



## Complaints Handling Policy

Complaint handling in the Department of Education is fair, efficient and accessible. The department has a respectful and productive workplace culture where consumers, members of the community, and staff can raise their concerns directly.

### Key considerations

- What can a complaint be about?
- How can I make a complaint?
- Can I get assistance in making my complaint?
- How will my complaint be handled?
- What about confidentiality?
- What if I need support during the process?
- What if I am not satisfied with the outcome?

### What can a complaint be about?

A complaint can be about:

- an expression of dissatisfaction made by a community member or consumer about any aspect of a service provided (or contracted) by the department, the behaviour or decisions of staff, or about practices, policies and procedures.
- a staff complaint about another staff member relating to a range of concerns, including interpersonal conflict; staff behaviour; disagreements about how work is allocated or managed; disagreements about the application of workplace policies; or other perceived unfairness.

### How can I make a complaint?

It is best to discuss your concerns with your child's teacher first.

- Make an appropriate time to meet with them or phone the school and ask for an appointment with the teacher.
- If you are not happy with the result, or if you do not feel it is appropriate to talk to them, phone and make an appointment to discuss your concerns with the principal.
- You may bring a friend or relative to be your support. An interpreter can be arranged prior if required.
- If your complaint is about the principal you will need to contact the Director of Public Schools NSW in your area. Ask the school office staff at your school for their name and number.
- If your complaint cannot be resolved in an informal way, we may ask you to put it in writing. It is important that you include specific details of the situation and tell us what you would like to happen as a result of your complaint. We can help you to put your complaint in writing, if you require it.
- Alternatively a complaint form may also be used. Complete the form and send it to the Principal, or the Director of Public Schools NSW in your area.

### What if I need support during the process?

We understand that people may be affected by a complaint and the process related to it.

If you need support, you could approach the person dealing with the matter for a recommendation as to who might be available to support you or you might consider seeking support from the following bodies, as appropriate:

- Complainant and Witness Support Program - (02) 9561 8761
- Human Resources Directorate - (02) 9561 8523
- Employee Performance and Conduct Directorate - (02) 9266 8070
- Student Welfare on (02) 9266 8936
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP) on 1300 361 008 or 1300360364

#### **Staff making a complaint:**

- Wherever possible, staff should attempt to directly resolve an issue or complaint raised by a member of the school community, a consumer, or other person by providing feedback or relevant information.
- Staff should also attempt to resolve issues and concerns with other staff, face to face.
- If a complaint cannot be resolved directly or face to face, it should be referred to the principal or immediate workplace manager. If the complaint is about the principal or workplace manager, it should be referred to their supervisor.
- Any formal complaint by a staff member about another staff member should be made in writing (using the staff complaint form linked to the staff complaint procedure).
- All staff involved in a complaint must keep information confidential and only discuss the issues raised by the complaint on a 'need to know' basis. Staff who raise a complaint must not be subjected to reprisal action.
- The principal or workplace manager will appoint a 'complaint manager' to manage the complaint process (including managing it themselves unless the complaint is about them).
- The complaint manager should gather information, assess the issues raised by the complaint and consider reasonable outcomes.

#### **How will my complaint be handled?**

- When responding to a complaint it is important to deal with all complainants with respect and be helpful and positive at all times.

#### **Complaint managers should:**

- acknowledge the complaint as soon as possible, if possible within 3 working days. This can be done in person, by telephone, email or formally in writing. If acknowledgement was made verbally, it should still be documented by the complaint manager
- let the complainant know that they will be kept up to date with progress
- keep the matter as confidential as possible by only sharing information with those who **need to know** about the complaint issues
- listen carefully to the issues and resolve the complaint directly at the local level wherever possible.

#### **Resolving a complaint:**

- Complaints should be finalised as soon as possible and no later than 20 working days. Complaint managers must keep people updated on the progress of their complaint. If a delay is anticipated, inform the complainant and other parties and provide reasons for the delay.
- Consider any reasonable outcomes suggested by the complainant and any staff member complained about. However, ultimately the complaint manager determines how a complaint is to be resolved.
- Outcomes will depend on the circumstances of each complaint and take into account any statutory requirements. Complaint managers should consider flexible approaches wherever possible.