



PARENT COMPLAINT POLICY

A guide to raising a concern or complaint

2014

Update: 2015

Parent Complaint Policy

DECD Guiding principles

This policy is based on the following principles:

- The safety and educational wellbeing of children and young people is our first priority.
- Students, parents, staff and volunteers have the right to be treated with respect and courtesy.
- Parents/caregivers have the right to raise concerns and complaints about their child's school or preschool and be supported to do so.
- Wherever possible, complaints should be resolved at the school level.
- Complaints will be considered in a confidential, timely and impartial manner and in accordance with due process and the principles of natural justice.
- The rights and responsibilities of all parties should be considered and balanced in finding a mutually acceptable outcome to complaints.
- Complaints are monitored and their management evaluated so as to inform and drive DECD system and performance improvement.

Complaint resolution stages for parents

The school should always be the first point of contact.

The parent needs to find a mutually convenient time to discuss the concern with the class teacher, the Principal, Sheila Klinger or the Deputy Principal, Sharon Rattray, whoever is the most appropriate person.

The school front office personnel can help to arrange a meeting time with the teacher or for a discussion over the phone.

If the concern is about a teacher then the parent may prefer to talk to the Principal. If the complaint involves the Principal, the local regional office of the Department for Education and Child Development should be contacted. Contact at DECD Regional Office, Education Director: Brendyn Semmens.

If the parent is not satisfied after speaking with the teacher, she/he may choose to discuss the complaint with the Deputy Principal or Principal who will work with the parent and the staff member to resolve the issue.

The parent may write to the Principal, who will then acknowledge receipt of the complaint with a written response as soon as possible. Alternatively, the parent may choose to telephone the school to make a time to meet with the Principal.

The Principal will consider the most effective way of resolving the concern or complaint, based on:

- information provided
- the school's Parent Complaint Policy
- the DECD *Parent Concerns and Complaints* Policy and Procedure
- consideration of any legislative and policy implications
- advice from the regional office or DECD Central Office

SASVI will aim to resolve the concern or complaint ideally within 15 working days.

Stage 1 – talk to school personnel first

If the issue is not resolved, you may choose to go to stage 2.

Stage 2 – contact your regional office

You may choose to contact your regional office for help if you are not satisfied that your complaint has been resolved by the school or if the Principal is the subject of your complaint.

The regional office will review your complaint and work with you and the school to resolve the matter as soon as possible – within 20 working days.

If the issue is not resolved, you may choose to go to stage 3.

Stage 3 – refer your matter to the Parent Complaint Unit

If you are still not satisfied you can refer your feedback or complaint to the Parent Complaint Unit by completing the online form or calling them on 1800 677 435.

SASVI Procedures

SASVI is committed to providing clear, transparent and responsive complaint management processes that assist our parents to make a complaint when dissatisfied with the level or quality of educational services. The school ensures that parent complaints are resolved in a consistent, systematic, impartial, fair and timely manner, to the satisfaction of all parties.

Processes

- DECD and the SASVI Principal encourages, wherever possible, that resolution of complaints occurs at the school level.

- SASVI ensures parent complaint management processes are fair, non-adversarial, easily accessible and simple to understand and use.
- SASVI ensures that parent complaints are acknowledged and addressed promptly within agreed timelines.
- SASVI ensures that parent complaints management processes reflect, from beginning to end, procedural fairness.
- DECD will provide parents with appropriate avenues of redress, where necessary.
- DECD will provide an opportunity for an independent and impartial review of a parent complaint management process to occur, where necessary.
- The SASVI parent complaint policy and procedures guide has been developed in consultation with the school community, endorsed by the governing council and will be reviewed every 2 years.

Recording of complaints

SASVI has a process for documenting parent complaints effectively and appropriately.

The action taken to resolve the complaint will also be documented, dated and signed by all parties.

In instances when the complaint is easily resolved over the phone or by front line staff, SASVI will record a brief account of these issues and the resolution in order to monitor all parent concerns and complaints. This will assist in identifying common or recurring issues requiring attention.

The school may acknowledge the complaint in the form it was made (i.e. a phone call is acknowledged with a return phone call). Staff will fill in a Parent Complaint form during a meeting or telephone call with a parent. This should be read back to the parent and verbally agreed. This will help to ensure that the parent and the school have the same understanding of what was discussed.

All notes of meetings and telephone calls are to be kept, whatever the concern or complaint, along with copies of any written information provided by the parent.

Staff will record information as follows:

- The contact details of the parent
- The way the complaint was communicated to the school (i.e. verbally, over the phone, email, letter etc)
- The nature of the complaint and the requested remedy
- The staff member responsible for managing the complaint

- Practices or procedures relevant to the complaint actions taken, time taken and outcome
- Potential improvements that could be made to school policy, procedures or practices that would resolve the parent's complaint and prevent a recurrence of similar complaints

Complaints not covered by this policy

This policy does not apply to matters where there are legislated requirements or existing policies and processes of appeal. Examples include:

- Appeals about student suspension and expulsion
- Complaints that fit within the scope of the Education and Early Childhood Services Registration and Standards Board
- Staff disputes and grievances
- Mandatory reporting responsibilities
- Some health, safety and welfare related issues

Some complaints may never be resolved to a parent's satisfaction.

Vexatious or previously finalised complaints will not be pursued unless the parent is able to provide new information.

This policy is not applicable where a parent has employed a third party (eg, legal representation) in relation to their complaint. In these circumstances, the complaint must be referred to the department's Legislation and Legal Services Unit for action. A parent is, however, entitled to a support person such as a friend, colleague, or a person provided through an appropriate support agency, as long as they do not receive a fee for service.

Impartiality

Impartial investigations are vital to the credibility and success of the parent complaint process. A concern or complaint will be considered on its merits and without prejudice arising from any previous contact that a parent may have had with the school, Regional Office or Central Office.

Making a complaint

There are some simple points to keep in mind if you have a complaint about public education and care:

- Clearly identify the issue and let us know what you would like us to do about it. Write down key points to refer to when you report the problem.
- A friend or representative from a support organisation can attend any meeting with you. This person is not there to speak for you or

to answer questions on your behalf. It's important that it's your opinions and feeling that are voiced and heard by all parties.

- If an interpreter is required, please let us know prior to any meeting.
- Written or verbal complaints should focus on the facts or details of what happened – avoid personal insults, inflammatory statements and threatening or intimidating comments.
- It's best to only discuss your complaint with people directly involved in the complaint or resolution process. This will help limit damage that can be caused by rumours.
- When a lawyer is engaged by one of the parties, the issue becomes a legal matter and will be referred to the Legislation Legal Services Unit of DECD.

More information

Downloads:

Parent complaint policy: a guide to raising a concern or complaint

Parent concerns and complaints procedure: Solving concerns in public education schools and preschools

Brochure: Parent guide to raising a concern or complaint