

Attachment to Complaints Policy 103
School Complaints Management Procedure

Complaints come to Administrator and other school staff in many forms. Complaints can be from parents/guardians, community, staff or students.

This document outlines the procedures undertaken at this school to manage complaints. Complaints management at this school is also underpinned by school Policy 103 - Complaints.

All complaints are handled in a positive and open way.

1. Documentation

The school documents all complaints.

Complaints are recorded and reported to the Administrator as soon as practicable after receiving the complaint.

Complaints can be made directly to the Administrator.

The record of the complaint:

- Uses objective language clearly stating the facts
- Contains information in chronological order as practically possible
- Uses quotation marks, where appropriate and necessary
- Is neatly and legibly written in pen or in print in clear unambiguous language
- Includes, where necessary, initialed and dated corrections
- Includes signature, designation of the author, and time and date of the incident/complaint

If it is not resolved at the first point of contact, the complaint is acknowledged within five (5) working days by telephone, in person, by email, or in writing.

Documents related to the complaint are kept and stored in accordance with the relevant policies and schedules. This includes schedules governing the archiving and disposal of records:

- General Disposal and Retention Schedule
- Retention and Disposal Schedule for Records held in Central and District Offices
- Retention and Disposal Schedule for Records held in Schools

2. Complaints Management Phases

There are four key phases in handling a complaint, with the option of a fifth phase for review of a complaint outcome:

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| Phase 1. | Receiving and clarifying the complaint |
| Phase 2. | Deciding how to handle the complaint |
| Phase 3. | Finding out about the complaint |
| Phase 4. | Making a decision about the complaint |
| Phase 5. | Review |

Phase 1 – Receiving and Clarifying the Complaint

Any member of staff can receive a complaint.

All complaints are received in the following manner:

- Being respectful and helpful
- Giving the person your undivided attention
- Not being defensive, apportioning blame
- Remaining positive
- Not perceiving anger as a personal attack

When a staff member receives a verbal complaint they:

- Listen carefully to the issues being raised
- Summarize the issues to clarify and check that they understand what the complainant is telling you
- Empathize and acknowledge the complainant's feelings
- Find out what the complainant wants to happen as a result of the complaint
- Tell the complainant that they may use the support of a third party in progressing the complaint, if they feel this is needed
- Resolve the complaint if possible, or assure the complainant that an appropriate staff member will address their complaint
- Tell the complainant of what will happen with their complaint
- Thank them for their complaint

Complaints are sometimes made with the assistance of an advocate, interpreter or by a third party (as agreed between the complainant and the Administrator). In this case staff will receive and clarify a complaint from more than one person.

Many complaints are resolved at the first point of contact with information and/or an explanation, together with an apology and recognition of the effect the situation has had on the person. Some complainants may also want an undertaking that action will be taken to prevent the problem recurring.

When the complaint is not resolved immediately the complaint is referred to the Administrator as soon as is practicable.

A member of staff who receives a verbal complaint that is not resolved informs the complainant of the further options of:

- Putting their complaint in writing; or
- Assisting the member of staff to record, in writing, the particulars of their complaint.

In general, if the complainant agrees to put the complaint in writing, the member of staff takes no further action unless or until a written complaint is received.

However, if the complaint relates to a report about harm (whether physical/emotional/ sexual) of a student under 18 years attending a educational institution, or the matter relates to possible criminal activity, the matter is immediately reported to the Administrator or the School Social Worker advising them of all the particulars known.

Once the complainant indicates that they would like to register a formal complaint verbally, the member of staff makes a written outline of the issues concerned. The record is read to the complainant, with opportunity for appropriate amendments and the complainant is asked to sign, where possible, the written version of the complaint. The staff member also signs (indicating their personal designation, for example, "Year 7 Teacher, Achieve Language Academy") and dates the complaint.

No signature is required for verbal complaints taken over the phone, but the complainant is asked to provide verbal confirmation of the issues that have been recorded.

If a complainant refuses to sign or confirm a written recording of a verbal complaint, the staff member notes the refusal on the written complaint. The complainant is told that this refusal will be noted and that the process will be reliant on the staff member's interpretation and notes only. The complainant may not, at a later date, make another complaint based on a lack of satisfaction with this record of complaint.

Receiving a Written Complaint

When a written complaint is received it is date-stamped and forwarded to the Administrator.

Receiving an Anonymous Complaint

Anonymous complaints will only be acted upon if enough information is provided to allow for follow up. When an anonymous complaint is received the complainant is told of the possible limitations associated with the making of an anonymous complaint.

Phase 2 – Deciding how to handle the complaint

When a staff member receives a complaint they:

- Begin the process of making an assessment about a complaint from the moment the complaint is received
- Make an assessment in the first instance about whether the issue can be dealt with as a concern or a complaint
- If they are not the Administrator, refer the complainant or the complaint to the Administrator for addressing.

The Administrator decides whether to:

- Take no further action
- Attempt to resolve the complaint through resolution strategies such as mediation
- Refer the complaint to the relevant internal or external agency if required
- Initiate an investigation of the complaint, within the school, if further information is required.

Coordination of complaints

The Administrator has final responsibility for the management of all complaints that relate to school management issues under his/her jurisdiction. The complaint can be referred to another staff member in the school for action (for example, the Assistant Principal, or other nominated staff member).

If the complaint relates to school policy the complainant may be advised to take their complaint to the School Board Chairperson.

If the complaint is in relation to official misconduct, student protection, staff grievances or a perceived breach of privacy, the complaint may also be directed to the School Board Chairperson.

Record of Complaint

The Administrator ensures that records are kept of a complaint and any referral of a complaint for either internal or external review.

Phase 3 – Finding out about the complaint

The Administrator or delegate gathers all the necessary facts about the complaint while keeping in mind the principles of natural justice of all parties concerned.

The Administrator or delegate investigates complaints by:

- Collecting and analyzing information relevant to the matter
- Working collaboratively with all people involved
- Finding the facts relating to the matter
- Identifying any contributing factors to the matter
- Consulting the relevant DOEM policy on issues that relate to the complaint
- Documenting the investigation report or outcome

Phase 4 – Making a decision about the complaint

Based on the facts about the complaint gathered in Phase 3, the Administrator, or delegate makes a decision on the complaint.

Notifying the complainant of the decision

Within 28 days of receipt of the complaint, the Administrator provides the complainant with either:

- A written response, including reasons for the decision or
- A written notification that their complaint has been referred to the School Board Chairperson.

Phase 5 Review Phase

If the complainant is not satisfied with this response, they are encouraged to discuss it further with the school Administrator and/or advised to contact the School Board Chairperson.