



Kapinara Primary School

Complaints Management Policy

1. Objective

To ensure that complaints lodged at this school are resolved in a prompt and efficient manner.

To promote the highest standard of professionalism in dealing with our community.

2. Policy

Staff at this school are responsible for managing the resolution of disputes and complaints lodged with us.

We will make every effort to promptly resolve disputes and complaints lodged with us according to the principles of procedural fairness.

Where we cannot resolve a complaint, the complainant, Principal or District Director can forward a written complaint to the Director General of the Department of Education and Training.

NB: The Department of Education and Training's *Disputes and Complaints Policy and Procedures* details the Departmental procedures to be followed in the management of complaints. This document details the procedures to be followed for local management of complaints at this school.

As outlined in Australian Standard AS 4269-1995 our Complaints Handling Policy demonstrates:

1. Commitment:

We are genuinely interested in having complaints resolved at the school level.

We recognise a community member's right to complain and to have their complaint dealt with seriously and fairly.

We actively seek comments about our performance from our parent community.

2. Fairness:

We understand the need to be fair in our complaints handling processes.

We follow procedural fairness principles when responding to a complaint.

Decisions made, and the reason for them will be made available to all parties directly involved in a complaint.

3. Resources:

We use school resources to effectively manage complaints.

We have adequate resources for effective handling of complaints.

Relevant staff at this school receive training in the management of complaints.

Complainants will have easy access to the person at our school that will be dealing with the complaint.

4. Visibility:

Our complaints handling processes are available from the School Office.

Brochures explaining our complaints handling processes are available from the school office.

Complaints handling processes are explained regularly in our school newsletter. (please note that these will be produced once the policy has been ratified by the School Council)

5. Access:

We accept complaints lodged by telephone, fax, in writing and via email.

We facilitate people with special needs to access our complaints handling system.

Our complaints handling processes recognise cultural diversity and take into account the particular needs of our parent community.

6. Assistance:

Upon request, we will provide a complainant with the support needed to formulate and lodge a complaint.

Trained staff are available to help complainants formulate and lodge a complaint.

7. Responsiveness:

Complaints will be dealt with quickly and efficiently.

We will maintain regular contact with complainants to keep them informed of the progress of their complaint.

8. Charges:

There will be no charge to the complainant for the raising of a complaint with us.

NB: Where relevant, statutory charges, for example, Freedom of Information requests, still apply.

9. Remedies:

Our complaints handling system has the capacity to determine and put in place remedies.

Where a complaint results in the identification of changes that should be made to our processes, those changes will be made.

10. Data Collection:

Complaints received, and their outcomes will be recorded under our school name in the Department of Education and Training's complaints handling database.

Data about complaints lodged with our school is collected and stored.

11. Systemic and Recurring Problems:

Complaints are regularly analysed for the identification and addressing of systemic and recurring problems.

We analyse our Complaints Register to identify areas where changes are required to address systemic and recurring problems.

12. Accountability:

We report our complaints handling processes against our documented performance standards.

We report on our complaints handling processes as a part of our school review and evaluation procedure.

Complaints lodged and their outcomes are reported to the District Director as part of the school review process.

We report on complaints lodged and their outcome in the school's Annual Report.

13. Reviews:

We review our complaints handling process annually.

We review our complaints handling process regularly.

3. **Definitions**

Complaint:

The expression of dissatisfaction with any aspect of government education and training. It may be general in nature or relate to particular staff, a part of the organisation, a policy or a decision. Any person may lodge a complaint, however staff employed by the Department of Education and Training cannot use this process if they are acting in an official capacity. A complaint must contain sufficient detail to enable it to be addressed and recorded.

Locally Managed Complaint:

A verbal or written complaint made in relation to a school, or staff member and managed by the school.

Centrally Managed Complaint:

A complaint lodged in writing with the Director General of the Department of Education and Training, and managed at Central Office.

Complainant:

A person or persons who lodge a complaint.

4. **Receiving a Complaint**

Complaints are to be received and recorded as outlined in this policy.

All complaints are treated equally regardless of the manner in which they are lodged. Where necessary the complainant is to be given help in the framing, writing and lodgement of a complaint.

In all cases complainants are to be treated with courtesy and the contact is to be conducted and ended in a positive way.

Verbal Complaints:

- Be courteous and positive to the caller at all times.
- Assure the caller that their call will be taken seriously.
- Listen to the caller at all times and without admitting any liability, display empathy with what they are saying.
- Repeat the substance of their complaint to check your understanding of their position.
- Explain the course of action that will now follow.

- Identify yourself as the caller's contact person with regard to this matter.
- Record information on *Complaint Recording Form / Complaint Recording Database*.

Written Complaints:

- Record the complaint on *Complaint Recording Form / Complaint Recording Database* noting that it is a written complaint.
- Write an acknowledgement letter to the complainant, ensuring that the complainant will receive this within the school's identified timeframe.
- In the letter, explain the course of action that will now follow and identify yourself/relevant person as the complainant's contact person with regard to this matter.

5. Recording and Registering a Complaint:

It is the responsibility of the person who is the complaint contact person to record the complaint and file it on the *School Complaints Register / School Complaints Database*. The outcome of completed complaints must be recorded. The *Register / Database* is used to track and analyse complaints.

6. Resolving a Complaint:

- Local complaints should be resolved within 14 school days where practical. This should be seen as the maximum time and should be less wherever possible.
- Where outside support is required or it is judged that the complaint needs to be handled external to the school (District Office or Central Office) this determination will be made as soon as possible and all relevant material is to be forwarded promptly.

NOTE: The Department's Disputes and Complaints Policy and Procedures details the circumstances under which a complaint is to be managed externally to the school.

- Where there are likely to be unavoidable delays, the complainant should be contacted and kept informed of the status of their complaint. This contact may be made by telephone.
- For verbal complaints lodged by complainants who do not wish to be formally identified and who do not wish to lodge the complaint in writing, resolution can only be attempted directly with the caller. A written record of the nature of the complaint and the attempts for its resolution should still be recorded.
- Where the Principal makes a judgement that a complaint is vexatious, trivial, without substance or does not warrant further action then the complaint is not investigated and the complainant is informed of this decision in writing.

7. Remedies

Possible remedies for resolving local complaints include:

- Providing options for the resolution of a complaint;
- Acknowledgement when a complaint has substance;
- Providing a complainant with evidence that a complaint has been addressed in an open and transparent manner;
- Apprising the complainant of changes in practices as a result of the complaint;
- Provision of a written apology- where necessary; and,
- Offering remedies to others who may have been affected in the same way, but who did not make a formal complaint.

8. Escalation

Should a complainant be clearly unsatisfied with the school's attempts to resolve a complaint, the following process applies:

Advise the complainant of their right to take the matter further by writing to the school's District Director.

Provide the complainant with the name and postal address of the School's District Director.

Offer the complainant support in the formulation, writing and lodgement of the complaint with the District Director.

ENDORSEMENT

We, the undersigned, hereby certify that this document was ratified at the Kapinara School Council meeting of

KAPINARA SCHOOL COUNCIL CHAIR

KAPINARA SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

NAME _____

NAME _____

RESPONSIBILITIES FOR LOCAL MANAGEMENT OF COMPLAINTS:

CLASSROOM TEACHERS

- Maintaining confidentiality in dealing with each matter;
- Resolving parent concerns and complaints where possible;
- Communicating outcomes of parent concerns and complaints to a school administrator where appropriate; and
- Referring parent enquiries, concerns and complaints to a school administrator where appropriate.

PRINCIPALS

- Maintaining confidentiality and impartiality in dealing with each matter;
- Ensuring, wherever appropriate, that concerns and complaints are resolved at the school level;
- Developing and implementing a process for registering, responding to and managing parent enquiries, concerns and complaints;
- Ensuring that the process for managing complaints includes recording and monitoring of complaints and their outcomes to enable improvements to be identified and implemented;
- Ensuring that enquiries, concerns and complaint procedures are communicated clearly to parents and community members;
- Ensuring that school policies and procedures are modified, where necessary, to address areas of concern;
- Ensuring that processes are consistent with all relevant Department of Education and Training policies;
- Ensuring that complainants and respondents are aware that they can have a friend or adviser present during any discussion; and
- Referring the complaint, where appropriate, to the Director, Schools/and Services for either resolution or, if the complaint has possible disciplinary implications for an employee, to the Complaints Management Unit to manage.

VERBAL COMPLAINTS LODGED AT THE LOCAL LEVEL:

- When a principal, director or manager receives a verbal complaint that officer will implement strategies to resolve the complaint at the local level, if appropriate to do so. The principal director or manager may provide advice to the complainant on possible strategies to resolve the matter.
- Documenting/recording the substance and process of resolving these complaints must occur.
- 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 manager.
- In this event, officers need to assess whether it is appropriate to address the complaint locally or whether, to forward it to the Complaints Management Unit.

WRITTEN COMPLAINTS LODGED AT THE LOCAL LEVEL:

- All written complaints lodged with a principal, director or manager should be acknowledged within five working days.
- When the principal, director or manager receives a written complaint that is more appropriately dealt with at a central level, it should be forwarded to the Complaints Management Unit.
- Alternatively, they may decide to reject it on the grounds that the complaint:
 - is vexatious, trivial or without substance; or
 - does not warrant further action.Please note, that if the complaint relates to the conduct of an employee the Manager, Complaints Management Unit should be consulted before rejecting the complaint.
- If it is appropriate to manage the complaint locally, every endeavour should be made to resolve it within 14 days. If the circumstances warrant a longer timeframe for management of the complaint the complainant needs to be informed of the reasons for the delay in addressing the matter and of the likely time frame required to conclude the matter.
- Documenting/recording of complaints occurs at the local level in accordance with normal complaints processes and confidentiality requirements.