



**Government of South Australia**

Department for Education and  
Child Development



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## **PARENT COMPLAINT POLICY**

### **POLICY STATEMENT**

Poonindie Primary School is committed to ensuring the delivery of high quality education and care to all children and young people in our school. Working in partnership with parents to resolve any concerns and complaints that they may have about their child's schooling, is a key part of how we deliver on this commitment.

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear and transparent information to parents, the community and staff on how concerns and complaints will be managed and resolutions found. It is also the intent of this policy to ensure that parents have access to support and advice when attempting to resolve a concern or complaint.

When staff work with parents to resolve a concern or complaint they will follow a process that is founded on fairness, impartiality, accessibility, respect and responsiveness.

The process has three stages, with our school being the first point of contact for parents, followed by the regional office and then the Parent Complaint Unit if the complaint cannot be resolved at the local level.

Parents can expect that their concern or complaint will be responded to in a courteous, respectful and timely manner and that staff will work in partnership with them to resolve their concern or complaint. In return, we ask that parents are respectful, co-operative and courteous to staff and that they are realistic and reasonable about what course of action is required to resolve their concern or complaint.

At any point in the process parents have the right to refer the matter to an external agency, such as the South Australian Ombudsman.

### **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

This policy is based on the following principles:

- The safety and educational wellbeing of children and young people is our first priority.
- Students, parents, staff and volunteers have the right to be treated with respect and courtesy.
- Parents have the right to raise concerns and complaints about our school or preschool life and be supported to do so.
- Wherever possible, complaints should be resolved at the school level.
- Complaints will be considered in a confidential, timely and impartial manner and in accordance with due process and principles of natural justice.
- The rights and responsibilities of all parties should be considered and balanced in finding a mutually acceptable outcome to complaints.
- Complaints are monitored and their management evaluated so as to inform and drive Poonindie Primary School system and performance improvement.

### **SCOPE**

Parents can raise a concern or a complaint about any aspect of the school's operations (for example, the type, level or quality of services, the behaviour and decisions of staff or policy, procedures and practices) directly with the site as this is where the concern can best be resolved.

If no acceptable resolution is reached at the school level then parents may contact the Regional Director at the Port Lincoln Office on 86820700.

Complaints about regional or Central Office staff may also be referred to either the Parent Complaint Unit on 1800 677 435 or the Head of Schools on (08) 8226 2536.

### ***Complaints not covered by this policy***

This policy does not apply to matters where there are legislated requirements or existing policies and processes of appeal.

Examples include:

- appeals about student suspension and expulsion
- complaints that fit within the scope of the Education and Early Childhood Services Registration and Standards Board
- staff disputes and grievances
- mandatory reporting responsibilities
- some health, safety and welfare related issues.

Some complaints may never be resolved to a parent's satisfaction. Vexatious or previously finalised complaints will not be pursued unless the parent is able to provide new information.

This policy is not applicable where a parent has employed a third party (eg, legal representation) in relation to their complaint. In these circumstances, the complaint must be referred to the department's Legislation and Legal Services Unit for action.

A parent is, however, entitled to a support person such as a friend, colleague, or a person provided through an appropriate support agency, as long as they do not receive a fee for service.

### **POLICY DETAILS**

#### ***Stage 1 – Raise the concern at school level***

The school should always be the first point of contact. The parent needs to find an appropriate time to talk to the class teacher in the first instance to discuss the concern. The school front office may be able to arrange a time to meet with the teacher or have a discussion over the phone.

If the concern is about a teacher then the parent may prefer to talk to the principal or director. If the complaint involves the principal then the Port Lincoln Regional Office of the Department for Education and Child Development should be contacted.

If the parent is not satisfied after speaking with the teacher, they may choose to discuss the complaint with the principal. They will work with the parent and the staff member to resolve the issue.

The parent may write to the principal (who will then acknowledge receipt of the complaint with a written response as soon as possible), or telephone the school to make a time to meet with the principal. The principal will consider the most effective way of resolving the concern or complaint, based on:

- information provided
- the school's parent complaint procedure
- the DECD *Parent concerns and complaints* policy and procedure
- consideration of any legislative and policy implications
- advice from the regional office or DECD Central Office.

The school will aim to resolve the concern or complaint as soon as practical.

#### ***Stage 2 – Contact the regional office***

If the parent is not satisfied that their complaint has been resolved by the school – or if the principal is the subject of the complaint – they may choose to contact their regional office for help. The regional office will review the complaint – this may involve meeting with those involved and reviewing the documentation. The parent may also be offered mediation.

The regional office will aim to resolve the complaint within 20 working days.

#### ***Stage 3 – Parent Complaint Unit***

The Parent Complaint Unit has a dual function:

- To provide advice and support to parents about their concern or complaint
- To objectively review complaints that has not been resolved at the school or regional level.

A parent may contact the unit's hotline at any time to discuss their concern or complaint or to seek advice. Staff will follow up at a later stage to check about progress.

If a complaint has not been able to be resolved by the school or regional office, the unit will be asked to assess the complaint and decide what action is needed. Staff from the unit will contact the parent about what has been done, explain the process and provide information about when they can expect to hear about the outcome.

The department's Head of Schools or the Head of Early Childhood Development and the Chief Executive's office will be advised by the Parent Complaint Unit of the outcome of the review. One of these senior leaders will make a final decision about the complaint and communicate the decision within 35 working days in most cases.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Order for lodging complaints and contact details:

1. Your child's class teacher
2. School leader (if Principal absent)
3. Principal - 86846067
4. Regional Director – 86820700
5. Parent Complaint Unit - 1800 677 435
6. Head of Schools - 8226 2536.

## **MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed every year with regards to contact details.  
The full policy will be reviewed every three years.

## **DEFINITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

For the purpose of this policy the following definitions mean:

- School – public education preschools, schools, and other educational sites and settings.
- Parent – other than parents, this term also includes a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for the child including parental responsibility under the Commonwealth Family Law Act 1975 and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides.
- Concern – an issue of interest (because of its importance and effect) which is raised informally in order to improve or change a situation.
- Complaint – an expression of grievance or resentment where the parent is seeking redress or justice.

## **ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS**

Poonindie Primary School Grievance Procedures in Bullying Policy

## **REFERENCES**

*DECD Documents*

Available at <http://www.decd.sa.gov.au/portal/community.asp> - in the policies menu on the right hand side of the page.

‘A Guide to Raising a Concern or Complaint’

‘Parent Guide to Raising a Concern or Complaint Brochure’

‘Parents Concern or Complaints Procedure’

Policy reviewed at GC 21/10/ 2015

Next review: 2018