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## SPRINGTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

### PROCESS for PARENTS TO RAISE CONCERNS and GRIEVANCES

We believe that a positive working relationship between the home and school supports students to be even more successful. There are times in a student's schooling when parents may have concerns about decisions made at the school. Therefore we have developed the guidelines below to help you raise your concerns.

#### Concerns and complaints received by our school

Our school aims to resolve parent concerns at the local level, wherever possible, before formal complaint management procedures are utilised. Teachers and other staff are often approached first by parents with a concern or complaint and it is expected that staff will continue to make the first attempt to resolve these matters.

Any parent concerns or complaints referred to the **Regional Office or Parent Complaint Unit that have not first been raised at the local school level will be referred back to the school for resolution except in circumstances where it is not appropriate or possible for the school to manage the concern or complaint.**

The Parent Complaint Unit will work with parents to ensure that they are supported to raise the complaint with the appropriate person. In circumstances where it is not appropriate a school or regional office manages a parent concern or complaint (ie, allegations of serious staff misconduct, departmental policy or procedure issue, broader government policy issue) and the matter is to be referred to Central Office then the parent is to be advised of where the matter will be referred to and why.

Barossa Regional Office: 8522 0900

The Parent Complaint Unit: 82261000

#### Scope

These procedures apply to parent concerns and complaints in relation to government schools. These procedures do not apply to matters where there are legislated requirements or existing policies and processes of appeal, such as:

- ◆ appeals relating to student suspension and expulsion
- ◆ complaints made under the Education and Early Childhood Services (Registration and Standards) Act 2011 that are within the scope of the Education and Early Childhood
- ◆ Services Registration and Standards Board
- ◆ concerns and allegations of misconduct by staff, volunteers and service providers at government schools and preschools (criminal matters, child protection, corruption etc)
- ◆ employee disputes and grievances (employees should refer to HR17 Complaint resolution for employees 2000 for these types of complaints)
- ◆ mandatory reporting responsibilities
- ◆ some occupational health, safety and welfare related issues health support planning
- ◆ governing council members, decisions and functions (ie, uniforms, OSHC, canteen operations)

## Confidentiality

The aim of the Parent Complaint Policy is to ensure positive relationships between parents, schools and children are maintained.

Observing confidentiality helps to ensure the protection of the rights of everyone by limiting knowledge of the details of the complaint to those who will work together for a resolution. In addition, it helps to limit damage to any existing trust between the parties, thereby facilitating resolution. By preserving confidentiality there will be greater chance of a positive resolution as everyone will have greater confidence in each other when involved in the complaint resolution process.

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

Everyone involved in a complaint however is entitled to advice and support. This may involve confiding in a partner or spouse, a close friend or the staff of the Parent Complaint Unit and for staff it also includes a senior departmental officer. It is expected these people will also maintain confidentiality.

## Rights and responsibilities

Parents lodging a concern or complaint with ECD can expect to:

- ◆ be treated with respect, courtesy and consideration
- ◆ have their complaint dealt with in an efficient and timely manner
- ◆ have access to appropriate and easily understandable information regarding the complaints management process
- ◆ have personal information treated as confidential
- ◆ have their complaint considered impartially and in accordance with due process and principles of natural justice.

In return ECD requests that parents making a complaint will:

- ◆ treat all parties with respect and courtesy and maintain confidentiality
- ◆ raise the 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

## Timeframes

The timeframes referred to in these procedures are indicative (i.e. as soon as reasonably possible), to guide timely action. The time taken to review the complaint will vary due to a range of factors, including:

- ◆ range and complexity of the complaint
- ◆ emergence of other unexpected additional issues as a result of the review
- ◆ need for further inquiries to be made and the number of people involved
- ◆ need to refer the matter (or parts thereof) to other areas within or external to ECD
- ◆ school holidays/school closures.

If, at any stage of the complaint management process, there is to be a delay and a longer timeframe is required, then the staff member managing the complaint is responsible for notifying the parent of the reasons for the delay and the likely timeframe within which the matter will be concluded

## Possible approaches/remedies

The approach taken to resolve a parent's concern or complaint may include:

- ◆ an acknowledgement that the complaint is valid and requires investigation
- ◆ 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
- ◆ an opportunity for an apology, where warranted, to be made by any of the parties
- ◆ involved for any behaviour/actions that may have caused distress to another party
- ◆ acknowledgement that the situation could have been better handled (this does not constitute an admission of negligence)
- ◆ a change of decision, policy, procedure or practice
- ◆ recognition that the situation presents an opportunity for changes or alternative 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 policy, procedures or practices.

## School staff

Parents are, in the first instance, to raise any concerns or complaints in relation to their child's education with their child's teacher. It is expected that teachers will:

- ◆ make a time available as soon as reasonably possible (ie, within five working days), to discuss with the parent (face-to-face, by phone) their complaint
- ◆ listen to the parent
- ◆ consider relevant legislation, departmental policy and guidelines and school/preschool procedures and/or seek advice/support
- ◆ identify and discuss with the parent possible courses of action that could be taken to resolve their complaint and the timeframe within which this will occur
- ◆ follow up with the parent(s) after a reasonable period of time has elapsed for any changes to take affect to ensure that the parent is satisfied with the outcome(s)
- ◆ if appropriate (depending on the nature of the concern or complaint), keep a written record of the complaint, its progress and outcomes
- ◆ If appropriate, refer the complaint in line with the school's complaint management procedure.

Concerns and complaints received by a school staff member in relation to another staff member or an issue outside their responsibility or beyond their authority to resolve are to be referred in line with the school complaint management process. The staff member who receives the initial complaint is to advise the parent of the reason(s) why the matter is to be referred elsewhere, direct them to the school's complaint resolution procedure and assist, if required, the parent to make their complaint.

If a parent is not satisfied with the outcome of this stage of the complaint management procedure, or decides that it is more appropriate to discuss their complaint directly with a member of the school leadership team (ie, deputy principal/principal/director), then the parent is to contact the school to make a time to meet with the appropriate site leader. If a complaint is in relation to the principal/director then the parent is to contact the relevant regional director. School office staff can provide the parent with the relevant regional director's contact details.

## Leadership team (deputy principal/principal)

It is expected that a leadership team member will:

- ◆ wherever possible, make every reasonable effort to resolve parent concerns or complaints at the school level in a timely and effective manner
- ◆ ensure that the school has an up-to-date school parent complaint policy and procedures
- ◆ that are consistent with the department's Parental Concerns and Complaints policy and these procedures and which is reviewed every two years
- ◆ ensure that the school parent complaint policy and procedures are communicated to all school staff and volunteers in appropriate languages and formats, accessible to all families and available on the school's website
- ◆ ensure all staff understand the school's complaint policy and procedures and have access to appropriate training
- ◆ ensure that when parents lodge a complaint they are made aware of the relevant policies and procedures for responding to complaints, the dedicated parent support free call number and their right to a support person
- ◆ acknowledge receipt of a written parent complaint in writing as soon as reasonably possible (ie, within five working days)
- ◆ advise all relevant parties of the complaint (refer to When a parent wants their identity to remain confidential section of this procedure)
- ◆ determine if support needs to be provided to the parent or staff member involved while the complaint is considered
- ◆ consider relevant legislation, departmental policy and guidelines and school procedures.
- ◆ seek advice and support, as required, from Central Office
- ◆ assess the complaint and its management to date. Can the complaint be resolved effectively at the local level or does the complaint need to be referred to the regional director?
- ◆ investigate, consider and determine the most appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint in a fair and prompt manner, including negotiation between the parties and whether the parent complaints unit's mediation services are required
- ◆ document the complaint process and outcome
- ◆ communicate the outcome to all the parties involved verbally, and if appropriate, in writing (within 15 working days of receipt of the complaint)
- ◆ advise the parent of their right to refer the matter to the regional office if they are dissatisfied with the outcome, and then to the Parent Complaint Unit if necessary
- ◆ recommend to the regional director any system improvements at a broader level that would reduce the likelihood of similar complaints.

If the principal/director is unable to resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of the parent then the formal complaint management process is to be utilised. The principal/director is to forward all relevant information recorded by the school, in relation to the complaint, to the regional office for action.

ACTION	TIME FRAME
Parent raises concern or issue with their child's teacher	Child's teacher makes a time within 5 working days to discuss with the parent (face to face, by phone) their complaint Teacher and parent work to resolve the complaint over a reasonable and mutually agreeable timeframe.
Parent concern or complaint cannot be resolved by the child's teacher and the matter is referred to a leadership team member (deputy principal/principal/director).	The principal/director: <input type="checkbox"/> acknowledges receipt of the complaint in writing, where appropriate, as soon as reasonably possible (within 5 working days). <input type="checkbox"/> communicates the outcome to all the parties involved verbally, and if appropriate, in writing, within 15 working days of receipt of the complaint
Complaint cannot be resolved and is referred to the regional office for resolution.	The regional office will: <input type="checkbox"/> where appropriate, acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within 5 working days. <input type="checkbox"/> notify all parties of the outcome of the assessment process (action to be taken) within 7 working days of receipt of the complaint.
	If the complaint can be managed at the school, with the assistance of the regional office, then an attempt to resolve it within 15 working days from receipt of the complaint is made. Advise all the parties in writing of their decision in relation to the complaint, within 20 working days, from receipt of the complaint.
A complaint cannot be resolved as a result of the parent, school and regional office working together and is referred to the Parent Complaint Unit.	The Parent Complaint Unit assesses the complaint and makes a recommendation to the Head of Schools within 10 working days. The Head of Schools makes a decision in relation to the Parent Complaint Unit's recommendations within five working days of receiving their advice. Parent notified in writing of the Head of Schools' decision regarding the assessment of the complaint. This will occur within 15 working days of lodging the complaint with the Parent Complaint Unit. If the complaint is to be reviewed by the Parent Complaint Unit – this process will be finalised and the findings and recommendations forwarded to the Head of Schools. This will occur within 10 working days of approval being given by the Head of Schools to proceed with a Parent Complaint Unit review. The Head of Schools makes a decision in relation to receipt of the Parent Complaint Unit recommendations within five working days. The Parent Complaint Unit will within five working days: <input type="checkbox"/> document the Head of Schools decision and its outcome <input type="checkbox"/> notify all parties involved in the complaint
Complaint cannot be resolved and is referred to the regional office for resolution	The regional office will: <input type="checkbox"/> where appropriate, acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within 5 working days. <input type="checkbox"/> notify all parties of the outcome of the assessment process (action to be taken) within 7 working days of receipt of the complaint.
	If the complaint can be managed at the school, with the assistance of the regional office, then an attempt to resolve it within 15 working days from receipt of the complaint is made. Advise all the parties in writing of their decision in relation to the complaint, within 20 working days, from receipt of the complaint.
	Advise the Chief Executive (CE) and the Minister (when the complaint has been raised directly with the Minister or CE), via the Head of Schools, of the decision and the outcome of the complaint. Wherever possible the parent is to be notified in writing within 35 working days of lodging the complaint with the Parent Complaint Unit of the Head of Schools final decision.

## Student Grievance Procedures

It is important for students to address issues they are faced with in both the yard and classroom. At Springton Primary, we encourage students to try to deal with issues themselves to begin with. However if the issue continues we suggest they ask a friend to support them, ask a teacher for help or go to the Principal/Deputy. Often student conflicts are resolved with little or no input from adults however, it is vitally important for students to inform the school if issues continue. Unless we are aware of concerns we are unable to support students and help them build their repertoire of strategies to use in the future.

If your student is telling you about on-going issues, please ask them to report them to the Principal/Deputy Principal (they may want you to attend that meeting to support them).

Below are the steps we ask students to use when dealing with conflict/grievances.

Step 1:- Is there a problem? Stop, think and get in control

Step 2:- How can I deal with this?

- Make an "I" statement
- Ignore them
- Walk Away
- Use humour

Step 3:- If it doesn't work what can I do?

- Try again
- Get a friend
- Tell them what you'll do if they don't stop

Step 4:- Get help

Who can you get help from:-

- Yard duty teacher
- Class teacher
- Principal/Deputy Principal

The above process is used in the yard and the classroom at Springton Primary. We believe this process helps students to learn to deal with and find solutions to issues. If issues continue, the school must be informed so we can deal with the problem.