

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Rationale

Educational success is dependent on the effective partnerships between students, parents/guardians/carers, our school and the community. We need to develop an open and respectful dialogue which recognises the rights and responsibilities of all parties concerned so that we are able to talk to each other when we have concerns, so that the issues can be worked out. During the course of your child's school years, you may have concerns or complaints about an issue or concern you have relating to our practice or your students education. It is important to us that you share these concerns with us so that we might endeavour to continue to work well together. It is important for us to understand what the issues or concerns are and then be able to talk them through. Your comments and feedback are important to us and your contribution can always help us in delivering educational outcomes for our students.

How to raise a complaint

Clifton State High school is committed to ensuring that all complaints are dealt with in a fair and equitable manner. If your complaint is with your child's teacher or relates to an issue concerning your child's experience at school please make an appointment with that teacher as soon as possible through the office. Share the information you have about the problem with the teacher. Give the teacher the opportunity to tell you all he/she knows about the incident or problem. Together, both the parent/carer and the teacher should then take steps to resolve the incident or problem at this level. The teacher will make a record of the concern or complaint and report your meeting and any outcomes to the Head of Department or Deputy Principal.

You may raise an issue with any member of the school staff. Contact them through the office to make an appointment to see the relevant person.

To achieve an effective resolution for all parties, when making your complaint, you should ensure you:

- provide complete and factual information in a timely manner
- deliver your complaint in a calm and reasoned manner
- avoid making frivolous or vexatious complaints
- or using deliberately false or misleading information.

You should be aware that if you are making a complaint about a staff member that, in most instances, the staff member will be told of the complaint and offered the right of reply. You also have the right to have a support person participate throughout the process.

The following four-step procedure is in place to assist parents/ carers and school staff to reach an outcome that is in the best interest of the student.

1. Discuss your complaint with the class teacher

If your complaint is with your child's teacher or relates to an issue concerning your child's experience at school, make an appointment with that teacher as soon as possible through the school administration. Discuss your complaint with the teacher and give the teacher an opportunity to suggest a solution. The teacher will make a record of your complaint and report your meeting and any outcomes to the school principal. Together, both you and your child's teacher should be able to resolve the problem at this level.

2. Discuss your complaint with the principal

If after approaching your child's teacher your complaint remains unresolved, make an appointment to see the school principal to discuss the issue further. Alternatively, you and the teacher may agree to ask the principal to act as a go-between in informal conflict resolution in an attempt to resolve the problem.

If your complaint relates to more general school matters, including issues of school policy and issues of compliance or non-compliance, you should raise your complaint directly with the principal or their delegate. The principal may refer your complaint to a delegate such as the deputy principal or Business Services Manager. The staff member will make a record of your complaint and work with you to come to a resolution. Complaints to the principal may be lodged in person, by telephone, writing or via email.

3. Contact your local education office

If you have discussed your complaint with the principal and still feel that you have not reached a resolution, you have the right to contact your local Department of Education and Training office. Complaints may be lodged by telephone or in writing. Your complaint should be specific in detail and outline the steps you have taken to resolve the issue. Ensure your complaint includes your full name and address and that you have signed and dated it. It is also a good idea to keep a copy for your own records.

Process for Managing Concerns or Complaints

There are generally four phases in managing a complaint or concern with the option of a fifth phase for review of a complaint or concern outcome.

Phase 1: Receiving and clarifying the complaint

All members of staff may receive concerns or complaints. Try to state your concern or complaint calmly, clearly and courteously. Conversations will continue provided the tone and manner are calm and respectful. If not able to be achieved an alternate time will be booked.

When a staff member receives a complaint he/she should

- Listen carefully to the issues raised and make sure they understand what you are saying
- Ask clarifying questions to ensure he/she is clear in the understanding of what has been said
- Summarise the main points you have raised
- Explain a relevant school policy or procedure as related to the concern or complaint raised
- Work out an action plan with you in relation to: what he/she will do; what you will do; what your child will do; and when you will talk again if necessary.
- Tell you that he/she may access the support of another party in investigating the complaint; if they feel this is needed or refer the matter to an appropriate person
- Resolve the complaint as soon as possible. In most circumstances this will be immediate but in others it may require further investigation.

If a verbal concern or complaint is not resolved you may consider putting your concern or complaint in writing and forwarding it to the school for action. In general, if you advise that you prefer the complaint be in writing, the member of staff will take no further action until your written complaint is received. When a written complaint is received it is date stamped and forwarded to the Principal. Please be aware that when a complaint or concern is raised anonymously we have insufficient information to investigate the situation fully thus no action will be taken until identification is made. If your complaint relates to a report of harm (whether physical, emotional or sexual) of a student under 18 years or the matter relates to Domestic Violence or possible criminal activity, the matter is required to be immediately and reported to the Principal advising them of all the particulars known (in relation to sexual abuse, as prescribed in section 365 of the Education General Provisions Act 2006)

Phase 2: Deciding how to handle the complaint

When a member of staff receives a complaint he/she will:

- Begin the process of making an assessment about your concern or complaint from the moment it is received
- Make an assessment in the first instance about whether the issue can be dealt with as a concern or complaint
- If not the Principal, he/she may refer your concerns or complaint to a Deputy Principal or HOD

The Principal will then decide whether to:

- Take no further action
- Attempt to resolve your concern or complaint through resolution strategies such as mediation
- Refer your concern or complaint to the relevant internal or external agency as required.
Some matters are so serious that they may need to be referred to the QLD Police Service or Department of Child Safety.
- Initiate an investigation of the concern or complaint within the school, if further information is required.

Some matters may require further investigation, in this instance you will be advised as to the next contact time.

The Principal has the final responsibility for the management of all complaints that relate to school management issues. The concern or complaint may however be referred to another member of staff for action (eg: Deputy Principal, Business Services Manager or nominated staff member). If your concern or complaint relates to departmental policy position, you may be advised to take your complaint to the relevant Regional Office. If your concern or complaint is in relation to official misconduct, student protection, staff grievances or perceived breach of privacy, the complaint is directed to the Ethical Standards Unit and the Administrative Law Branch. The Principal ensures that records are kept of complaint and referral of a complaint for either internal or external review.

Phase 3: Finding out about the concern or the complaint

In this phase the person managing the concern or complaint will gather the facts about the issues while keeping in mind the principles of natural justice of all parties concerned. A key principle in understanding any concern or complaint is to understand context and cause. You can assist the school by providing as much information as you can.

When investigating a concern or complaint our staff may need to talk to other people in order to gain a complete picture of the situation. As they do this they begin to explore options to resolve the concern or complaint with you. You can assist the school by focussing on a positive resolution to the matter. Your information will be treated confidentially where possible, however if investigation by an external agency is required information will be passed on.

Please be aware that if you are raising a concern or complaint about an individual that this person will usually have the right to be made aware of the concern or complaint.



Phase 4: Making a decision

In this phase the member of staff managing your concern or complaint will use facts that have been gathered to make a decision about the way forward that is fair to all. We will want to make sure that you understand the decision and accept the resolution.

Phase 5: Review

If you are not satisfied with the response to your complaint, you are encouraged to discuss it further with the Assistant Regional Director, at Regional Office. Further review of the decision is available from the Office of the Education Queensland and the Queensland Ombudsman as described in Education Queensland's ***Making a Complaint*** policy document.

Our commitment to you

We are committed to listening to your concern or complaint and dealing with the issues you raise in a positive and supportive manner. We will conduct ourselves in a calm and respectful manner and we ask the same of you. We will try to make sure that your concern or complaint is resolved quickly, however sometimes more complex issues take time to investigate thoroughly. We will always endeavour to ensure that you understand what we are doing and why we are doing it.

Principal

P&C President

Lou Oberholzer

Joe Doepel