



PARENT COMPLAINT POLICY & PROCEDURES

Parent Complaint Policy and Procedures: May 2017

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Values

At Kangarilla Primary School we have a set of core values that underpin all that we do. There is an expectation that all members of the school community; staff, students, volunteers, parents/caregivers, will adhere to these values at all times.

These values are:

- **Respect**
- **Responsibility**
- **Honesty**

This means that in relation to:

- **RESPECT**

- All members of the school community will treat themselves, each other and their environment with respect, acknowledging the worth and rights of individuals and groups.

- **RESPONSIBILITY**

- All members of the school community are accountable for their actions and will complete their duties with honesty and to the best of their ability.

- **HONESTY**

- All members of the school community will be honest in words and actions; aspiring to do what is right and appropriate at all times.

If at any time a parent believes that a member of the school community is not adhering to these values then they have a right to make a complaint in line with the following policy and procedures.

Objectives

The objectives of these procedures are to:

- provide clear, transparent and responsive complaint management processes, that assist parents to make a complaint when dissatisfied with the level or quality of educational services provided by the school
- ensure that parent complaints are resolved in a consistent, systematic, impartial, fair and timely manner, to the satisfaction of all parties
- encourage, wherever possible, the resolution of complaints at the school level
- ensure parent complaint management processes are fair, non-adversarial, easily accessible and simple to understand and use
- ensure that parent complaints are acknowledged and addressed promptly within agreed timelines
- ensure that parent complaints management processes reflect, from beginning to end, procedural fairness
- provide parents with appropriate avenues of redress, where necessary
- provide an opportunity for an independent and impartial review of a parent complaint.

Scope

These procedures apply to parent concerns and complaints in relation to issues within Kangarilla Primary School, its teaching staff and/or leadership.

These procedures do not apply to matters where there are legislated requirements or existing policies and processes of appeal, such as:

- complaints or appeals relating to student suspension and expulsion
- concerns and allegations of misconduct by staff, volunteers and service providers at government schools and preschools (criminal matters, child protection, corruption etc)
- employee disputes and grievances
- mandatory reporting responsibilities
- some occupational health, safety and welfare related issues
- health support planning
- governing council members, decisions and functions (ie, uniforms, OSHC operations).

Where it becomes apparent that the issue relates to any of these matters the appropriate procedures will be applied. Complaints against governing councils are to be referred to the regional director with responsibility for the site. The regional director will then determine what advice or action is required.

Rights and responsibilities

Parents lodging a concern or complaint with Kangarilla Primary School can expect to:

- be treated with respect, courtesy and consideration
- have their complaint dealt with in an efficient and timely manner
- have access to appropriate and easily understandable information regarding the complaints management process
- have personal information treated as confidential
- have their complaint considered impartially and in accordance with due process and principles of natural justice.

In return Kangarilla Primary School requests that parents making a complaint will:

- treat all parties with respect and courtesy and maintain confidentiality
- raise the concern or complaint as soon as possible after the issue has arisen
- provide complete and factual information about the concern or complaint
- ask for assistance or further information as needed
- act in good faith to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
- have realistic and reasonable expectations about possible outcomes/remedies.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality will be adhered to throughout the complaint resolution process. Confidentiality in the complaint resolution process means that a complaint should only be discussed with those people directly involved in the complaint or resolution process.

Observing confidentiality helps to ensure the protection of the rights of everyone by limiting knowledge of the details of the complaint to those who will work together for a resolution. In addition, it helps to limit damage to any existing trust between the parties, thereby facilitating resolution. By preserving confidentiality, there will be greater chance of a positive resolution, as everyone will have greater confidence in each other when involved in the complaint resolution process.

Everyone involved in a complaint however is entitled to advice and support. This may involve confiding in a partner or spouse, a close friend or the staff of the Parent Complaint Unit and for staff it also includes a senior departmental officer. It is expected these people will also maintain confidentiality.

Communication / Recording of complaints

In instances when the complaint is easily resolved over the phone or by senior staff then recording of the issue may not be required. The school may, however, record a brief note of some issues and the resolution in order to monitor parent concerns and complaints to identify common or reoccurring issues requiring attention.

In most cases we will acknowledge the complaint in the form it was made (ie, phone call is acknowledged with a return phone call) and/or use a standard parent complaint form that staff can fill in at the end of a meeting or telephone call with a parent. This will help to ensure that you and the school have the same understanding of what was discussed and agreed. Brief notes of meetings and telephone calls may be kept (depending on the nature of the concern or complaint) along with copies of any written information provided by you, the parent.

Key pieces of information that may be recorded are:

- the contact detail 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
- recommendations for improvements to school policy, procedure or practices
- potential improvements that could be made to school policy, procedures or practices that would resolve the complaint and prevent a reoccurrence of similar complaints.

Making a complaint

- Please raise the concern or complaint as soon as possible after the issue has arisen
- Complaints can be made in person, verbally over the phone or in writing (ie letter or email).
- Provide complete factual information about the concern or complaint, including names, dates and times.
- Treat all parties with respect and courtesy and maintain confidentiality.
- State, but have realistic and reasonable expectations about, possible outcomes/remedies.

Time Lines

- Acknowledgement of a written complaint will be made within 5 working days.
- Communication regarding the outcome to all the parties involved verbally, and if appropriate, in writing will be made within 15 working days of the complaint.

Responsibilities

School staff

Parents are, in the first instance, to raise any concerns or complaints in relation to their child's education with their child's teacher. It is expected that teachers will:

- make a time available as soon as reasonably possible (ie, within five working days), to discuss with the parent (face-to-face, by phone) their complaint
- listen to the parent
- consider relevant legislation, departmental policy and guidelines and school procedures and/or seek advice/support
- identify and discuss with the parent possible courses of action that could be taken to resolve their complaint and the timeframe within which this will occur
- follow up with the parent(s) after a reasonable period of time has elapsed for any changes to take effect to ensure that the parent is satisfied with the outcome(s)
- if appropriate (depending on the nature of the concern or complaint), keep a written record of the complaint, its progress and outcomes
- if appropriate, refer the complaint to the principal or regional director.

Concerns and complaints received by a school staff member in relation to another staff member or an issue outside their responsibility or beyond their authority to resolve are to be referred to the principal. The staff member who receives the initial complaint is to advise the parent of the reason(s) why the matter is to be referred elsewhere, direct them to the school's complaint resolution procedure and assist, if required, the parent to make their complaint. The parent is then to contact the school to make a time to meet with the principal. If a complaint is in relation to the principal then the parent is to contact the regional director.

School office staff can provide the parent with the regional director's contact details.

Principal

It is expected that the Principal will:

- wherever possible, make every reasonable effort to resolve parent concerns or complaints at the school level in a timely and effective manner
- ensure that the school has an up-to-date school parent complaint policy and procedure that are consistent with the department's *Parental concerns and complaints* policy and this policy is reviewed every two years and ratified by the governing council.
- ensure that the school parent complaint policy and procedures are communicated to all school staff and volunteers in appropriate languages and formats, accessible to all families and, available on the school's website
- ensure all staff understand the school's complaint policy and procedures and have access to appropriate training
- ensure that when parents lodge a complaint they are made aware of the relevant policies and procedures for responding to complaints, the dedicated parent support free call number and their right to a support person
- acknowledge receipt of a written parent complaint in writing as soon as reasonably possible (ie, within five working days)
- advise all relevant parties of the complaint
- determine if support needs to be provided to the parent or staff member involved while the complaint is considered
- consider relevant legislation, departmental policy and guidelines and school procedures.
- seek advice and support, as required, from central office
- assess the complaint and its management to date. Can the complaint be resolved effectively at the local level or does the complaint need to be referred to the regional director?
- investigate, consider and determine the most appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint in a fair and prompt manner, including negotiation between the parties and whether the Parent Complaints Unit's mediation services are required
- document the complaint process and outcome
- communicate the outcome to all the parties involved verbally, and if appropriate, in writing (ie, within 15 working days of receipt of the complaint)
- advise the parent of their right to refer the matter to the regional office if they are dissatisfied with the outcome
- recommend to the regional director any system improvements at a broader level that would reduce the likelihood of similar complaints.

If the principal is unable to resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of the parent then the formal complaint management process is to be utilised. The principal will forward all relevant information recorded by the school, in relation to the complaint, to the regional director.

Withdrawal of a complaint

A complaint can be withdrawn at any stage during the complaint management process. A written complaint should preferably be retracted in writing by the parent. Alternatively a signed and dated notation on the original written complaint that the complaint has been withdrawn by the parent can be made by a departmental staff member. A verbal complaint can be withdrawn verbally and a notation made to that effect. The staff member managing the complaint must notify in writing all affected parties that the complaint has been withdrawn.

Unreasonable complainant conduct

Any written or verbal complaints that contain personal abuse, inflammatory statements, and/or comments of a threatening nature or intended to intimidate will not be addressed and the parent will be advised accordingly. At the discretion of staff verbal communication will be terminated after firstly warning the parent that this will occur if the inappropriate behaviour continues.

Monitoring and evaluation

The school will establish and maintain a system to record and monitor parent complaints and the action taken to resolve the complaint. In instances when the complaint is easily resolved over the phone or by staff then recording of the issue may not be required.

Reoccurring issues will be flagged as a priority and steps will be taken to amend policies and procedures as to resolve the issue. In such cases all relevant stakeholders will be consulted as part of the review process.

This policy and the procedures will be reviewed by staff every two (2) years. The policy will then be presented to the governing council for ratification or amendment.

Contact information

Kangarilla Primary School

Principal:

Mail – Mrs Donna Lean

Kangarilla Primary School

33-35 McLaren Flat Road

Kangarilla

SA 5157

Phone:- 08 8383 7068

Email:- donna.lean935@schools.sa.edu.au

Regional Office

Regional Director :- Nanette Van Ruiten

Mount Barker Office

6 Dutton Road

Mount Barker

SA 5251

Phone:- 08 8391 4705

Fax: - 08 8391 4018

DECD Parent Complaint Unit

PH: 1800 677 435 (free call)

Email: DECD.parentcomplaint@sa.gov.au

Web: www.decd.sa.gov.au/parentcomplaint

DECD Parent Complaint Policy

<http://www.decd.sa.gov.au/docs/documents/1/ParentConcernsandComplain.pdf>