



ALBANY SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

COMPLAINTS POLICY

DOCUMENT HISTORY

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Policy

a) 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 Department in their private capacity.

b) Employees of the Department 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.

Background

The Department is characterised by a commitment to responding positively to complaints. In particular, the partnership between parents and schools should be a strong and reliable feature of the public school system. Parents and other school community members must be confident that staff will listen and respond to their needs and concerns.

Principles

The following principles apply to the management of all complaints:

- ❖ 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.

Procedures

WHO MAY COMPLAIN

Students, parents, members of the community, and employees of the Department 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:

- ❖ provision of education; or
- ❖ conduct of any Department employee.

Employees who are the subject of a complaint are to be informed of the substance of the complaint.

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.

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.

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 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.

Local Management of Complaints

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 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

APPENDIX A: Support for staff

What to do if you receive a complaint

If a parent makes contact directly with you by phone to complain about you, e.g. about a Bluey, and you are able to resolve together, do so. Record this information and resolution on SIS and inform your Line Manager.

If you receive a verbal complaint about another staff member or service provision, please liaise with a member of executive for advice. Most verbal complaints about another staff member will be logged on the Complaints Register.

If a written complaint is received from a parent, community member, student or staff member please forward to the Principal's Assistant. This will be recorded in the Complaints Register and the Principal will manager or delegate management of the complaint. A written complaint requires a written response.

Complaints Register

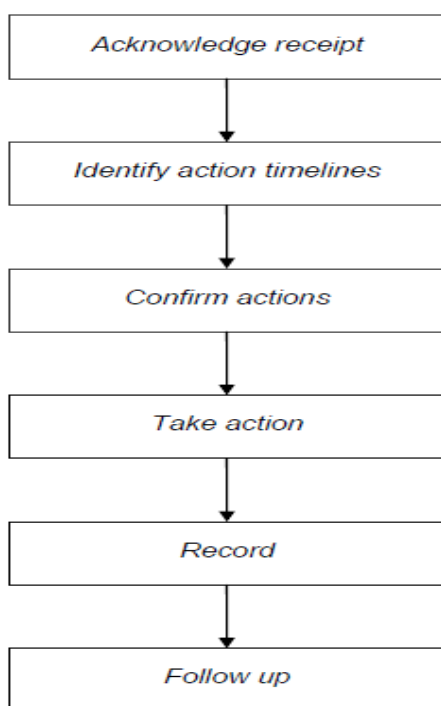
This is a confidential register of complaints, dates and actions, with restricted staff access. This records if the complaint is about service or an employee, the date it was received, associated correspondence and the date of finalisation.

APPENDIX B Management procedures

Management of Complaints

If delegated responsibility to manage a complaint, the following procedures should be followed:

- Make contact with the Complainant to inform them you will be managing the matter, within three days of the school receiving the complaint.
- Clarify, if necessary, the desired outcome the Complainant is seeking and outline a timeline for the process.
- Inform the person in charge of the service area or employee of the nature of the complaint and ask for a response, either in writing or through an interview within three days of being informed.
- Determine any actions as follow up and inform relevant people, verbally and in writing.
- Liaise with your Line Manager to review your determinations and draft responses.
- Follow up with a written response to the Complainant, and if relevant, employee. See the Principal's Assistant for support in producing letters.
- Make contact with the Complainant to convey determination and satisfaction.
- Forward all records to the Principal's Assistant for filing at completion.



APPENDIX C Guidelines for the Community

Seeking information as early as possible can solve many problems. If you have any questions or concerns about your child's progress, the homework set or the assessment procedures, contact the class teacher. The best way to do this is to contact the school office to arrange a mutually convenient time for a telephone conversation or meeting.

WHEN YOU HAVE A PROBLEM

Try to identify the problem clearly before going to the school. If there is more than one problem, list them to ensure that the extent of the problem is clear to the school.

Decide whether the problem is a concern, an enquiry or a complaint. This will help in finding a solution. Make an appointment to talk with the teacher. This can be arranged through the school office. If your concern is about the conduct of a staff member, you may prefer to discuss the matter with a school administrator.

Try to stay calm. Even if you don't feel it, being calm will help to get your concerns across more clearly than if you are upset or angry. It may help to take someone with you.

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.

You should be aware that when a complaint is made in writing about the conduct of an individual staff member, that staff member will receive documentation of the substance of the complaint and, in most cases, the name of the complainant.