

ERRINGTON SPECIAL EDUCATION CENTRE

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# Parent complaint policy:

*A guide to raising a concern or complaint*

## Policy statement

Errington Special Education Centre, as part of The Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) is committed to ensuring the delivery of high quality education and care to children and young people. 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.

This policy seeks 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 the 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.

The Parent Complaint Unit has a dual purpose:

- To provide advice and support to parents about their concern or complaint
- To objectively review complaints that have not been resolved at the school or regional 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 concerns. In return, we ask that they are realistic and reasonable about what course of action is necessary and available. Timeframes for response are listed in this policy.

At any point in the process parents have the right to refer the matter to an external agency.

## 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, parent, staff and volunteers have the right to be treated with respect and courtesy.
- Parents have the right to raise concerns about their child's school 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 within the context of the school for children with disabilities.

## 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
- 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 DECD 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.

A concern or complaint will be considered on its merits and without prejudice arising from any previous contact that a parent may have had with the school.

Confidentiality should be adhered to throughout the complaint resolution process. This means that the complaint should only be discussed with those people directly involved in the resolution process.

Observing confidentiality helps to protect the rights of everyone by limiting knowledge of the details of the complaint to those who will work together for a resolution.

## Complaint resolution stages for parents

### Stage 1 – Raise the concern

The school is always the first point of contact. The parent needs to find an appropriate time to talk to the class teacher 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. If the complaint involves the principal then the local regional office of the Department for Education and Child Development should be contacted. ***This contact is Greg Petherick, 8416 7333***

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 complaint, based on

- information provide
- the school's parent complaint procedure
- the DECD Parent concerns and complaints policy implications
- advice from the regional office or DECD Central Office.

The school will aim to resolve the concern or complaint within a timely fashion.

## **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 documentation. ***This contact is Greg Petherick, 8416 7333*** The parent may also be offered mediation and 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 have not been resolved at the school or regional office.

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 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.

## **Rights and Responsibilities**

When raising a concern or complaint with staff, parents can expect to:

- be treated with respect, courtesy and consideration
- have the complaint dealt with in a confidential and timely manner
- have access to appropriate and easily understandable information regarding the complaint resolution process
- have the complaint considered impartially and in accordance with due process and principals of natural justice
- be kept informed of the progress and outcome of their complaint.

We request that when making a complaint parents will:

- treat other parties with respect, courtesy and maintain confidentiality
- raise concern or complaint as soon as possible after the issue has arisen
- provide complete and factual information about the concern or complaint
- ask for assistance or further information as needed
- act in good faith to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
- have realistic and reasonable expectations about what course of action is required to resolve the concern or complaint.

## **Errington Special Education Centre and Regional Office responsibilities**

Errington Special Education Centre is required to publish their parent complaint resolution policy and procedure that reflect the requirements and be easily accessible on the school website.

## **Monitoring and review**

Errington Special Education Centre will establish and maintain a system to record and monitor parent complaints, the action taken to resolve the complaint and the outcome.

This policy is reviewed every year.