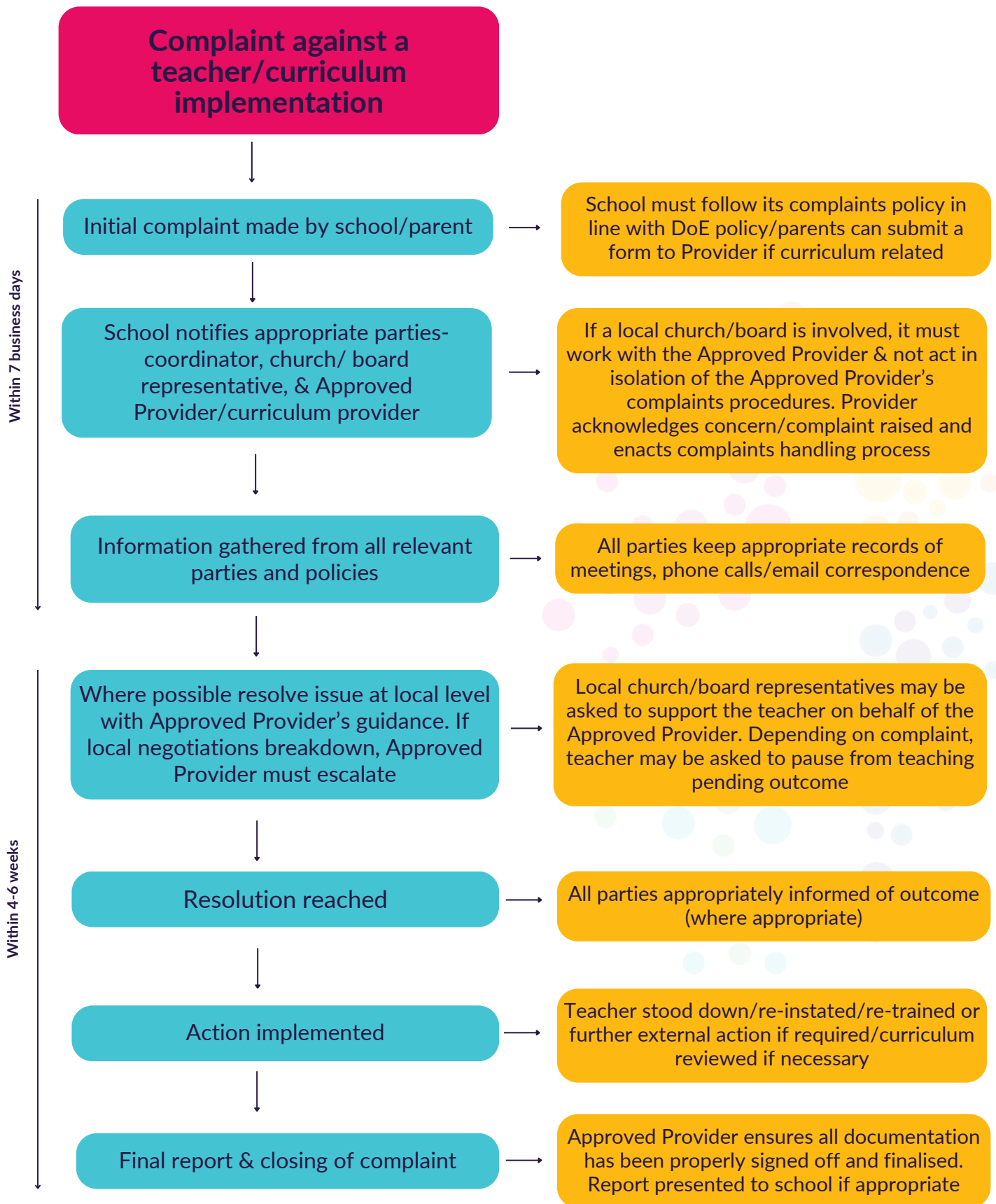
- Their contacts with the principal, church representatives, board representatives
- How they managed the complaint
- The outcome of the complaint, including how and whether any concerns were substantiated, and actions taken in response
- The steps taken to follow up the outcome actions

### 7. Ongoing Responsibilities

An approved provider has ongoing responsibilities to:

- Respond to and manage concerns or complaints so that the complaints process is accessible to all providers' representatives
- Take reasonable steps to prevent people making complaints being treated unfairly because a concern has been raised, or a complaint been made by them or on their behalf
- Always keep confidentiality about concerns and complaints, including after a satisfactory resolution. This requires everyone, including the complainant, to ensure that information is restricted to those who genuinely need to know. People should only be told as much as they need to know and no more.
- Support those involved. To the extent possible the approved provider should monitor the well-being of all parties involved in or impacted by the complaint and arrange support where available.

# Baptist Union of NSW: SRE Complaints Flow Chart



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