



GOULBURN WEST PUBLIC SCHOOL

COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

Responsibilities and delegations

The Director-General of DET and Managing Director of TAFE NSW, senior executives, senior officers, principals, managers and supervisors are responsible for the effective management of suggestions, complaints and allegations.

All staff need to be aware of their responsibility to comply with the DET Code of Conduct Procedures and act in a manner which promotes a productive and harmonious working environment.

Monitoring, evaluation and reporting requirements

All senior executives, senior officers, principals, managers and supervisors are responsible for monitoring and evaluating the operation of this policy within their area of responsibility.

All senior executives, senior officers, principals, managers and supervisors will comply with all mandatory reporting requirements detailed in the guidelines to this policy.

What can a complaint be about?

A complaint can be about any aspect of the service provided, or not provided, in any Department of Education and Training site, the behaviour or decisions of staff, or practices, policies or procedures.

Who can make a complaint? Any person can make a complaint, including a student, parent or caregiver, a community member who uses the services of the Department, any employee, contractor or volunteer in a location where Department services are provided. The Guidelines do not impinge on the right of a union to lodge a dispute notification or raise an issue directly with the Department.

How can a complaint be made? Ideally, most complaints should be resolved informally with the relevant employee. However, should you feel that you must raise a concern formally, see Making a Complaint which includes an optional Complaint Form (pdf 27kb). There is a complaints brochure, which will be available to you.

The Goulburn West Public School Principal will need to advise the parties involved about these guidelines and provide information on how to access the guidelines. The Goulburn West Public School Principal will include information about making a complaint in at least one school newsletter each year. See the Sample Advice for Newsletter listed below.

Sample advice for school newsletter

I extend a reminder to all that if at any time you find that you have a concern about anything to do the school, you are encouraged to come to the school and tell someone so that your concern can be resolved. It is our aim to work with all of our school community to ensure that we do the very best we can to ensure a productive, safe and enjoyable experience for our students. However, should you feel that you must raise a concern formally, the NSW Department of Education and Training has procedures for ensuring that complaints are handled fairly. A brochure which provides information about how to lodge a complaint and a Complaint Form are available from the school office. Further information is also available in the Department's Complaints Handling Guidelines which includes a guide to Lodging a Complaint. These documents can be accessed on the Department's internet website at <https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/.....>

Who can receive a complaint?

Any Department employee can receive a complaint. In general, the complaint should be made where the problem occurred (e.g. the school or college) unless there are concerns about the local principal, manager or supervisor, in which case the complaint should be made to the next supervisory level. It is appropriate, when receiving a complaint, to give consideration to [Managing Complainants](#).

What should be done when a complaint is received?

An employee who receives a complaint will need to determine, applying these guidelines, whether it is a matter that can be resolved informally or whether it should be referred to a supervisor, principal or manager.

Minor complaints should be resolved informally if possible and without delay. Any matter which cannot be resolved informally must be referred to a supervisor, principal or SED. Assistance in making this decision is available at the [Quick Assessment Guide](#) or in [Assessing a complaint](#).

Complainants' Expectations

A person making a complaint will have expectations as to how the complaint will be handled and may require assistance in making the complaint.

To manage complainant expectations, the recipient of the complaint should:

- explain the complaint handling process to the complainant
- if the matter is to be referred, explain why and to whom
- confirm with them that their complaint has been fully understood and ask them what outcome they are seeking
- outline the possible outcomes, including whether or not the outcome being sought is reasonable
- provide realistic timeframes for dealing with the matter
- ensure that any promises made are followed through.

At times, Principals will be confronted with complainants who are very challenging. See the related issue [Dealing with Difficult Complainants](#).

This policy will be reviewed in line with DET policy and memorandums.

Annette Broadbent

Principal

Goulburn West PS

July 2011

REFERENCES

3.1.1 Sections 6 and 7 of the *Teaching Service Act 1980* – the Director-General is responsible to the Minister for the general conduct and the efficient, effective and economical management of the functions and activities of the Teaching Service;

3.1.2 Section 19 of the *Education Act 1990* – the general functions of the Minister are set out and include to establish and supervise the operation of government schools; and

3.1.3 Section 12 of the *Technical and Further Education Commission Act 1990* – the functions of the TAFE Commission Board include to review and make recommendations to the Minister on, amongst other things, policies related to the technical and further education services provided by the TAFE Commission, and efficiency and effectiveness in relation to the operation and management of the technical and further education services provided by the TAFE Commission.

3.2

The NSW Office of the Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment Policy and Guidelines' *Dealing with Employee Work-related Concerns and Grievances* states that the NSW Government requires public agencies to achieve and maintain workplaces that foster productive and harmonious working environments and where work related concerns or grievances are managed promptly, impartially and justly.

3.3

The National Code of Good Practice for Responding to Complaints about Vocational and Education Training Quality – Australian Department of Education, Science and Training details the rights of education and training clients to the principles of fairness, accessibility, transparency, responsiveness, accountability and constructiveness.

3.4

Legislative Provisions:

- Anti-Discrimination Act 1977
- Child Protection Legislation Amendment Act 2003
- Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998
- Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998
- Education Legislation Amendment (Staff) Act 2006
- Government and Related Appeals Tribunal Act 1980
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000
- Ombudsman Act 1974
- Protected Disclosures Act 1994
- Public Sector Employment and Management Act 2002

3.5