

Complaints Policy and Procedure 2016

Aims

- A. To direct complaints to the relevant person or group
- B. To manage complaints positively, fairly and quickly
- C. To resolve issues effectively
- D. To maintain relationships between members of the community involved in a complaint

Scope and Application

This policy is available on the school website.

This policy applies to:

- A. Employees
- B. Students
- C. Parents
- D. Community members
- E. Visitors to the school

Definitions

For the purposes of the policy:

- A. A **‘Concern’** – is an issue of interest (because of its importance and effect) which is raised informally in order to improve or change a situation. For example:

I believe that the school’s physical education policy and program is inadequate. I don’t think that it caters for students who have well-developed skills and who need to be involved in competitive sport. I think the school should review its policy in this area.
- B. A **‘Complaint’** - is an expression of grievance where the complainant is seeking redress or justice. For example:

My daughter has been left out of the school’s netball team for the third time in a row. She is an accomplished netballer and deserves to be part of the team. It is not fair that she is left out and I want you to do something about it.

Principles

- A. Everyone is welcome to bring their complaints to the school.
- B. It will be clear who is the most appropriate person to approach (see Attachment A), though people may bring complaints to any member of staff or council
- C. If the person the complainant initially approaches is unable or unqualified to manage the complaint, they will consult with an appropriate person.
- D. Concerns may be made verbally or in writing.

- E. Complaints must be made in writing.
- E. Complaints will be received positively and taken seriously.
- F. Resolutions will be sought that address the needs of all parties.
- G. The process of managing the complaint will be fair to all parties.
- H. All parties involved will be kept informed of what is likely to happen next, progress towards resolution and outcomes. Initial feedback will be given within one week of the concern being entered into the logbook.
- I. Complaints will be dealt with as quickly as possible, while allowing enough time for a satisfactory outcome.
- J. If a complaint concerns a specific individual, this person will be informed of the substance of the complaint.
- K. Confidentiality will be respected and maintained so far as is possible.
- L. Clear, confidential records of all complaints will be kept in a log book, along with copies of written complaints. This will be kept in the office under the supervision of the Coordinator. (see Attachment F)
- M. Staff professional development will include handling of complaints.
- N. It is not acceptable for students to receive adverse treatment because they or their parents have raised a complaint.

Remarks

It is helpful for everyone involved to keep in mind conflict resolution skills and attitudes:

- win/win,
- creative response,
- empathy,
- active listening,
- assertiveness,
- appropriate use of power,
- managing emotions,
- projection,
- designing and choosing options,
- negotiation and mediation.

Responsibilities

A. All members of council and staff

1. Assist members of the community to know who to approach with a complaint
2. Receive and manage complaints according to the principles of this policy

B. Council

1. Complaints related to the governance and policies of the school
2. Complaints unresolved by teachers or coordinators
3. Employing a suitable independent person to assist with unresolved complaints

4. Monitoring and revising this policy as needed

C. Council President

1. Complaints related to the conduct of the Coordinator

D. Coordinator

1. Complaints related to the education program and its delivery, student conduct and well-being, staff conduct and well-being and performance of the school council
2. Complaints related to the administration of the school, the school buildings, grounds or environment
3. Complaints brought to a staff member which have not been resolved satisfactorily
4. Incident file; ensure incident reports are completed, ensure all complaints are followed through to a resolution and follow up occurs to ensure solutions remain satisfactory, monitor trends in complaints to address problems within the school
5. Support staff if a complaint has been made about them
6. Be available to members of the school community, to mediate and/or assist in resolving a complaint
7. Report complaints to the board whilst maintaining the confidentiality of the complainant where possible.
8. Provide the school community with information about this policy which enables them to feel comfortable to make a complaint, in a positive way, to the appropriate person

E. Staff

1. Complaints related to their duties and responsibilities

F. Parents

1. Complaints arising from interactions that occur at school or as a direct relationship of attendance at the school should be directed to a member of staff prior to initiating contact with other parents.

G. Special Whole School Meeting

1. Genuine, substantial complaints about the performance of the coordinators or the school council may be brought to a special whole school meeting if all efforts have been made to resolve the complaint and no satisfactory resolution has been achieved. This may include deciding to employ the services of a suitable independent facilitator.

Related Legislation

- A. School Education Act 1999
- B. Equal Opportunity Act 1984
- C. Also related is legislation dealing with discrimination and harassment and child protection. For further information please see Policies and Procedures Guidelines for Schools, AISWA File, Section 20: Compliance Issues

Related Kerry Street Documentation

- A. Kerry Street Community School Constitution

- B.** Governance Structure
- C.** Policies including:
 - 1.** Non-discrimination Policy
 - 2.** Child Protection Policy
 - 3.** Curriculum Policy

References and Further Information

- A.** Department of Education and Training, Disputes and Complaints Policy and Procedures
- B.** Conflict Resolution Network of Australia (website, trainers' manual, conflict resolution workshops)
- C.** Everyone Can Win, by Helena Cornelius and Shoshana Faire

Contact Person

Enquires relating to this policy should be directed to the School Coordinator or the Council President.

Breaches of this Policy

Any breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Attachments

- A.** Guideline to Show Most Relevant Person to Manage a Complaint
- B.** Complaints Procedure
- C.** Complaints/Concern Form
- D.** How to Approach Problems at School
- E.** Receiving Complaints
- F.** Complaints Register

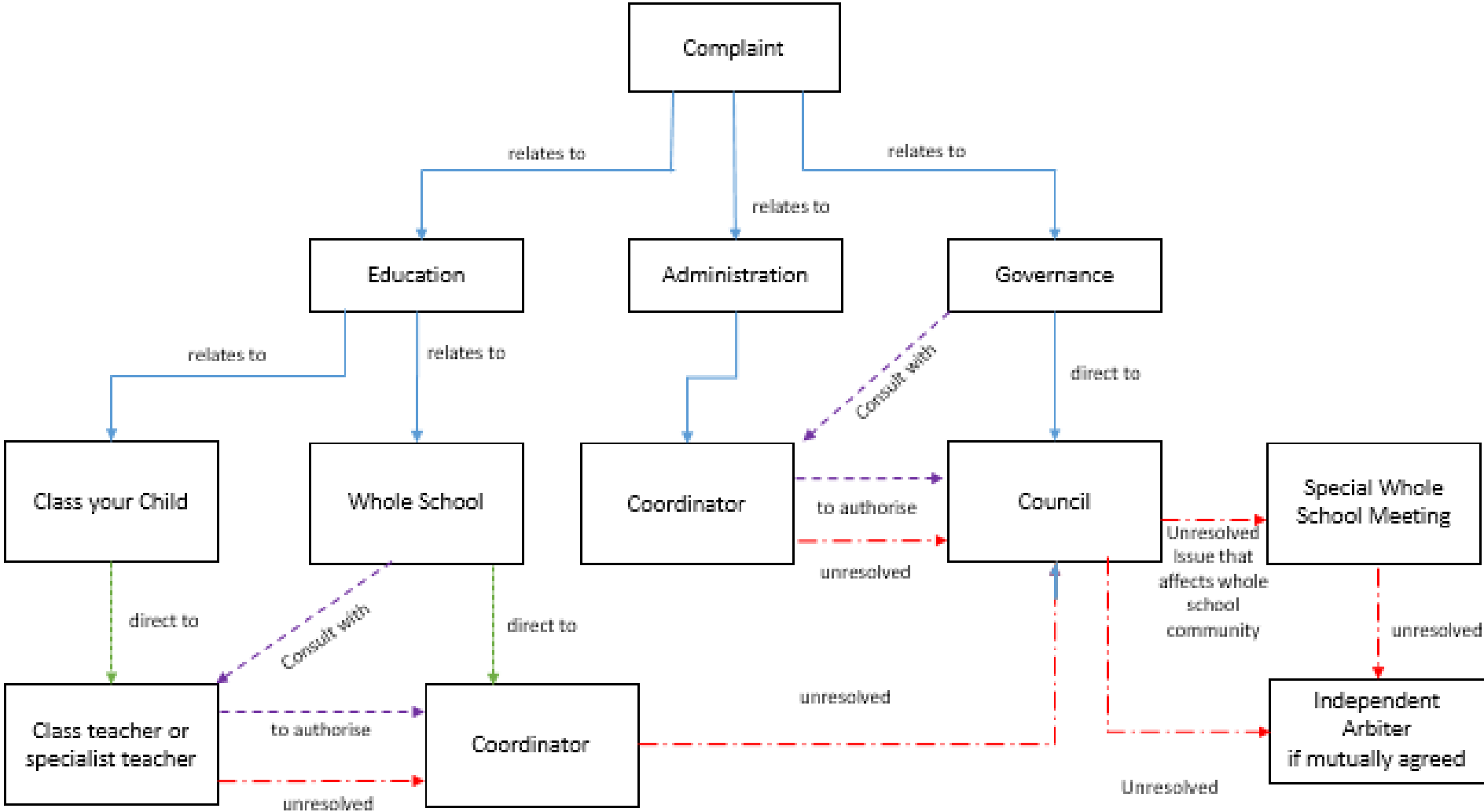
Authorisation and Review

- A.** This policy was authorised by the Kerry Street Council on 13/1/06
- B.** The Grievance Policy was incorporated into this policy at a meeting of staff and council on 13/1/06. The policy was reviewed again in January 2007, on the recommendation of the Office of Non-government Education.
- C.** This policy was reviewed September 2012
- D.** This policy was reviewed September 2013. Changes to complaints flowchart were made at the recommendation of DES for Reregistration.
- E.** Policy amendment made to procedure. Referral of complaints to AISWA was removed. Recorded in November 2015 minutes.
- F.** Policy changed to clarify independent auditor clause June 2016
- G.** To be reviewed June 2017.

Helen Sugars Duff

Complaints Policy 2016 - Attachment A
Complaints Flowchart

Guideline to Show Most Relevant Person to Manage a Complaint



Complaints Policy 2016 - Attachment B

Procedure

This procedure refers to 'complaints' but can be used at any time you wish to approach the school about something you would like to be different, a serious complaint, an opportunity you can see, an idea you have, problems your child has brought to you, an observation you have made, a project you would like to take on, a request you have or a question about anything.

When you have a complaint (or any of the above), first consider what your complaint is really about:

- A.** Try to clarify what the issues are for you and identify what needs of yours would be addressed in an outcome you considered satisfactory.
- B.** Try to identify any strong emotions you have. Are these emotions in proportion to the problem? How can you manage them so they do not interfere with resolving the complaint in a positive way?
- C.** Talking it over with someone you trust can help you identify issues and needs and help you manage your emotions and gain perspective.
- D.** Thinking of some possible solutions can be of benefit, especially if you remain flexible about them, to allow for other people's needs you may be unaware of.
- E.** Consider who is the best person at school to approach with your complaint. Below is a list of who we recommend in different circumstances but if you do not feel comfortable approaching this person, you may seek advice from a council member or approach any staff member or councilor you feel would be in a good position to help you resolve your complaint.
 1. Your child's teacher: matters related to the class program or environment or your child's progress or well-being.
 2. Coordinator: matters related to the educational program of the school, your child's well-being, student behaviour as a group or individually, bullying, volunteers, conduct of the school council or unresolved complaints with another member of staff.
 3. Coordinator: matters related to administration, maintenance, buildings and grounds. The Coordinator may also be of assistance in discussing matters which are the responsibility of council, for example, school policies.
 4. Council: Projects involving a significant budget and governance issues including policies.
 5. Council President: For a serious complaint involving the Coordinator, you are advised to approach the president of the council.

When you have clarified your complaint and are ready to approach someone at school:

- A. You may approach this person with your complaint verbally or in writing. Both ways are valid and useful in different circumstances. If you prefer to present your complaint verbally, it may be of benefit to have some notes with you so you do not forget important points you wish to make. You may bring a person with you for support.
- B. Be positive and straight forward. Approach the person as a partner in problem solving. Present the complaint as a problem you would like to resolve, rather than trying to work out who or what is right or wrong.
- C. The person you approach will let you know what they think will happen next and a time frame for this. All efforts will be made to resolve problems as quickly as possible without rushing to less than satisfactory solutions. You will be kept up to date on progress.

Confidentiality

- A. A confidential record will be kept of your complaint, to ensure it is resolved satisfactorily and followed up, to review the effectiveness of the resolution and this process. Complaints also provide the school with valuable information for improvement, some of which may only be seen clearly in the fullness of time.
- B. The Coordinator monitors all complaints at the school.
- C. If your complaint is about a person, this person will be informed of the substance of your complaint.
- D. Confidentiality will be respected and maintained so far as is possible.

Resolution

- A. If you are satisfied with the resolution of your complaint, you can congratulate yourself on approaching the problem well and working as part of a team to come to a solution.
- B. If you are unsatisfied with the outcome of your complaint:
 - 1. Please approach someone else who has the authority to help you, usually the Coordinator. If the complaint relates to the Coordinator, talk to the Council President. Alternatively, approach the same person in a different way or at another time. The flow chart may help you which is available from the Administrator, the Coordinator, or the website.
 - 2. If you are still unsatisfied after first taking to the Coordinator, second, talking to the Council President, if mutually agreed upon, you have the option to involve an Independent Arbiter [at your own expense]. If the issue affects the whole school community, you have the right to call a special whole school meeting under conditions detailed in the constitution. This process may involve an Independent Arbiter if required and mutually agreed upon.

Complaint/Concern Form

This form is to be used in conjunction with the school's Complaints Policy and Complaints Procedures. The form may be used by any member of the school community (staff, parent or volunteer) to formally raise a complaint for resolution

Date:

Complaint Level: 1 | 2 | 3 (see page three)

Your Name:

Contact Number:

Email:

Your Concern

Please outline the nature of your complaint, including the surrounding circumstances and your main concern.

What happened? What is your complaint/concern primarily about?

Who has been affected? How?

What would you like to see happen as a result of your complaint?
How can we improve or make things better?

Actions You Have Taken

Please outline any steps you have already taken to attempt to resolve the problem or issue.

Who have you spoken to? What was the response?

If you have not yet approached anyone with your concern, why not?

What time, skills or resources can you personally offer to help resolve this issue?

Signed:

Date:

COMPLAINT – Receiver to complete

Your name:

Date:

Your role or position:

What do you understand to be the core issues or needs identified in the complaint?

What problems or circumstances did you experience that may have contributed to the situation?

What do you think needs to happen to bring about a solution to the complaint?

What time, skills or resources can you personally offer to help resolve this issue?

Is there anything else that you think needs to be communicated to the complainant to help them to understand what happened better?

COMPLAINT – Both parties to complete

Did you manage to reach agreement about a solution to this issue or concern? Yes No

If no, please provide all documentation to the School Coordinator for assessment of the problem, issue or concern.

If yes, Agreed Outcomes

Please provide a brief summary of what agreements were reached. (Attach additional pages if required).

Agreed Action Plan

Who	What	By When

Signed: _____ Signed: _____ Signed: _____

Role: _____ Role: _____ Role: _____

Date: _____ Date: _____ Date: _____

Who should I contact?

Category 1:	Category 2:	Level 3:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> may relate to a single issue; involves minimal risk to the complainant, school, staff member, or student; will not require a detailed investigation; and will be suitable for local resolution. <p>Contact the person immediately responsible for that area of school functioning (e.g., parent, teacher, etc).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> may relate to one or more issues; involves a low degree of risk to the complainant, school, staff member, or student; may require a more detailed investigation; likely to involve consultation with staff and/or volunteers. <p>Contact School Coordinator</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> may involve a serious or significant risk to the complainant, school, staff member or student; will involve a formal investigation; and <p>School Coordinator or the President of School Council (or Nominated Representative).</p>

Complaints Policy 2016 - Attachment D
How to Approach Problems at School

- 1.** You are welcome to talk about problems you have or see at school. They could be about school work, other students, teachers, bullying, the playground or any other problem, big or small.
- 2.** Think about your problem.
 - a.** See how clear you can get your problem in your mind. An adult or a friend may be able to help you understand what you really need or want. Write things down if it helps. Do you have any suggestions for solutions?
 - b.** Who do you trust to help you? You can go to any adult at school, a parent, talk it over with a friend, or bring it up at the kids' meeting. Think about whether they have the power to help you.
- 3.** Talk to the person you have decided on or write it on the agenda for the kids' meeting.
- 4.** Try to work positively with others to find a solution that suits everyone.
- 5.** If it doesn't work the first time, try again.
- 6.** What you say to an adult will not be told to other people if you don't want anyone else to know, except if someone else needs to help for the problem to be solved, or if you are talking about what someone else has said or done. We may need to get their side of the story or they may not know about the problem and may be able to willingly and easily solve it.
- 7.** It takes courage to talk about things that may be embarrassing or hurtful, to yourself or other people. Or maybe you think nothing can be done about it. But talking about it can help and the adults at school will try their best to help you.

Complaints Policy 2016 - Attachment E

Receiving Complaints

1. Remember to actively listen first. This means let the person talk, feed back to them what you think they are saying, and ask questions to clarify the issues and help them explore their needs. Don't judge, solve or diminish the person or their problem. Don't justify. Don't take it personally. This allows the other person to get their whole story out, including their stated reasons and sometimes uncovering subconscious needs that may block resolution if not addressed. It demonstrates your willingness to listen to their complaint seriously, openly and positively. It allows them to present their complaint in a non-adversarial way. It sets up a good basis for problem solving as partners.
2. See the complainant as a person who would like something to be different and is asking for your help. Be creative.
3. See the complaint as an opportunity to learn, even if you don't agree with the person. At a minimum you will get to practise this process.
4. Now is your time to talk. Give the person information, tell your side of the story, if relevant, and describe factors affecting the issue they may not have considered.
5. You may be able to reach a resolution immediately by developing different options and choosing one or several of them. If so, congratulations.
6. It may not be appropriate to resolve the complaint at this stage. You may need to discuss what actions need to be taken. Do you need to consult with anyone, listen to the other side of the story, find information, refer the complaint to another person or the council, or access professional advice outside the school?
7. Be clear about what will happen next, when it will happen and who will be responsible for following through with the actions decided on.
8. Begin or complete an incident report and forward it to the education coordinator.
9. Follow through with the actions decided on, updating the report and informing or consulting with relevant parties as you go. Discuss new avenues of approach if appropriate.
10. If you come to a resolution, congratulations. If you are unable to come to a resolution, encourage the person to take their complaint to another person you think may be able to help them.
11. If you need support, please talk with someone who can help you. This may be the education coordinator, the president of council or someone outside the school community. It may also be another member of staff or a friend within the community. In this case, be careful about confidentiality,
12. At all times, be aware of confidentiality. Discuss this directly with the complainant and be clear about your respective expectations.
13. When finding solutions, be aware of what is a reasonable expectation and keep your perspective. You may need to balance the needs of the person you are speaking with, with

the needs of others, including yourself. It can help to be creative about solutions so allowing one person to have their needs met does not necessarily preclude another person having their (unique and different) needs met. But sometimes one person's needs will have a direct impact on another person and not everyone can have what they want or need. This is when you must use your best judgment. If the process has been fair, positive and open, hopefully all parties will be willing to compromise at this stage. If not, it is your responsibility to be fair but firm in stating what you believe a reasonable outcome would be.



Complaints Policy 2016 -
Attachment F
Complaints Register

Complaints Register

Complaint No.	Date	Time	Mode of Complaint	Nature of complaint	Name of Person Making Complaint	Name of person Receiving Complaint	Action Taken