



# Complaints Management Policy

## RATIONALE

A school culture that welcomes, encourages and initiates regular two-way school-home liaison is one in which healthy problem solving processes can be established and sustained. Clearly defined and operational resolution processes facilitate parents and school personnel to focus on early resolutions to issues and concerns in order to foster and support children's academic progress, their physical development and social and emotional well being.

Employees of the Department of Education (the Department) are responsible for managing the resolution of enquiries, concerns, complaints and disputes lodged by students, parents, members of the community, employees of government and non government agencies and the Employees of the Department will make every effort to promptly resolve enquiries, concerns and complaints preferably at the local level in accordance with the principles of procedural fairness. The Executive Director, Professional Standards and Conduct is responsible for resolving complaints that cannot be resolved at a local level.

## PROCEDURES

### School-level resolution

#### **Stage 1: DISCUSSION WITH STAFF MEMBER**

Contact the class teacher or other relevant staff member to discuss your complaint. This is best done by making an appointment through the school office. The staff will work with you to resolve the problem.

#### **Stage 2: REVIEW OR INVESTIGATION AT THE SCHOOL LEVEL**

Contact the principal who will work with you and the staff member to resolve the problem. You may wish to formalise your complaint. To do this, you may write to the principal who will acknowledge the complaint with a written reply as soon as possible, even if a resolution is not available at this stage.

The principal will consider the issue and identify what action is to be taken and by when, and will clarify the process if a formal complaint is to proceed. The principal may seek the support of the Manager, Operations or other relevant district, or central office staff.

This action and timeline will be confirmed with you in writing. You should be aware that when a complaint is made in writing about the performance of an individual staff member, that staff member will receive documentation of the substance of the complaint.

### District-level resolution

#### **Stage 3: DISTRICT RESOLUTION**

If resolution is not reached at the school level or, if the principal is the subject of your complaint, contact the Manager, Operations at your District Education Office for assistance in resolving the issue. This will involve an independent review of the situation and may include mediation.

The Managers, Operations can be contacted through your District Education Office. Numbers are listed in the telephone directory under the Department of Education and Training.

Regional Executive Director,  
North Metro Education Regional Office,  
Regional Executive Director,  
North Metropolitan Regional Education Office  
PO Box 1126  
INNALOO CITY WA 6918

### **Central Resolution**

#### **Stage 4: FORMAL COMPLAINTS**

In those exceptional circumstances where a complaint relates to the alleged improper conduct of a department employee. Written complaints should be forwarded to:

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Executive Director, Professional Standards and Conduct  
Department of Education and Training  
151 Royal Street  
EAST PERTH WA 6004

#### **Standards & Integrity**

**Phone:** (08) 9264 8186

**Fax:** (08) 9264 4590

For further information please visit the [Department of Education's Policies website](#).

### **PRINCIPLES: for resolving issues at the local level**

- The process is accessible to all aggrieved parties and is underpinned by a commitment to cooperation on the part of Department of Education staff.
- Resolution at the local level is preferred, wherever it is appropriate to do so.
- Procedural fairness is afforded to all parties.
- The subject of the complaint is informed of the substance of the complaint.
- Vexatious, trivial or previously finalised issues are not pursued.
- Warranted investigation will be pursued with or without the active involvement of the complainant.
- Confidentiality is maintained, to the extent that it is consistent with legislative requirements and the other principles outlined in this section.
- Complaints are monitored and their management evaluated so as to reduce the occurrence of systemic and recurring problems.
- In all matters, the educational well-being of students is the first priority.
- All persons in the school community including students, parents, administrators, teachers and support staff, have a right to be treated with respect and courtesy.
- Complainants are able to make enquiries, raise concerns or lodge complaints about the provision of education or the conduct of Department employees and have these dealt with efficiently, fairly and promptly.
- Processes are to be straightforward and align to the Department's policies.
- Information about the process for making enquiries, raising concerns or complaints is to be available to parents, students and members of the local community.

## RESOLUTION PROCEDURES

### **Step 1: Get a good grasp of the problem.**

Before you visit the school to discuss a problem or concern it pays to do a lot of thinking. Work out what it is that is really bothering you. Be as specific and objective as you can in describing the problem. At this stage, try not to focus too much on solutions.

### **Step 2: Arrange an interview with the class teacher.**

Your problems and concerns deserve more than a few hurried words before the bell goes, so make an appointment for a time which suits both you and the classroom teacher. Aim for a time when you know you will be relatively free of time constraints and when you won't have a pre-schooler in tow.

### **Step 3: Discuss what is bothering you.**

You are meeting with your child's teacher because you have identified a problem which can best be solved through his/her active involvement. The teacher's cooperation will be most readily available when your facts are correct, your manner is at least civil, and you show your willingness to be part of the solution.

### **Step 4: Follow through on agreed actions.**

Ensure any actions that were agreed to are adhered to form parties, home and school, arrange a follow up meeting to assess the progress being made in resolving your concerns

## HOW THE COMPLAINT WILL BE HANDLED

Complaints will be handled promptly, confidentially and in accordance with procedural fairness.

Persons who are the subject of a complaint, who make a complaint or provide information in the course of an investigation into a complaint shall not be subject to prejudice, intimidation, and harassment or be subject to any detriment because of their involvement.

Where disciplinary processes are commenced against an employee as a consequence of a complaint being received complainants will be informed whether the allegation was substantiated or not substantiated. Complainants are not informed of the nature of any disciplinary action taken against an employee in respect to disciplinary matters due to confidentiality requirements.

Appropriate confidentiality is to be observed in any discussion of complaints. This means that at the workplace these matters are to remain confidential between the employee and his or her line manager and any other parties who have a legitimate interest in the process.

### **Guideline**

Such parties may include support persons, unions or professional associations and more senior line managers.

## LODGING A COMPLAINT

A person is able to complain verbally or in writing to a principal, director or line manager or, in writing to the Director General. If a verbal complaint is complex or very serious the complainant may be required to restate the complaint in writing or sign a written summary prepared by the principal, director or line manager.

A written complaint which contains personal abuse, inflammatory statements or material that is clearly intended to intimidate will not be addressed and the complainant will be informed accordingly.

Similarly, a verbal complaint that contains personal abuse, inflammatory statements or comments of a threatening nature may be terminated at the discretion of the staff member after firstly warning complainants of that intention.

The Director General will only consider written complaints. The Director General must reject a complaint about an incident which occurred more than 12 months before the complaint is made unless in the Director General's opinion the person who made the complaint has shown good reason for the delay. A person making a written complaint must provide his or her name, address and details of the complaint.

### **WITHDRAWAL OF A COMPLAINT**

A person who has made a complaint is able to withdraw the complaint at any time. A written complaint should preferably, be withdrawn in writing. However, a signed and dated notation on the complaint by an employee that it has been withdrawn by the complainant will suffice. A verbal complaint can be withdrawn verbally and a notation made to that effect. The officer who received the complaint must give notice in writing to any parties affected by the complaint that it has been withdrawn. Complaints that warrant investigation must be pursued even though the complaint has been withdrawn.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES FOR LOCAL MANAGEMENT OF COMPLAINTS**

#### ***CLASSROOM TEACHERS***

Classroom teachers must:

- maintain confidentiality in dealing with each matter;
- resolve parent concerns and complaints where possible;
- communicate outcomes of parent concerns and complaints to a school administrator where appropriate; and
- refer parent enquiries, concerns and complaints to a school administrator where appropriate.

#### ***PRINCIPALS***

*Principals must:*

- maintain confidentiality and impartiality in dealing with each matter;
- ensure, wherever appropriate, that concerns and complaints are resolved at the school level;
- develop and implement a process for registering, responding to and managing parent enquiries, concerns and complaints;
- ensure that the process for managing complaints includes recording and monitoring of complaints and their outcomes to enable improvements to be identified and implemented;
- ensure that enquiries, concerns and complaint procedures are communicated clearly to parents and community members;
- ensure that school policies and procedures are modified, where necessary, to address areas of concern;
- ensure that processes are consistent with all relevant Department policies;

- ensure that complainants and respondents are aware that they can have a friend or adviser present during any discussion; and
- refer the complaint, where appropriate, to the Director Schools for either resolution or, if the complaint has possible disciplinary implications for an employee, to the Standards and Integrity Directorate to manage.

### ***MANAGERS, DISTRICT OPERATIONS***

Managers, District Operations must:

- provide advice and support to principals;
- provide advice and support to parents;
- receive complaints on behalf of the Director, Schools referred or lodged at district level and manage/investigate these where it's appropriate to do so; and
- maintain confidentiality and impartiality in dealing with each matter.

### ***RECORD KEEPING OF COMPLAINTS, TIMELINE FOR ACTION, ACTION TAKEN AND OUTCOMES***

- Recording details helps to ensure that we deal with each complaint satisfactorily. In many cases some brief diary points and/or a note on the student's file is all that is required.
- A clear record is helpful where there are subsequent enquiries, concerns, complaints or investigation.
- Tracking complaints will help us improve our policies and operations both in managing complaints and in the areas of operations about which we receive complaints.
- The emphasis should be on learning rather than attributing blame. We need information to plan for improvement.

***Reviewed in 2020***