

Complaints Management

Complaints come to principals and other school staff in many forms. Complaints can be from parents/carers, community member, staff or students. All complaints are handled in a positive and open way.

1. Documentation

The school documents all complaints. Complaints are recorded and reported to the principal as soon as practicable after receiving the complaint. Complaints can be made directly to the principal.

The record of the complaint should:

- use objective language clearly stating the facts
- contain information in chronological order as practically possible
- use quotation marks, where appropriate and necessary
- be neatly and legibly written in biro/pen or in print in clear unambiguous language
- include, where necessary, initialled and dated corrections
- include signature, designation of the author, and time and date of the incident/complaint.

2. Complaints Management Phases

There are four key phases in handling a complaint, with the option of a fifth phase for review of a complaint outcome:

Phase 1. Receiving and clarifying the complaint

Phase 2. Deciding how to handle the complaint

Phase 3. Finding out about the complaint

Phase 4. Making a decision about the complaint

Phase 5. Review

It should be noted that if the parent/carer, community member, staff or student who is making the complaint has communicated the issue/concern on social media, either on a private medium that has been brought to the attention of the school, or on a public medium, the school will request that the social media content is deleted.

Parents/carers and community members should be aware that this type of social media communication will be referred to Department of Education and Training Legal Officers for an assessment for a potential legal response from the school and/or individual staff members.

Students should be aware that this type of social media communication can amount to a breach of the school's Responsible Behaviour Plan and consequences will be applied as necessary.

Staff should be aware that this type of social media communication can amount to a breach of the Queensland Government's Code of Conduct.

Phase 1 - Receiving and clarifying the complaint

Any member of staff can receive a complaint. Complaints are sometimes made with the assistance of an advocate, interpreter or by a third party (as agreed between the complainant and the principal). In this case staff will receive and clarify a complaint from more than one person.

In general, if the complainant agrees to put the complaint in writing, the member of staff takes no further action unless or until a written complaint is received.

However, if the complaint relates to a report about harm (whether physical/emotional/sexual) of a student under 18 years attending a state educational institution, refer to [Student Protection](#), for detailed obligations of all Education Queensland employees.

Receiving a written complaint

When a written complaint is received it is date-stamped and forwarded to the principal.

Receiving an anonymous complaint

When an anonymous complaint is received, the complainant is told of the possible limitations associated with making an anonymous complaint.

Phase 2 - Deciding how to handle the complaint

When a staff member receives a complaint, they:

- begin the process of making an assessment about a complaint from the moment the complaint is received
- make an assessment in the first instance about whether the issue can be dealt with as a concern or a complaint
- if they are not the principal, refer the complainant or the complaint to the principal for addressing.

The principal decides whether to:

- take no further action
- attempt to resolve the complaint through resolution strategies such as mediation
- refer the complaint to the relevant internal or external agency if required
- initiate an investigation of the complaint, within the school, if further information is required.

Co-ordination of complaints

The principal has the final responsibility for the management of all complaints that relate to school management issues under his jurisdiction. The complaint can be referred to another staff member in the school for action (for example, the deputy principal, business services manager or nominated staff member).

If the complaint relates to departmental policy, or a departmental policy position, the complainant is advised to take their complaint to the relevant regional office.

If the complaint is in relation to official misconduct, student protection or a perceived breach of privacy, the complaint is directed to the Ethical Standards Unit and the Legal Administrative Law Branch.

Record of complaint

The principal ensures that records of a complaint and any referral of a complaint are kept for either internal or external review.

Phase 3 - Finding out about the complaint

The principal or delegate gathers all the necessary facts about the complaint while keeping in mind the principles of natural justice of all parties concerned.

Phase 4 - Making a decision about the complaint

Based on the facts gathered in Phase 3 about the complaint, the principal or delegate makes a decision on the complaint.

Within 28 days of the receipt of the complaint, the principal notifies the complainant of the decision.

Phase 5 Review Phase

If the complainant is not satisfied with this response, they are encouraged to discuss it further with the school principal and/or advised to contact the Darling-Downs South-West [regional office](#).

Further review of the decision is available from the Queensland Ombudsman as described in [Making a Complaint](#).