

Dealing with Complaints – Policy and Procedure

Rationale:

At Huntfield Heights School P-6 we believe parents and carers are our partners in the education of children. Regular communication between parents/guardians/carers and the school and preschool is essential in helping children achieve their potential. Our school and preschool are committed to ensuring that anyone with parental responsibilities for a young person can raise a complaint, with confidence that it will be heard and responded to in a timely fashion.

Guiding Principles:

Safety of children is always the priority. Our procedures are underpinned by the following principles:

1. All persons in the school and preschool community including the children, parents, educators/staff and volunteers have the right to be treated with respect and courtesy.
2. Parents have the right to raise concerns and make enquiries or complaints about any aspect of school and preschool life.
3. Information about how, where and to whom complaints can be made will be accessible.
4. Complaints will be acknowledged and addressed promptly within specific timelines.
5. Individual complaints will be assessed objectively and without bias using principles of natural justice.
6. The rights and responsibilities of all parties will be considered and balanced in attempting to find a mutually acceptable outcome to complaints.
7. The confidentiality of all parties will be maintained wherever possible.

Step 1: Talk to Us

If your concern or complaint relates to an issue concerning your child's education or experiences you should talk to the preschool teacher as soon as possible.

At Huntfield Heights School P-6 we ask that any concerns are raised outside of session times as educators/staff have a duty of care to the children during the session.

Our educators/staff will, following a direct complaint:

- Listen.
- Record what you say.
- Identify actions to resolve the concern.
- Let you know what will or has been done.

- Get back to you to see how things are going.
- Provide support to you if necessary while the complaint is being considered.
- Investigate, consider and determine the most appropriate way/ways to resolve the issue fairly and promptly.
- Consider relevant legislation, department policy and guidelines.
- Inform you if there is a delay in the process.
- Ensure your complaint and the outcome is documented.

Please note:

Interpreters and Aboriginal Education Coordinators are available to assist parents in communicating with us.

Step 2: Contact the Education Complaint Unit

If your complaint remains unresolved after working together with our school and/or preschool, you should submit your complaint telephone, email or in writing to:

Free call telephone: 1800 677 435
Manager, Parent Complaint Unit
Level 6/31 Flinders Street
Adelaide SA 5000

Or by email to

You should include information about the complaint, including why it remains unresolved and an outline of what actions have been taken to resolve the complaint.

You should also outline what you think a reasonable solution would be.

The Education Complaint Unit, on behalf of the Chief Executive, will:

- Acknowledge receipt of complaint.
- Assess and make a recommendation to the Principal or Director that:
 - A review is not warranted and that you should be advised that no further action is considered necessary, and that the complaint is now concluded; or
 - A review is necessary; or
 - The complaint should be referred to an external agency for investigation or review.

The Principal or the Director will review the advice and decide that the complaint (in full or in part):

- Can be resolved (all parties agree on an appropriate response)

- Should be dismissed (complaint is either unsubstantiated, vexatious, outside of reasonable expectations in relation to confidentiality, cooperation, courtesy and respect or is orientated towards conflict)
- Remains unresolved and that an independent review by an external agency is required.

Please Note:

- Any written or verbal complaints that contain personal abuse, inflammatory statements, and comments of a threatening nature or intended to intimidate will not be addressed and the parent will be advised accordingly.
- Parents can call the Education Complaint Unit hotline at any stage on 1800 677 435 for information, advice and support. In some circumstances it may be appropriate that a concern or complaint is escalated directly to the Education Complaint Unit. In these instances, the parent will be advised of where the matter will be referred to and why.
- Parents can also contact the Education Standards Board of South Australia (ESB) Ph: 1800 882 413 or the State Ombudsman: www.ombudsman.sa.gov.au for information, advice, support and in circumstances where the complaint remains unresolved.

Requesting your identity to remain confidential.

Parents may request that their identity remain confidential when making a complaint. In this situation, every effort will be made to keep the parent's identity confidential, but this may limit options for negotiating a resolution. (For example, an apology is unlikely to be forthcoming if the identity of the complainant is not known). These circumstances also raise issues in relation to procedural fairness for those who have a complaint made about them as they have a right to know the particulars of the complaint.

While every effort will be made to comply with a request to keep the parent's identity confidential, Freedom of Information requirements may result in a parent's identity becoming known.

Anonymous complaints.

Huntfield Heights School P-6 will assess every complaint that is made. The extent to which an anonymous complaint can be investigated will be limited, as educators/staff cannot liaise with the parent about the complaint. Anonymous complaints also raise issues in relation to natural justice for this who have a complaint made about them as they have a right to know the particulars of the complaint.

The Director will determine upon receipt of an anonymous complaint to what the extent the complaint will be investigated. Where the complaint is in relation to the Director, the

Education Director will make the determination and, the Head of Schools or the Head of Child Development will make the final decision.

Approaches that may be used to resolve a parent complaint.

Our school and preschool may take one of the following approaches to resolve a parent's concern or complaint:

- An acknowledgement that the complaint is valid and is worthy of investigation (overall or in part).
- Identification of areas of agreement between the parties involved.
- Opportunities for all the parties involved to express their concerns, explain their point of view and clarify any misunderstandings.
- Acknowledgement that the situation could have been better handled (this does not constitute an admission of negligence)
- An opportunity for an apology.
- Recognition that the situation presents an opportunity for changes or alternate arrangements to be made to resolve the complaint.
- Discussion with the parties about the steps that will be taken to ensure that the event complained about will not reoccur.
- An undertaking to review school and preschool policy, procedures and practices.

Additional Information

These procedures apply to parent concerns and complaints in relation to Huntfield Heights School P-6. These procedures do not apply to matters where there are legislated requirements or existing policies and processes of appeal, such as:

- Concerns and allegations of misconduct by staff, volunteers and service providers (criminal matters, child protection and corruption, etc).
- Employee disputes and grievances. (Employees should refer to HR17 Complaints Resolution for Employees 2000 for these types of complaints).
- Complaints of appeals relating to student suspension and expulsion.
- Duty of care or mandatory reporting responsibilities.
- Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare related issues.
- Health support planning.

Endorsed by Staff and Governing Council September 2023

Policy review: This policy will be reviewed in September 2026 or as required based on department policy updates and/or advice.