

# Complaint handling Policy

Authorisation Date: 07/2019

OSG Document Code: POL\_QLD\_ADM\_Complaint Handling\_v1.5

Region: Queensland

# Complaint handling Policy

<b>OSG Document Code</b> POL_QLD_ADM_Complaint Handling_v1.5	<b>Authorisation Date</b> 07/2019	<b>Next Review Date</b> 07/2025
<b>Enquiries Contact:</b> admin.qld@au.oneschoolglobal.com	<b>Approval Authority</b> QLD State Board	<b>Document Author</b> State Admin Officer
<b>Associated Documents</b> POL_AU_GOV_Work Health and Safety Policy_v1.0 POL_AU_TL_Bullying Policy.v.1.3 POL_QLD_ADM_Child Protection_v1.3 POL_QLD_ADM_Privacy_v1.1 POL_QLD_ADM_Student Behaviour Management_v1.3 POL_QLD_TL_Assessment Years 3 to 10_v1.4 POL_QLD_TL_Assessment Years 11 to 12_v1.4 QLD Complaints Register Smartsheet		

## 1. POLICY STATEMENT

OneSchool Global QLD is committed to ensuring that student, parent and employee complaints are dealt with in an efficient, effective, responsive and fair way and complaints are viewed as part of an important feedback and accountability process. OneSchool Global QLD acknowledges the right of students, parents and employees to complain when dissatisfied with an action, inaction or decision of the school and the school encourages constructive criticism and complaints and recognise that time spent on handling complaints can be an investment in better service. The Regional Principal and School Board have the right to make allowance decisions outside these guidelines.

## 2. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Complaint Handling Policy is to outline procedures for dealing with complaints as soon as they arise.

## 3. SCOPE

This policy applies to employees, volunteers, parents, carers, students and members of the public (herein referred to as complainants) and describes the step-by-step procedures to follow upon receiving a complaint.

## 4. DEFINITIONS

TERM	DEFINITION
<b>Complaint</b>	a statement that something is unsatisfactory or unacceptable.
<b>Confidentiality</b>	The state of keeping or being kept secret or private

## 5. PROCEDURES

OneSchool Global QLD encourages students, parents and employees to lodge any concerns regarding sexual harassment, child protection, discrimination, workplace bullying and privacy breaches as well as more general complaints that include areas such as:

- the school, its employees or students having done something wrong;
- the school, its employees or students having failed to do something they should have done;
- the school, its employees or students having acted unfairly or impolitely;
- issues of student or employee behaviour that are contrary to their relevant code of conduct;
- issues related to learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning;
- issues related to communication with students or parents or between employees;
- issues related to school fees and payments;

- general administrative issues.

Student complaints may be brought by students or parents (on behalf of their children) as appropriate in the circumstances and can be lodged by completing the Complaint Handling Form on the OneSchool Global website under the QLD campus section. It is the policy of the school that all complaints will be acknowledged within 2 working days. The person receiving the complaint should inform the complainant of the complaints handling process and the issue should be dealt with as quickly as possible.

The following matters are outside the scope of this policy and should be managed as follows:

- child protection concerns or risks of harm to children should be dealt with in accordance with the law and the Child Protection Policy;
- student bullying complaints should be dealt with under the Bullying Policy or Student Behaviour Management Policy;
- employee complaints related to their employment should be directed to their supervisor and/or HR;
- student or employee violence or criminal matters should be directed to the Regional Principal who will involve the Police as appropriate;
- formal legal proceedings.

### 5.1 Complaint Handling Principles

OneSchool Global QLD is committed to managing complaints according to the following principles

- complaints will be taken seriously and resolved in a timely manner with as little formality and disruption as possible;
- anonymous complaints will be treated on merit and will be dealt with fairly and objectively;
- determine the appropriate person to deal with the complaint in the first instance;
- mediation, negotiation and informal resolution are optional alternatives;
- procedural fairness will be ensured wherever possible, including the right of interested parties to the complaint to be heard;
- confidentiality and privacy will be maintained as much as possible;
- all parties to the complaints will be appropriately supported;
- provide reasonable progress updates;
- appropriate remedies will be offered and implemented;
- provide a review pathway for parties to the complaint, if warranted;
- complainants, respondents and people associated with them will not be victimised as a result of lodging the complaint and will not suffer any other reprisals;
- the school will keep records of complaints;
- the school's insurer will be informed if a complaint could be connected to an insured risk.

### 5.2 Complaint Handling Process

The following actions should be adhered to in the complaint handling process:

- the complaint should be acknowledged promptly (within 2 working days);
- the complaint should be assessed and assigned priority;
- if investigation is required, it should be planned;
- the investigation should resolve factual issues and consider options for complaint resolution;
- the response to the complainant should be clear and informative;
- if the complainant is not satisfied with the response, internal review of the decision should be offered and information about external review options should be provided;
- any systemic issues that arise as a result of the complaint should be considered and acted on.

The person receiving the complaint should deal with it quickly and honestly. The person who handles the complaint should have a positive attitude when dealing with the complainant and if the person receiving the complaint does not feel confident about handling the complaint, they should consult with the Campus Principal and/or HR in the first instance and the Regional Principal, if warranted. The Campus Principal will share serious complaints with the Regional Principal. If a complaint is about the Campus Principal, complainants are encouraged to write directly to the Regional Principal, whose address will be supplied on request.

All complaints should be in writing and the person whom the complaint is about will be given the opportunity to respond. If the person receiving the complaint decides to respond to the complainant in writing, this should be discussed with the Campus Principal and/or HR, who will co-sign the response. Ensure that the nature of the complaint is clear before a response is sent.

Complaints that appear trivial should still be handled seriously. Young people may test the complaints procedures on relatively minor issues before finding the confidence to raise something painful, such as bullying. If the issue is a painful one, or if exploration of it is taking time, a student may need support from another student or from an adult. Students should be encouraged to choose a person with whom they feel comfortable to provide support.

### **5.3 Recording the Complaint**

The complaint should be logged on the QLD Complaints Register Smartsheet and it is important that the details of the complaint are recorded accurately as:

- it may become the cause of legal action in the future;
- patterns in the record may indicate a need for action; and
- the Campus Principal and Regional Principal should be able to check the log and report on it regularly to the School Board.

These files are confidential and should only to be accessed by authorised parties. The files should contain simple but clear written notes of all conversations with parents about any source of dissatisfaction. This applies to friendly chats and telephone conversations, as misunderstandings easily arise. There should be a clear statement of what is concerning the complainant/s and the complainant/s must agree to the accuracy of the record.

### **5.4 Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is an important issue for all complainants. It is essential that any complaint is treated in a confidential manner and with respect. Parents often seek an assurance of confidentiality before expressing their concerns. If, for example, they wish to discuss a member of staff, they may fear that their child will suffer in some way because they have complained. It should be made clear to all concerned that it is the school's policy that complaints made by parents should not rebound adversely on their children and similarly that complaints raised by students should not rebound on them or on other students. The question of confidentiality should be discussed sensitively and on an individual basis with the parents and the school's policy should be carefully explained.

It may be possible to deal with a problem without naming individuals. However, even if no names are given, the source of the complaint may be clear. Depending on the nature of the complaint and on the circumstances, it may be impractical to investigate without identifying the member of staff or the child – it may also be in the interest of the child to do so.

Members of staff are rightly concerned that they should know about complaints that might be damaging to their reputation. Such complaints will be known only to themselves and to those who must be consulted. The school will provide support for staff (if needed) against whom a complaint is made. If there is a situation involving the police, the Regional Principal will take responsibility for action in the school.

### **5.5 Anonymous Complaints**

Anonymous complaints may be where there is no indication of either name or address, or where the complainants say that they do not wish to be identified.

Complaints from the public about the behaviour of a group of students will be dealt with on a general basis, with reminders to all about the school's expectations. Complainants are encouraged to give their names and should be given reassurance on the issue of confidentiality. If they persist in wishing to remain anonymous, it is at the discretion of the Campus Principal as to what action, if any, should be taken, depending on the nature of the complaint.

Anonymous complaints will be recorded in the log but must contain an account based on facts. Anonymity is unacceptable. A person may ask not to be identified publicly but must provide a name to be credible and an account based on facts related to the matter. Anonymous allegations about child abuse

should be dealt with as outlined in the school's Child Protection Policy. Complainants may be satisfied the situation has been resolved by any of the following:

knowing that changes have been made, and that matters will be different in future;

- knowing that the school is now alert to a possible problem;
- feeling that their concern has been considered seriously;
- an outcome which may be different from the one they sought, but which they perceive to be well-considered i.e. a considered letter or an apology.
- In all cases where time has been needed to investigate a complaint, complainants will receive a report in writing which covers:
  - the issues raised;
  - how the issues were considered;
  - the people consulted;
  - the action that is to be taken;
  - an apology, if appropriate.

## **5.6 Intractable Complaints**

There may be a small minority of persistent or aggressive complainants who will never be satisfied, whatever the school does. The school may even discover on investigation that the complaint was without foundation or motivated by malice. Nevertheless, it is wise to treat all complaints seriously and to follow the procedures.

Most complaints can be resolved if approached positively. If a complaint becomes intractable, it may be due to its nature or to the way in which it was handled, or possibly because the complainant perceives the school to have 'closed ranks' against him or her. There are different stages of action to be taken with intractable complaints:

### **5.6.1 Referral to the Regional Principal**

In most cases, the procedure will be that the Campus Principal refers the matter to the Regional Principal and informs the parents that this stage has been reached. However, a situation may arise where the complaint seems to have been mishandled by the Campus Principal. In those circumstances, the parent should be able to write direct to the Regional Principal.

The Regional Principal will discuss the matter fully with the Campus Principal and be provided with relevant documentation. If a briefing is required from a member of staff, this will occur in the presence of the Campus Principal. The Regional Principal will respond to the parents, notifying them that he/she is reviewing the matter, asking them if they wish to add anything further and providing a date by which they may expect a response.

The Regional Principal may be able to offer a new approach to the matter, and this may satisfy the complainant. The Regional Principal's response will be clear and detailed and will offer a meeting if the complainants remain troubled.

### **5.6.2 Meeting with the Regional Principal**

If a meeting is requested, the Regional Principal will offer to meet the parents at a time convenient to them. Those involved are:

- Regional Principal;
- Campus Principal and, at the most, one other member of staff;
- the complainant/s

Complainants are encouraged to bring with them a supportive friend who is not involved with the complaint. Legal representation is not appropriate at this stage. The Regional Principal, after questioning and listening to the complainant and the Campus Principal, may be able to find a solution. If this is not possible, and the complainant wishes to take the matter further, the Regional Principal could consider seeking the advice of an independent arbitrator.

## **5.7 Referral to a Conciliation Committee**

The school may establish a Conciliation Committee if resolution by the Campus Principal and the Regional Principal has failed. Conciliation Committee is composed of a Convener (independent of the

school) and up to four other members, two of whom will be members of the Board. The Regional Principal, in consultation with the Campus Principal decides when to refer a complaint to the Conciliation Committee and invites the convener to call a meeting. The Regional Principal has no further involvement until the convener reports back at the end of the committee's deliberations.

### 5.8 Meeting with the Conciliation Committee

Those involved in the meeting are:

- up to five Committee members, including the Convener;
- the Campus Principal and possibly a key member of staff; and
- the complainant, who are invited to bring a supportive friend.

The meeting should ensure that:

- enough time is committed to the meeting;
- the complainant and the Campus Principal are asked in advance whether there are any papers they would like to have considered at the meeting, bearing in mind the need to keep the proceedings confidential. The papers are copied and distributed before the meeting;
- the Convener will emphasise that he or she is concerned to reach a positive conclusion and will invite first the complainant, then the Campus Principal to speak. After this, the Convener encourages questions and general discussion;
- the Convener may find it helpful at some point to invite the Campus Principal, the complainant and their friend to withdraw from the discussion for a time, leaving the Committee alone;
- if more time is required, it may be necessary to convene a second meeting. If so, Committee members must commit themselves to attend, as continuity is essential;
- if a positive solution is reached, the Convener will summarise the outcome and confirm the nature of the agreement before the meeting disperses. The agreement will be recorded, copied and circulated as soon as possible;
- at the end of the Committee's deliberations, the Convener will make a full report to the QLD State Principal and inform the complainant that this is being done. The Regional Principal would be expected to endorse the Committee's decision.

### 5.9 Further Action

If necessary, recourse to an external mediator will be arranged.

## 6. LEGISLATION

[Education \(Accreditation of Non-State Schools\) Regulations 2017](#)

[Australian Education Regulations 2013](#)

[Fair Work Act 2009](#)

[Work Health and Safety Act 2011 \(Qld\)](#)

[Privacy Act 1988 \(Cth\)](#)

[Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 \(Qld\)](#)

[Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 \(Cth\)](#)

[Sex Discrimination Act 1984 \(Cth\)](#)

[Age Discrimination Act 2004 \(Cth\)](#)

[Disability Discrimination Act 1992 \(Cth\)](#)

[Racial Discrimination Act 1975 \(Cth\)](#)

## 7. VERSION CONTROL

Policy Code	Date	Version No.	Nature of Change
POL_QLD_ADM_Complaint Handling	15/08/2019	v1.1	New branding and policy revamp
POL_QLD_ADM_Complaint Handling	24/03/2020	v1.2	Policy author updated

POL_QLD_ADM_Complaint Handling	18/07/2022	v1.3	Policy review – updated name of management
POL_QLD_ADM_Complaint Handling	03/11/2023	v1.4	Review Date
POL_QLD_ADM_Complaint Handling	August 2024	v1.5	Update of QLD State Principal to Regional Principal