

Communication Management Process

TEACHER

In the first instance a complaint about aspects such as learning, teaching, behaviour management, assessment, homework, results or playground incident should be addressed with the class teacher. Initial contact can be made through an informal discussion, email or phone call. A follow up face to face meeting might be required for further clarification. Parents may choose a face to face meeting as the initial contact after establishing a mutually convenient interview time that allows for a full discussion. Should the problem not be addressed or require further school intervention parents may either meet with the teacher again or advise the teacher that they will be seeking assistance from the sector Deputy Principal.



TEACHER / DEPUTY PRINCIPAL

With the Deputy Principal and possibly the class teacher, review the original complaint in the context of what has happened since the first contact with the class teacher. Discuss the strategies used and outcomes achieved and what problems still exist. Decide on future course of action and review dates. Should the problem not be addressed or require further intervention, parents may either meet again with the Deputy Principal or advise the teacher / Deputy Principal that they will be seeking assistance from the Principal.



PRINCIPAL

With the Principal review of all actions and discussions completed so far. Plan of action agreed to and carried out with review dates set.



REGIONAL OFFICE

Should the parent believe that the Education Act has not been adhered to by the school they may contact the Client Services Officer in Regional Office. Regional Office will then refer the complaint back to the Principal with legislative, policy and procedure advice where appropriate.

Getting the best for your child

From time to time you may have concerns about your child at school or the operations of the school such as learning, teaching, behaviour management, assessment, homework, results or playground incident. These concerns may grow into bigger issues if you don't talk to the school staff about them. Department of Education and Training (DET) is committed to ensuring that all parents have their concerns dealt with in a fair and equitable manner and there are processes and support structures in place to enable parents to work through any issues they may have.

Four Step Commitment to Positive Communication Management

At Norfolk Village State School we believe that effective partnerships between parents, students and our school are important to educational success. One part of that partnership is trust and openness. We need to be able to talk to each other when we have concerns, so that those issues can be worked out. You may at times, have concerns or complaints relating to your understanding of something at our school. It is important that you share these with us.

Perhaps we haven't explained something very well. We need to know so that we can put things right. Perhaps you don't agree with a decision. We need to talk the issue through. As a result, you could gain a better understanding of why we made that decision. Or we may need to reconsider our decision. Your contribution can help us improve.

Step 1: How to clarify or obtain information

Checking your understanding

The first step with any concern should be to check your information with the classroom teacher or relevant staff member. You can do this by phoning the relevant staff member on 5549 4222 or via email. These days, emails are the most successful in getting a prompt reply. Sometimes staff members are not available to respond to phone call immediately as they may be in class, off site or have made previous appointments. Generally most calls will be returned within 24 hours.

If, having clarified the information, you still disagree with an action or a decision, then you may wish to make a complaint or seek further clarification from the sector deputy principal. The remainder of this brochure explains how to make a complaint or seek further clarification, and what will happen if you do follow this path.

Step 2: How to seek clarification or make a complaint

We aim to provide a service that can be improved through your feedback.

To make a complaint or seek further clarification, email, write or telephone to school on 5549 4222. Sometimes we are unable to put your call straight through to the relevant person. In these cases our office staff will pass on your message to the relevant person.

If you wish to discuss the matter in person please telephone the school to make an appointment with the relevant person.

Due to the busy schedules of the leadership team, parents are advised if they wish to speak directly to the Principal or relevant sector Deputy Principal, that they phone the school prior to their visit to make an appointment (Phone 5549 4222). This enables the relevant person to arrange their timetables so that quality time can be spent discussing your issues and concerns.

If you decide to come to the school without an appointment it is important to note that we cannot guarantee that you will be able to see the Principal or a Deputy Principal as often they are in the middle of scheduled appointments or meetings, are either in another section of the school or are off site. This not only causes you an inconvenience as you have travelled especially to the school but also places the office staff in an uncomfortable situation, as they are unable to assist you with your need.

If this situation arises, then our office staff will take down your details and contact number and as soon as the relevant officer is available they will give your message to them for their action. Office staff are not trained nor responsible for making any decisions around parent complaints or school operations. Our staff are encouraged to deal positively and sincerely with your concern. They will listen. They will ask questions to make sure they understand. They may take notes to help in following up your concern. They will help you to take your complaint to the right place.

If you wish to bring a friend or if you want help or support, such as an interpreter, we will be happy to help.

What can you expect?

There are usually four phases in handling a complaint. In most cases these can all be worked through quickly in one process.

Phase 1 – Reception

Try to state your concern calmly, clearly and courteously. Being aggressive will not help resolve the issue, and could if continued, lead to termination of the interview. Someone will listen to your concerns and make sure they understand it. Be prepared to state clearly what action would in your opinion lead to a satisfactory resolution of the complaint. The teacher/administrator will summarise the main points. He or she will usually explain the school policy or procedure on the issue. He or she will work out an action plan with you: what he or she will do, what you should do, what your child should do and when you will talk again. He or she may deal with the complaint or refer it to another person. In many cases they should be able to resolve your concern straight away.

Phase 2 – Deciding how to handle the matter

Some matters must not be handled in our school, because they are so serious. They must be referred to the Department of Education and Training's central office, district office, Department of Child Safety or perhaps the police. Other matters will need further investigation. In this phase a decision will be made about how a complaint will be handled.

Phase 3 – Finding out about the matter

In this phase the person handling the complaint will try to find out all about your concerns. They will try to understand the context and the causes. You should help by providing all the information you can. They may need to talk to people to get a complete picture. As they do this they may begin to explore options to resolve the matter.

You can help them by focusing on a positive resolution of the matter. Your information will be treated confidentially (but where the matter must be investigated by an external agency it will need to be passed to the agency). You need to be aware that the person who is being complained about usually has the right to be made aware of the complaint.

Phase 4 –Resolution

The person who is handling your complaint will use the facts that have been gathered to make a decision that is fair to all and compliant with the Education Act and Policy and Procedures Register. He or she will work to put things right for you and would appreciate your help to do this. He or she wants to make sure that you accept the resolution.

Step 3: What happens if the problem still exists or has not been resolved?

Sometimes resolutions don't work for a number of reasons, such as:

The action plan identified required you or your child to undertake some course of action or change of routine that has not been undertaken, or that you do not agree or accept the results of resolution outcome. In these circumstances it is important to review the steps taken to arrive at the resolution. This will be done by asking you to attend an interview with the Principal.

During this interview the complaint process will be discussed and reviewed. You will be asked several questions as to what actions were recommended and what the outcomes of those actions were.

Step 4: What happens if the problem has not been resolved within the school?

If you believe that the Education Act has not been adhered to by the school they may contact the Client Services Officer in Regional Office. Regional Office will then refer the complaint back to the principal with legislative, policy and procedure advice where appropriate.

Our commitment

We are committed to dealing positively with your concerns. It helps us to learn how we can do things better for you. We will try to make sure that your complaint is resolved quickly. Sometimes a complex matter will take time. But we will always make sure you understand what we are doing and why.