Complaints Procedure

Complaints come to principals and other school staff in many forms. Complaints can be from parents/carers, community, staff or students. This document outlines the procedures undertaken at Baralaba to manage complaints. Complaints management is also underpinned by section 46 of the Education (General-Provisions) Act 2006 (Qld), Education Queensland’s Complaints Management - State Schools and Making a Complaint located on the department’s website. All complaints are handled in a positive and open way.

The following process is followed Parents to ensure complaints are handled appropriately:

1. Discuss your complaint with the class teacher – most matters are resolved at this stage. However if not resolved
   a. Discuss your complaint with the principal – if the matter is not yet resolved
      i. Contact your local education office
2. Independent review

The following process is followed by staff to ensure complaints are handled appropriately:

1. Principal receives the complaint in writing.
2. Principal submits complaint to Ethical Standards Unit.
3. Principal actions response from the Ethical Standards Unit.

1. Documentation
The school documents all complaints.
Complaints are recorded and reported to the principal as soon as practicable after receiving the complaint.
Complaints can be made directly to the principal.
The record of the complaint:
• uses objective language clearly stating the facts
• contains information in chronological order as practically possible
• uses quotation marks, where appropriate and necessary
• is neatly and legibly written in biro/pen or in print in clear unambiguous language
• includes, where necessary, initialled and dated corrections
• includes signature, designation of the author, and time and date of the incident/complaint.

If the complaint is not resolved at the first point of contact, the complaint is acknowledged within five working days by telephone, in person, by email, or in writing. Documents related to the complaint are kept and stored in accordance with the relevant departmental policies and procedures. Please refer to Managing the Department's Records and Access to Records Held in Schools.

2. Complaints Management Phases

Phase 1 - Receiving and clarifying the complaint
Any member of staff can receive a complaint and are to be received in the following manner:
• being respectful and helpful
• giving the person your undivided attention
• not being defensive, apportioning blame
• remaining positive
• not perceiving anger as a personal attack.

Phase 2 - Deciding how to handle the complaint
When a staff member receives a complaint, they:
• begin the process of making an assessment about a complaint from the moment the complaint is received
• make an assessment in the first instance about whether the issue can be dealt with as a concern or a complaint
• if they are not the principal, refer the complainant or the complaint to the principal for addressing.
The principal decides whether to:
• take no further action
• attempt to resolve the complaint through resolution strategies such as mediation
• refer the complaint to the relevant internal or external agency if required
• initiate an investigation of the complaint, within the school, if further information is required.

Co-ordination of complaints
The principal has the final responsibility for the management of all complaints that relate to school management issues under their jurisdiction. The complaint can be referred to another staff member in the school for action. If the complaint relates to departmental policy, or a departmental policy position, the complainant is advised to take their complaint to the relevant regional office. If the complaint is in relation to official misconduct, student protection or a perceived breach of privacy, the complaint is directed to the Ethical Standards Unit and the Legal Administrative Law Branch.

Record of complaint
The principal ensures that records of a complaint and any referral of a complaint are kept for either internal or external review.

Phase 3 - Finding out about the complaint
The principal or delegate gathers all the necessary facts about the complaint while keeping in mind the principles of natural justice of all parties concerned.

The principal or delegate investigates complaints by:
• collecting and analysing information relevant to the matter
• working collaboratively with all people involved
• finding the facts relating to the matter
• identifying any contributing factors to the matter
• consulting the relevant DETE Procedure Register on issues that relate to the complaint
• documenting the investigation report or outcome.

Phase 4 - Making a decision about the complaint
Based on the facts gathered in Phase 3 about the complaint, the principal or delegate makes a decision on the complaint.

Notifying the complainant of the decision
Within 28 days of the receipt of the complaint, the principal provides the complainant with either:
• a written response, including reasons for the decision, or
• a written notification that their complaint has been referred to an internal or external agency.

Phase 5 Review Phase
If the complainant is not satisfied with this response, they are encouraged to discuss it further with the school principal and/or advised to contact the principal’s supervisor, the Executive Director, Schools at the regional office. Further review of the decision is available from the Queensland Ombudsman as described in Making a Complaint.

Date of review January 2015