

# **Making a complaint: Advice for parents**

During the course of your children's school years, you may have cause to make a complaint about an issue with your child's education.

Education Queensland is committed to ensuring that all complaints are dealt with in a fair and equitable manner. There are processes and support structures in place to enable parents/carers and students to work through any issues they may have with Education Queensland provisions.

When making a complaint, it is in the best interest of complaint resolution to ensure that you:

- provide complete and factual information in a timely manner
- deliver your complaint in a non-threatening and non-abusive manner and
- not make frivolous or vexatious complaints or include deliberately false or misleading information.

You should be aware that if you are making a complaint about a staff member, that in most instances the staff member will be told of the complaint and offered the right of reply. You also have the right to have a support person participate throughout the process.

If your complaint relates to suspected official misconduct or criminal activity then you should make your complaint directly to the Crime and Misconduct Commission ([www.cmc.qld.gov.au/](http://www.cmc.qld.gov.au/)) or the Queensland Police Service ([www.police.qld.gov.au/](http://www.police.qld.gov.au/)).

The following 5-step procedure may assist parents/carers, and school staff to reach an outcome that is in the best interests of the student.

## **1. Discuss your complaint with the class teacher**

If your complaint is with your child's teacher or relates to an issue concerning your child's experience at school, make an appointment with that teacher as soon as possible through the school administration. Share the information you have about the problem with the teacher. Give the teacher an opportunity to tell you all he/she knows about the incident or problem. Together, both parent/carer and teacher, should then take steps to resolve the problem at this level. The teacher will make a record of the complaint and report your meeting and any outcomes to the school principal.

## **2. Discuss your complaint with the principal or ask the principal to assist by participating in informal conflict resolution**

Where the teacher has been approached as above but the issue remains unresolved, make an appointment with the school principal to discuss the issue further. Alternatively, you and the teacher may agree to ask the principal to act as a go-between in informal conflict resolution in an attempt to resolve the problem.

If your complaint is related to the school more generally including issues of school policy or its compliance or non-compliance you should raise your complaint directly with the principal or his/her delegate. For example, the principal may refer your complaint to a deputy principal or registrar. The staff member will make a record of your complaint and work with you to resolve the issue. Complaints to the principal may be lodged in person, by telephone, writing or via electronic format through the "Schools directory" at [www.education.qld.gov.au/schools/directory](http://www.education.qld.gov.au/schools/directory) - select relevant school, then click on the email link. 2

### **3. Contact district office**

If you have discussed the issue with the principal and still feel that your complaint has not been addressed, you have the right to contact the Executive Director (Schools) who is the supervisor of the principal and oversees activities of schools in that particular education district of Queensland.

Complaints may be lodged by telephone or in writing. Complaints should be specific in detail, and outline the steps taken to date to resolve the issue. Remember to date the letter, give your full name and address and sign it. The district office will make a record of your complaint.

Anonymous complaints will only be acted upon if enough information is provided to allow for follow up with the principal.

Addresses and telephone numbers of district offices are listed under the heading Education Queensland in the White Pages of your local telephone directory and are also available through the "Schools directory" at [www.education.qld.gov.au/schools/directory](http://www.education.qld.gov.au/schools/directory)

When you contact the district office you will be advised that your name and the nature of your issue will be reported back to the principal of your school. Staff at the district office will assist in seeking resolution to the issue.

### **4. Complaint still not resolved**

If, as a parent/carer you feel that your issue has not been resolved through the district office process, you have a further right to make a complaint to the central office of Education Queensland.

Parents/carers may choose to progress their complaint in writing to the Deputy Director-General Education Queensland. The Office of Education Queensland will seek to assist with the resolution of your complaint through referral:

- to the Executive Director (Schools) for further action or
- to another departmental unit for appropriate action.

The Office of Education Queensland can be contacted at: Education Queensland, PO Box 15033, CITY EAST, Qld 4002 Tel (07) 3237 0618 or fax (07) 3221 4953.

### **5. Independent review**

If, as a complainant you feel that your issue has not been resolved through these formal processes the Queensland Ombudsman provides an avenue for an independent review of the Department's decision. The Ombudsman may be contacted at: Office of the Ombudsman, GPO Box 3314, Brisbane, Qld 4001 Email: [ombudsman@ombudsman.qld.gov.au](mailto:ombudsman@ombudsman.qld.gov.au) Tel (07) 3005 7000 or Toll Free 1800 068 908 or fax (07) 3005 7067

### **A role for Parents and Citizens' Associations (P&Cs)**

It is understandable that parents/carers may sometimes feel overwhelmed when approaching a school or the department with a complaint. While the Queensland Council of Parents and Citizens' Associations Inc (QCPCA) does not advocate on behalf of individual parents or carers, individuals can request their own P&C to provide support in these circumstances. The P&C can in turn seek assistance from QCPCA to provide guidance in resolving the complaint.

Complaints about services that are run or managed by the P&C at your school, for example, after school care or the canteen, should be directed to the P&C in the first instance.