



Complaints Policy

Rationale

Educational success is dependent upon effective partnerships between parents, students and our school. We need to be able to talk to each other when we have concerns, so that issues can be worked out. During the course of your child's education you may have concerns or complaints relating to our practice. It is important to us that you share these concerns with us so that we might endeavour to continue to work well together. We need to understand what the issues are and then be able to talk them through. As a result you may gain a better understanding of why we make particular decisions. Your feedback is important to us and your contribution can always help us improve our business.

How to raise a complaint

Centenary Heights 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 our main office. Share the information you have about the problem with the teacher. Give the teacher an 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 his/her Head of Department or Head of Year. You may raise an issue with any member of our staff. Contact the main office to make an appointment to see the relevant person. When making the complaint or raising a concern, it is in the best interests of complaint resolution to ensure that you:

- Provide complete and factual information in a timely manner;
- Deliver your complaint in a non-threatening and non-abusive manner; and
- Not make frivolous or vexatious complaints or include deliberately false or misleading information.

Please be aware that if you make a complaint about a member of staff, 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 in the process and may choose to access the assistance of an advocate, interpreter or a third party (as agreed between you and the Principal) when raising your concern or complaint. All members of our staff are encouraged to deal positively and sincerely with concerns or complaints as they are raised. We will listen and we will ask questions to make sure that we understand fully your concern or complaint. We may take notes to assist in following up your concern or complaint.

Process for managing concerns or complaints

There are generally four phases in managing a complaint or a concern, with the option of a fifth phase for review of a complaint or concern outcome. In most situations these can be worked through quickly as one process.

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. Being aggressive will not assist the issue. Conversations will continue provided 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 verbal complaint he/she will/may:

- Listen carefully to the issues you raise 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 would do; what your child would 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 verbal concern or complaint is not resolved you may consider putting your concerns 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 raising a concern or complaint anonymously our school has insufficient information to adequately manage the situation or fully investigate the issues raised. As such 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 the age of 18 years, or the matter relates to possible criminal activity, the matter is required to be dealt with immediately and reported to the Principal or Principal's supervisor 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 Head of Year

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 (e.g. a Deputy Principal, Business Service Manager or nominated staff member). If your concern or complaint relates to departmental policy, or a 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 Workforce Standards and Performance Unit and the Administrative Law Branch. The Principal ensures that records are kept of complaint and any 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

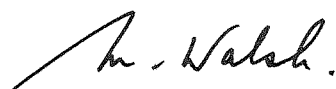
In this phase the member of staff managing your concern or complaint will use facts that have been gathered to make a decision about the way forward that is fair to all. We will want to make sure that you understand the decision and accept the resolution.

Phase 5: Review

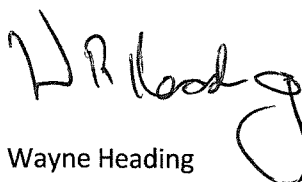
If you are not satisfied with the response to your complaint, you are encouraged to discuss it further with the Assistant Regional Director, at Regional Office. Further review of the decision is available from the Office of Education Queensland and the Queensland Ombudsman as described in Education Queensland's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



Maryanne Walsh
Principal



Wayne Heading
P & C President