

Complaints Management Policy

BRAESIDE PRIMARY SCHOOL

COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT POLICY

Department of Education and Training Policy Statement

Staff of the Department of Education and Training are responsible for managing the resolution of enquiries, concerns, complaints and disputes lodged by students, parents, members of the community, and Department of Education and Training staff in their private capacity.

Staff of the Department of Education and Training will make every effort to promptly resolve enquiries, concerns and complaints preferably at the local level where appropriate, in accordance with the principles of procedural fairness. [Note attached *Parent Concern Procedures* document]

Principals, directors and line managers are responsible for establishing and maintaining processes for managing and reviewing enquiries, concerns and complaints that are appropriately managed at the local level.

Where a complaint is not resolved at the local level or, where it is not appropriate to resolve it at the local level because of its nature, the complainant, principal, director or line manager can forward a written complaint to the Director General of the Department of Education and Training.

Procedures to Implement DET policy at Braeside Primary School

Who May Complain

Students, parents, members of the community, and Department of Education and Training staff in their private capacity are entitled to have their complaints addressed by a principal, director/line manager or the Director General, or their respective delegates, as appropriate.

What may be complained about

A complaint may be made about the:

- (a) provision of education; or
- (b) conduct of any Department of Education and Training employee.

Employees who are the subject of a complaint are to be informed of the substance of the complaint. The text of the complaint is not provided to them except in extraordinary circumstances. Complaints against employees should be sufficiently detailed so as to enable the employee to respond to the allegations against them. A detailed description of the incident/s, the alleged time and place when the incident/s allegedly occurred and the names of any possible witnesses to the incident/s should be provided, wherever possible.

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.

The outcome of formal disciplinary processes commenced against an employee as a consequence of a complaint being received is confidential between the employee and the employee's line manager/s at the time. Complainants will not be informed of the outcome in such matters due to confidentiality requirements.

Appropriate confidentiality is to be observed in any discussion of complaints. This means that at the workplace these matters must remain confidential between the employee and his or her line manager and any other parties who have a legitimate interest in the process. Such parties may include support persons, unions of professional associations and more senior line managers. A person may 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.

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 may 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 may be withdrawn verbally and a notation made to that effect.

The officer who received the complaint is to 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

Teaching staff

- maintaining confidentiality in dealing with each matter;
- resolving parent concerns and complaints where possible;
- communicating outcomes of parent concerns and complaints to a school administrator where appropriate; and
- referring parent enquiries, concerns and complaints to a school administrator where appropriate.

Principal

- maintaining confidentiality and impartiality in dealing with each matter;
- ensuring, wherever appropriate, that concerns and complaints are resolved at the school level;
- developing and implementing a process for registering, responding to and managing parent enquiries, concerns and complaints;
- ensuring that the process for managing complaints includes recording and monitoring of complaints and their outcomes to enable improvements to be identified and implemented;
- ensuring that enquiries, concerns and complaint procedures are communicated clearly to parents and community members;
- ensuring that school policies and procedures are modified, where necessary, to address areas of concern;
- ensuring that processes are consistent with all relevant Department of Education and Training policies;
- ensuring that complainants and respondents are aware that they can have a friend or adviser present during any discussion; and
- referring the complaint, where appropriate, to the Director, Schools/and Services for either resolution or, if the complaint has possible disciplinary implications for an employee, to the Standards and Integrity Directorate to manage.

District Office and Central Office Staff

The roles of District Office and Central Office Staff will be filled as described in the DET policy.

Verbal complaints at the local level

When a principal, director or manager receives a verbal complaint that officer will implement strategies to resolve the complaint at the local level, if appropriate to do so. The principal, director or manager may provide advice to the complainant on possible strategies to resolve the matter.

Documenting/recording the substance and process of resolving these complaints must occur.

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 manager. In this event, officers need to assess whether it is appropriate to address the complaint locally or whether to forward it to the Standards and Integrity Directorate.

Written complaints at the local level

All written complaints lodged with the principal, director or manager should be acknowledged within five working days.

When the principal, director or manager receives a written complaint that is more appropriately dealt with at a central level, it should be forwarded to the Standards and Integrity Directorate.

Alternatively, they may decide to reject it on the grounds that the complaint:

- is vexatious, trivial or without substance; or
- does not warrant further action.

Please note, that if the complaint relates to the conduct of an employee the Director, Standards and Integrity should be consulted before rejecting the complaint.

If it is appropriate to manage the complaint locally, every endeavour should be made to resolve it within 14 days. If the circumstances warrant a longer timeframe for management of the complaint the complainant needs to be informed of the reasons for the delay in addressing the matter and of the likely time frame required to conclude the matter.

Documenting/recording of complaints occurs at the local level in accordance with normal complaints processes and confidentiality requirements.

Principles for handling complaints **Advice for Staff**

What to do if you receive a complaint [Note attached *Parent Concerns Procedures* flowchart]

Act promptly

Find out as quickly as possible both the nature of the complaint and the outcome the complainant wants. Determine who is the appropriate person to handle the complaint to ensure there is no conflict of interest or perception of bias.

Listen carefully, discuss the issues calmly and maintain confidentiality

Treat complainants with respect and courtesy.

Approach the complaint with an open mind, taking the person seriously and letting them have their say. We should welcome complaints and assure complainants that they will be dealt with properly.

Record all relevant details.

Maintain confidentiality to protect complainants, their children and the staff involved.

Focus on relevant issues

Keep the discussion to relevant issues and check the facts.

It is important to hear all sides of the story and keep everyone involved informed of the progress and outcome of the complaint.

Be clear about current policy and processes.

Give personal and specific responses

Give the complainant your name. Let them decide whether the matter is really an enquiry, a concern or a complaint.

Be clear about what solutions we can actually offer.

Explain what will happen next and what steps and support are available.

Make sure written responses address all of the issues, contain correct information and use plain English.

Keep a record 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.

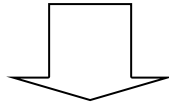
Tracking complaints will help us improve our policies and operations both in managing complaints and in the areas of operations about which we receive complaints. The emphasis should be on learning rather than attributing blame. We need information to plan for improvement. If the complaint is one you consider serious please forward record to the office for filing.

Parent Concern Procedure

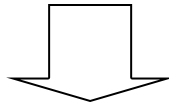
Any Concerns you may have, with regard to: any area of your child's education, programs of learning, operations of the school are of interest to us. These procedures outline the most efficient and effective processes by which your concerns might be addressed.

Note: It is essential that parents make appointments to see staff at school. While we would like to be available to everyone all the time, if you don't make appointments, the person you want to see is often unavailable. By booking an appointment through the office or with the staff member, you avoid any frustrations and are able to get the attention and time you deserve.

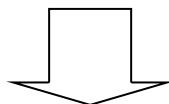
Step 1: Parents should firstly discuss any issues or concern with your child, ensuring you have as much information as possible. Once you have done this, you may be able to solve the problem by providing your child with advice or direction. If this is not successful or appropriate, you should move quickly to **Step 2.**



Step 2: Where a parent has a concern regarding their child in a class, you should always discuss this firstly with the teacher concerned. This can be done through a phone call or a note, or if more information is required, an appointment can be made. This is done by phoning our office on 9821 2328



Step 3: If an interview with the teacher does not successfully solve the problem, or the issue does not involve a particular classroom, parents should contact the school and arrange to discuss this with the Deputy Principal or Principal. This can be done through a phone call, or again, by ringing the office and making an appointment.



Step 4: If the concern is still unresolved, parents should lodge a written letter outlining the concern or problem. **You may also contact the Northam District Education office to seek further advice.** The principal will seek further advice if it relates to employee conduct, through the Director of Standards and Integrity Directorate. They will assist and provide advice and suggestions, as to what further action you can take.

At any stage of this process parents/guardians or staff are always welcome to have someone they are comfortable with to accompany them to any meeting as support or and advocate.

Parent Concerns Procedure

I have an issue or problem!

