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## GRIEVANCE POLICY

**Drafted & Implemented:** Jun 2010

**Authorised Update:** Apr 2017

**Date to be reviewed:** Jan 2019

### PURPOSE

Geneva Christian College has a responsibility to act wisely and justly in relation to issues of conflict that have the potential to cause a breakdown in the relationships between members of the school and its community. It must always be kept in mind, when handling complaints, that regardless of how important or unimportant the issue might appear on the surface; for the persons involved, it is a source of unhappiness. Anyone who makes a complaint therefore, must be treated with respect. The school's response will be perceived as a measure of how it lives up to the Biblical values that it espouses to. The prompt, respectful and just way that complaints are handled has a twofold benefit for the school. It increases awareness of areas where improvement is needed and can help to build positive relationships with students, staff, parents and members of the wider school community. In the first instance:

- there should be an attempt to informally resolve the issue. If this is unsatisfactory or does not result in a resolution of the matter, then the school's internal complaint flow charts (within this policy) will be followed.
- the process of this grievance procedure is confidential and any complaints are a matter between the parties concerned and those directly involved in the complaints handling process.
- Any party should seek to address and resolve relevant grievances, complaints and appeals by staff, students, parents and the wider community, in a gracious and timely manner.

### DEFINITIONS

**Grievances** exist when a person feels a sense of wrong, hurt, or injustice because of the actions or words of another person. We recognize that the existence of a state of grievance in a person's life may affect a person's emotions and hinder his/her capacity to function within the school community, particularly in relation to the person against whom the grievance is borne.

**Mediation** is the settlement of a dispute or controversy by setting up an independent person between two contending parties in order to aid them in the settlement of their disagreement.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

Grievances should be treated seriously and sensitively, having due regard to procedural fairness, confidentiality and privacy. They should be handled without delay and directly with the people involved. For these reasons, persons with concerns should raise them as early as possible. Wherever possible, grievances should be resolved by a process of discussion, co-operation and conciliation. The aim is to reach an acceptable outcome that restores and maintains good relationships and releases those involved from their effect. Support should be provided to the person bringing the grievance and the person against whom the grievance is made. No person should be victimized because they raise a complaint or are associated with a grievance. Frivolous or malicious grievances should not be instigated and all parties are expected to participate in the grievance procedure in good faith.

**DURING ANY STAGE OF THE PROCESS, MEDIATION IS AVAILABLE IF REQUIRED,  
LEGAL REPRESENTATION CAN BE SOUGHT BY EITHER OR BOTH PARTIES.**

### **Stage 1**

If a person becomes aware that he or she is feeling aggrieved by the actions of another person, he or she should have first, checked all the facts, then take the time to reflect on the matter to ensure that his or her spirit and emotions are under control and that the issues concerned are clearly understood enough to be articulated simply and graciously.

The aggrieved person should make an opportunity to see the person against whom they have a grievance, privately, with enough time to be able to properly express the grievance. At this meeting, the issues should be discussed factually and without any accusation. The aggrieved person should avoid making an interpretation of the motivation or attitude of the person against whom the grievance is held.

The desirable outcome of this stage, on meeting, is that the two parties will resolve the issue and seek mutual forgiveness and reconciliation. If this meeting is successful, the issue should remain private.

If the grievance continues unresolved and the aggrieved person is not satisfied that the matter has been appropriately rectified, the grievance process will move to stage two.

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## **Stage 2**

The aggrieved person should now make a formal complaint, according to the relevant flow chart within this policy. The formal complaint should be documented in writing and also presented verbally at a meeting with the Principal, or, if the complaint is against the Principal, then to the Chairman of the Board, who will read the report, ask questions to seek clarification of the particulars of the grievance and make appropriate notes.

The Principal or Chairman of the Board will meet with the person against whom the complaint has been made, to explain the nature of the complaint and to present him/her with a copy of the written complaint. At this meeting, the person against whom the complaint has been made will have the opportunity to discuss his/her responses to the formal complaint and to seek further clarification. The main purpose of this meeting will be to prepare the person against whom the complaint has been made, to meet with the aggrieved person (where applicable) to seek resolution of the grievance. At any stage of this process formal mediation using external resources may be utilized in an attempt to reconcile differences.

The Principal or Chairman of the Board will arrange a meeting of the two parties. He/she will then lead the meeting with a view to allowing the grievance to be aired, then for the person against whom the grievance has been aired, to respond. If a person has a "counter grievance", they should be encouraged to make their own formal complaint in accordance with this Policy. The desired outcome of this meeting is that both parties will seek mutual forgiveness and that an agreement will be made that future conduct will be such, to avoid the grievance recurring.

If this meeting apparently achieves its goal, the Principal or Chairman will arrange a review meeting, not less than 3 weeks and not more than 5 weeks after the original meeting, to assess the progress of the resolution. Copies of the written results of this meeting will be given to both parties and also added to the grievance file. If the review meeting has a satisfactory outcome, then by mutual agreement no further action will need to be taken.

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LEGAL REPRESENTATION CAN BE SOUGHT BY EITHER OR BOTH PARTIES.**

## **Stage 3**

If the stage two meeting fails to produce a satisfactory resolution in the opinion of either party or the Principal or Chairman, either party may take or recommend one or more of the following:

- provide another opportunity for the issue to be aired in a broader setting and for advice to be given regarding the resolution

- provide opportunity for legal advice to be given regarding the resolution of the issue.

Should arbitration be required, this should be by an impartial expert arbitration panel consisting of any of the following:

- an educator who is unconnected with any party in the dispute; and
- a church leader who is unconnected with any parties involved in the dispute
- a person with mediation or legal skills outside the school
- another member of the Board

If both parties agree they will be obliged to abide by the decisions and advice of the arbitration panel before the arbitration commences. A party may refuse the use of an arbitration panel procedure where the grievance is substantially an employment issue.

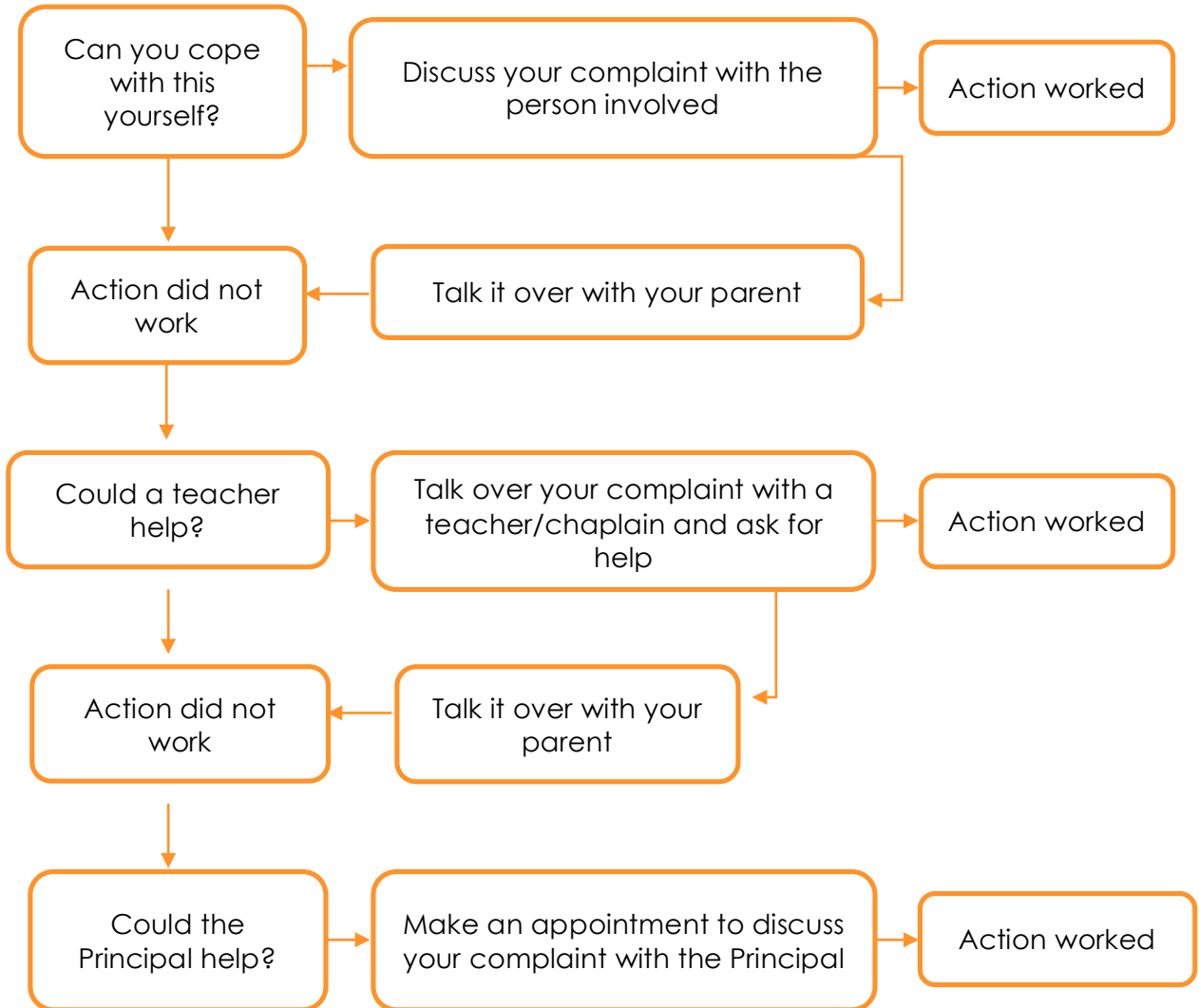
The arbitration panel will be given copies of all documents relating to the grievance at least 48 hours prior to the arbitration meeting and a date will be set for the arbitration meeting that is no more than one week from the request for arbitration.

The arbitration meeting will include:

- an individual interview of each of the two parties
- a discussion of the issues with both parties present
- a time of consultation among the panel without the parties present
- a presentation of the panel's decisions and advice
- action as required by the panel's decision

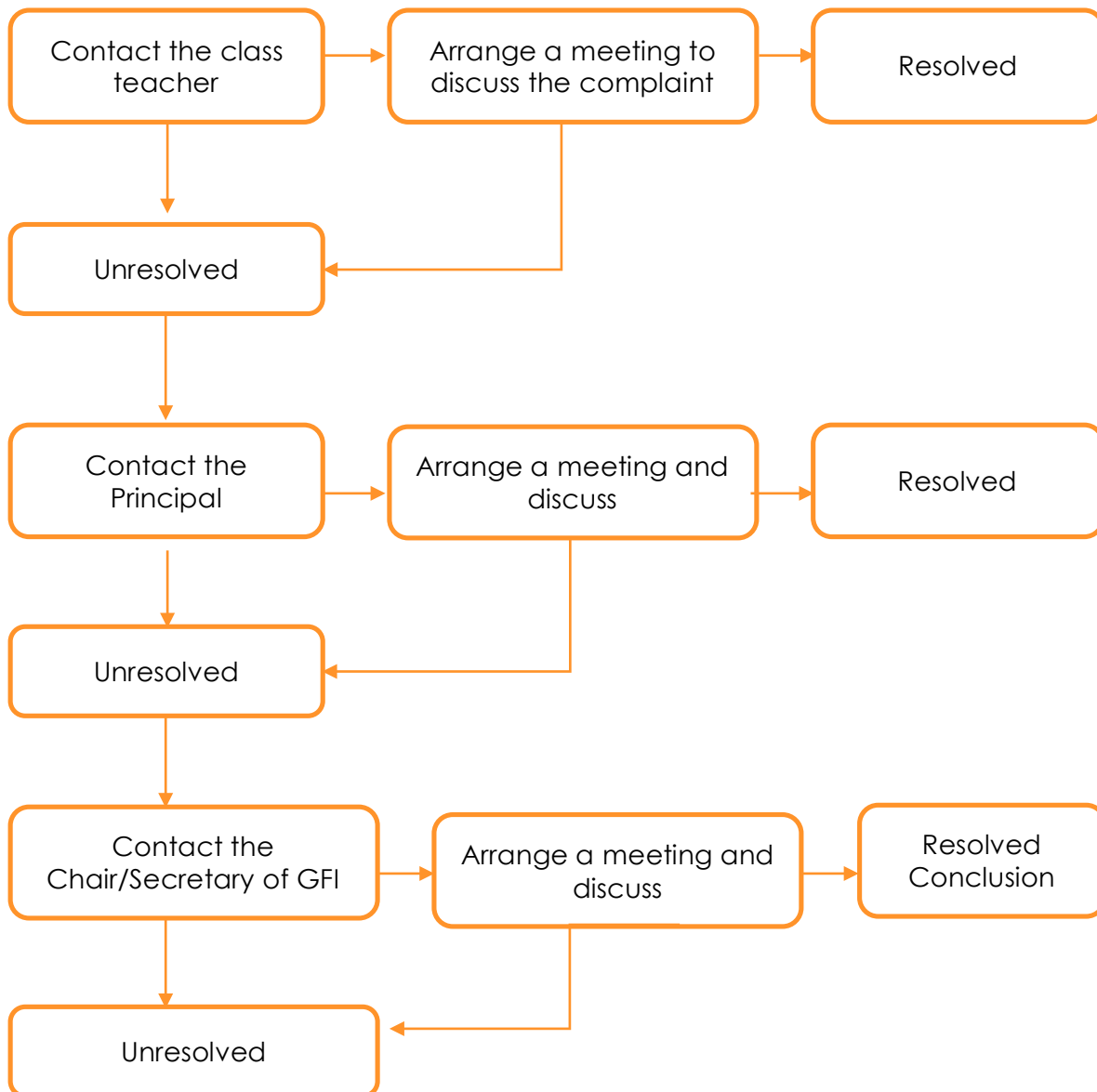
The desired outcome of an arbitration process would be to have the disputing parties agree to abide by the outcomes of the arbitration panel.

## FLOW CHART FOR COMPLAINTS - STUDENTS



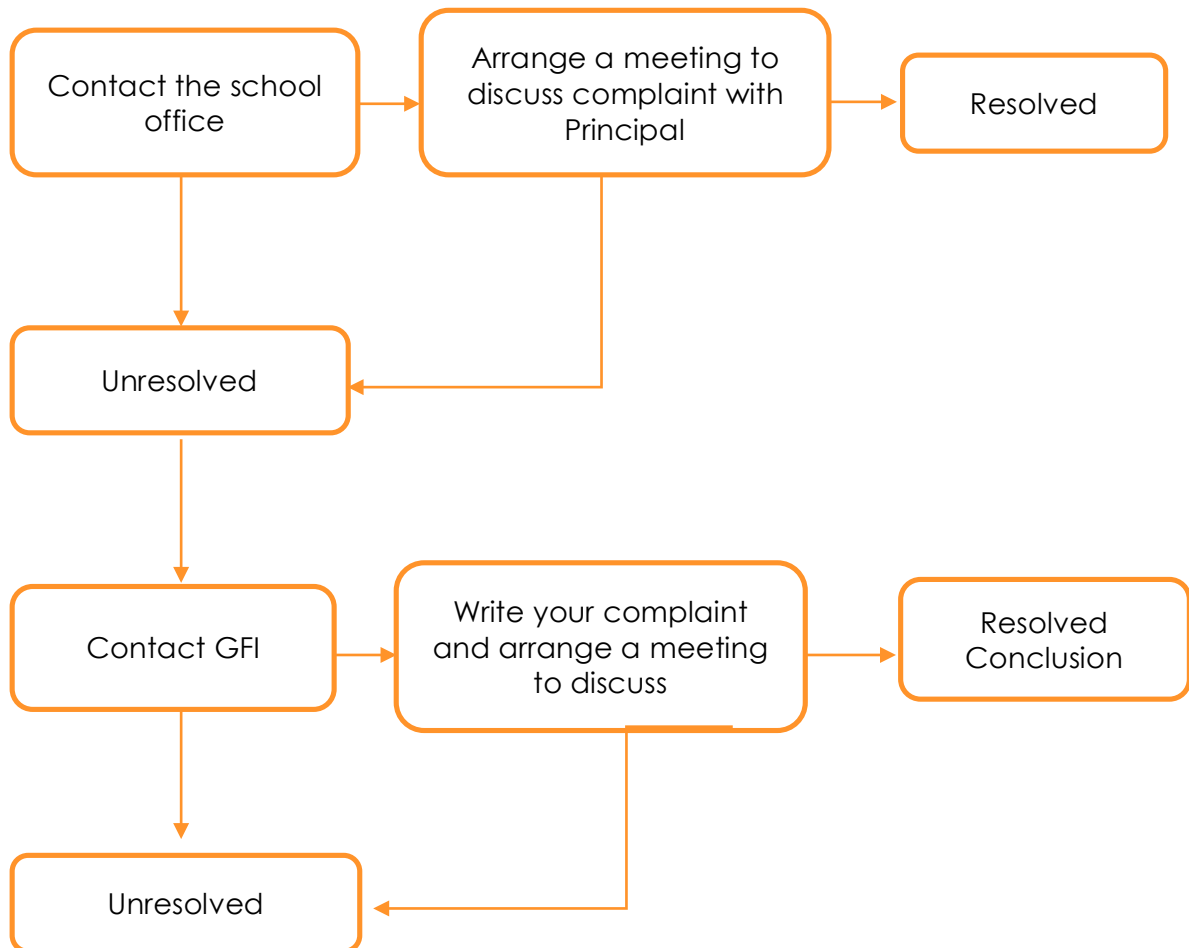
If matters remain unresolved, you have the right to seek arbitration through the courts, ombudsman, legal representation and other government commissions such as the Human Rights Commission etc. These may entail some financial cost. Mediation is an option at any stage if the complaint and the person to whom the complaint is directed, so agree. Normally, the Chairman/Secretary of GFI facilitates mediation.

## FLOW CHART FOR COMPLAINTS - PARENTS



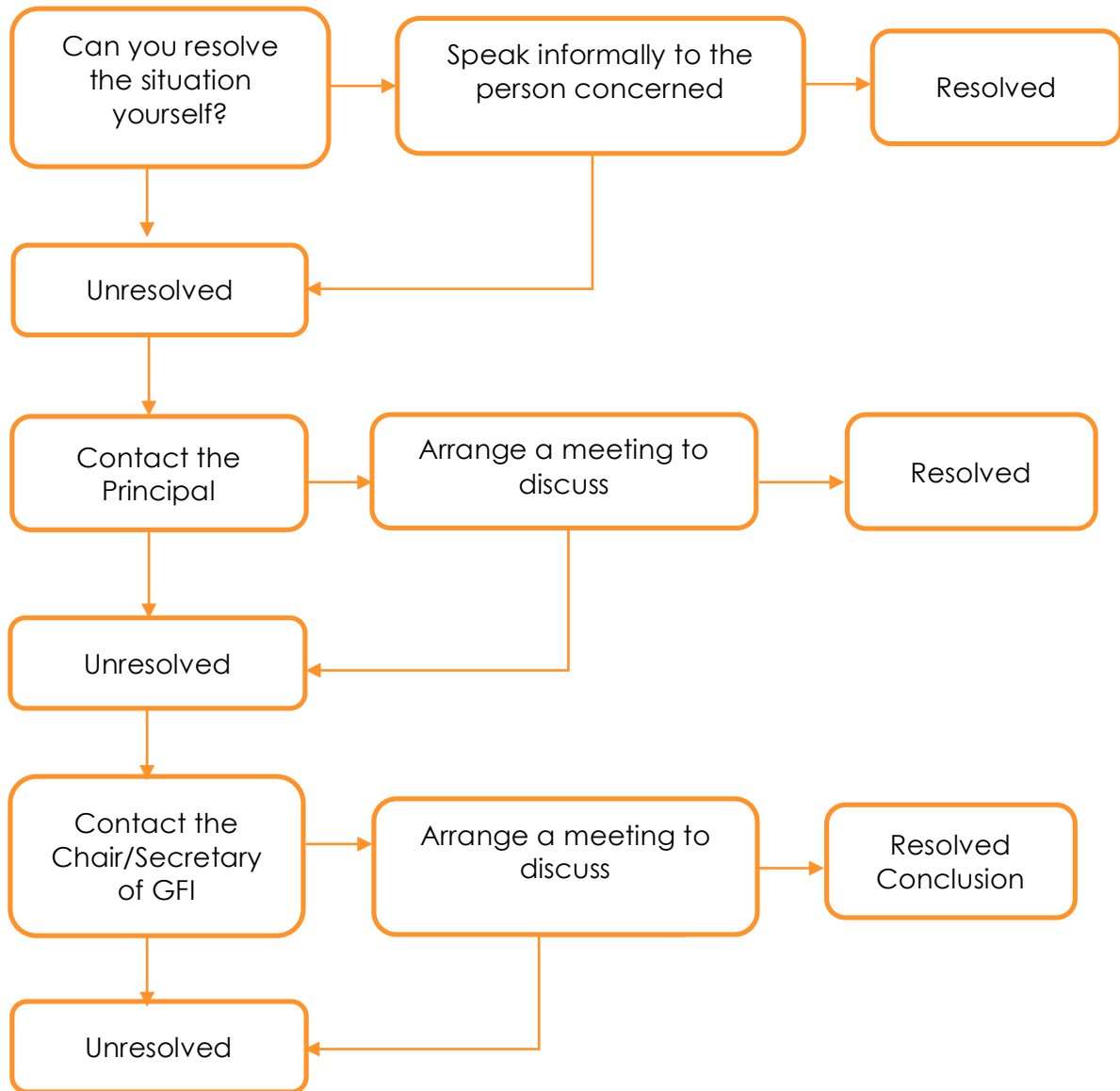
If matters remain unresolved, you have the right to seek arbitration through the courts, ombudsman, legal representation and other government commissions such as the Human Rights Commission etc. These may entail some financial cost. Mediation is an option at any stage if the complainant and the person to whom the complaint is directed, so agree. Normally, the Chairman/Secretary of GFI facilitates mediation.

## FLOW CHART FOR COMPLAINTS – WIDER COMMUNITY



If matters remain unresolved, you have the right to seek arbitration through the courts, ombudsman, legal representation and other government commissions such as the Human Rights Commission etc. These may entail some financial cost. Mediation is an option at any stage if the complaint and the person to whom the complaint is directed, so agree. Normally, the Chairman/Secretary of GFI facilitates mediation.

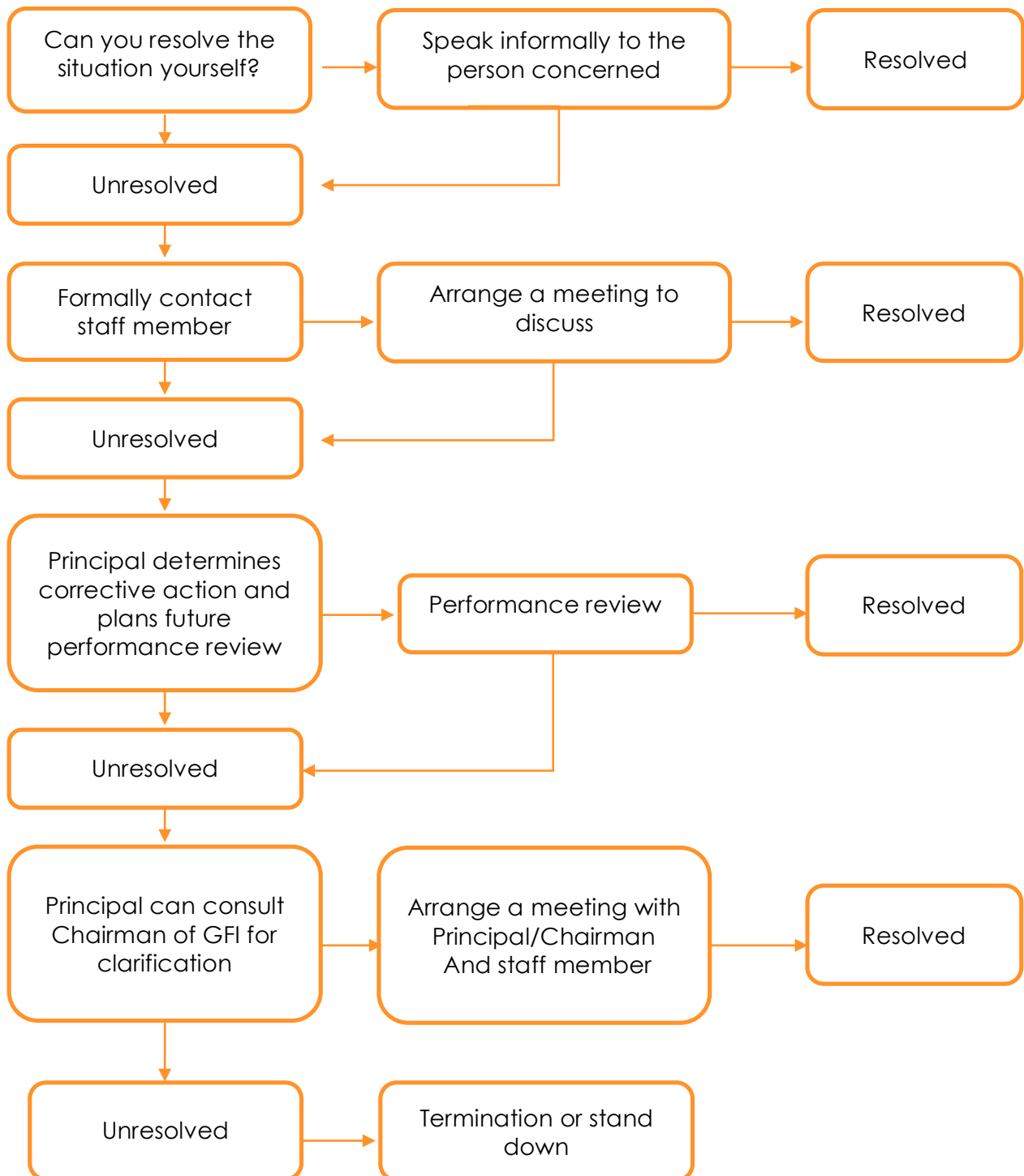
## FLOW CHART FOR COMPLAINTS – STAFF



If matters remain unresolved, you have the right to seek arbitration through the courts, ombudsman, legal representation and other government commissions such as the Human Rights Commission etc. These may entail some financial cost. Mediation is an option at any stage if the complainant and the person to whom the complaint is directed, so agree. Normally, the Chairman/Secretary of GFI facilitates mediation.



# FLOW CHART FOR COMPLAINTS – SCHOOL TO STAFF



If matters remain unresolved, you have the right to seek arbitration through the courts, ombudsman, legal representation and other government commissions such as the Human Rights Commission etc. These may entail some financial cost. Mediation is an option at any stage if the complaint and the person to whom the complaint is directed, so agree. Normally, the Chairman/Secretary of GFI facilitates mediation.