



## PARENT COMPLAINT POLICY February 2017

### SCHOOL PURPOSE

At Kapunda Primary our purpose is to provide a safe and diverse learning environment in which to educate and empower children to be successful in the community and in the future.

The education and wellbeing of our students is our first priority. All members of our school community, including students, parents, staff and volunteers have the right to be treated with courtesy and respect. Parents have the right to raise concerns and complaints about school, and this policy is designed to support parents through this process.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The School welcomes the airing of a grievance in a **responsible and constructive manner**. Please consider the following when you have a grievance:

- Grievances are to be kept **confidential**. At times you might want to seek support from friends to gauge their reaction, however it is important to do this privately and respectfully.
- There must be **mutual respect** between all parties – respect by parents for teachers/staff as professionals, their experience and their expertise; respect by teachers/staff for parents' special relationship with their child.
- It is vital for the sake of the students and the school that **teachers are not criticised in students' hearing**.
- All input/contributions **are to be listened to** respectfully and attentively by others in the process.
- Be prepared to **talk specifics**. Bring along notes you have documenting when, what, why, who, when, where and how the incidents/issues have occurred.
- Parents can use an **advocate** to assist them in raising an issue. At any stage a parent may contact the Parent Complaint Unit to discuss a concern or seek advice (1800 677 435)
- It is important to **remember** that the grievance process will not necessarily result in a change to, or reversal of a decision or action. Sometimes the only achievable outcome may be an apology, an understanding to follow or improve guidelines or procedures in the future.
- If a concern has not been addressed or the follow-up is unsatisfactory, please refer to the **quick reference guide** in this document as to your next step.
- All department staff- teachers, principals, pre-school directors, regional and Central Office staff- will help you on a plan of action and a timeframe.

### TYPES OF CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS COVERED

Parents can raise a concern or complaint about any aspect of the school's operations. This includes:

- Quality of services
- Behaviour of staff
- Decisions of staff
- School policy
- School procedures
- School practices

### **NOT COVERED**

This policy does not apply to matters where there are legislated requirements or existing policies and processes of appeal such as:

- Complaints or appeals about student suspension and exclusion
- Staff disputes and grievances
- Mandatory reporting responsibilities
- Some health, safety and welfare related issues
- Previously finalised complaints will not be pursued unless the parent is able to provide new information.
- This policy is not applicable where a parent has employed a third party (eg, legal representation) in relation to their complaint. In these circumstances, the complaint must be referred to the department's legislation and legal Services Unit for action. A parent is however, entitled to a support person such as a friend, colleague, or a person provided through an appropriate agency, as long as they do not receive a fee for service.

### **RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

When raising a concern or complaint with staff, parents can expect to:

- Be treated with respect, courtesy and consideration
- Have the complaint dealt with in a confidential and timely manner
- Have access to appropriate and easily understandable information regarding the complaint resolution process
- Have the complaint considered impartially and in accordance with due process and principles of natural justice
- Be kept informed of the progress and outcome of their complaint

We request that, when making a complaint parents will:

- Raise concerns and complaints at an appropriate time and place
- Treat other parties with respect, courtesy and maintain confidentiality
- Refrain from using social media (such as Facebook) to raise concerns and complaints
- 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 to resolve the concern or complaint

## **WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE A COMPLAINT**

### **STAGE ONE – RAISE THE CONCERN**

Parents may raise concerns or complaints verbally or in writing. Issues should be raised with the school in the first instance. Parents need to make an appropriate time to talk to the class teacher to discuss their concern or complaint. This can be arranged through a diary note, a phone call or face to face.

It is expected that teachers will:

- Make a time available as soon as reasonably possible to discuss the issue (within 5 working days)
- Listen to the parent
- Consider relevant legislation, policies and guidelines, seeking support as necessary
- Identify and discuss with the parent possible courses of actions that could be taken and the timeframe within which this will occur
- Follow up with the parent after a reasonable period of time has elapsed to ensure parent is satisfied
- If appropriate, refer issue to leadership staff . If the concern is about a teacher, or if the issue is not addressed to the satisfaction of the parent by the teacher, the parent should raise the issue with the school leadership staff (Principal or Deputy Principal). Appointments to see leadership staff can be made through the front office via phone call, in person or via email.

The Principal (or Deputy Principal) will consider the most effective way of resolving the concern or complaint based on:

- Information provided by all relevant parties
- The school's parent concern and complaints procedure
- DECD Parent Concerns and complaints policy and procedure
- Consideration of any legislative and policy implications
- Advice from the regional office or DECD Central Office

The school will aim to resolve the concern or complaint within 15 working days.

### **STAGE TWO – EDUCATION COMPLAINT UNIT**

The Education Complaint Unit has a dual function:

- To provide advice and support to parents/caregivers about their concern or complaint
- To objectively review complaints that have not been resolved at the school. A parent may contact the unit at any time to discuss their concern or complaint or to seek advice.
  - If a complaint has not been resolved by the school, the unit will be asked to assess the complaint and decide what action is needed.
  - Complaints submitted to the Education Complaint Unit must be in writing and state the reasons why the complaint remains unresolved and an outline of what reasonable action could be taken to resolve the complaint.
  - Staff from the unit will contact the parent about what has been done, explain the process and provide information about when they can expect to hear about the outcome.
  - This should occur within 35 working days.

- Any complaint that is referred to the Education Complaint Unit that has not been raised with the school and the regional office will be directed back to the school for resolution, except in circumstances where it is not appropriate or possible for the school to manage the complaint.
- You can contact the unit's hotline 1800677435 or by email at [DECD.EducationComplaint@sa.gov.au](mailto:DECD.EducationComplaint@sa.gov.au) at any time to discuss your concern or complaint or to seek advice.

### **IMPARTIAL REVIEW**

If the complaint has not been able to be resolved by the school, the unit will assess your complaint and decide what action is needed. Staff will discuss what has been done with your complaint, and when you can expect to hear about the outcome.

The department's Head of Schools and the Chief Executive's Office will be advised by the Education Complaint Unit of the outcome of the review. One of the senior leaders will make a decision about your complaint. You can expect that you will hear of a decision within 35 days in most cases.

### **OTHER OPTIONS**

You also have the right to refer any educational and care concern to an external agency such as the South Australian Ombudsman on 1800 182 150 or 8226 8699 or by email at [ombudsman@ombudsman.sa.gov.au](mailto:ombudsman@ombudsman.sa.gov.au)

### **MONITORING AND REVIEW**

This policy has been developed in accordance with the DECD Parent Concerns and Complaint Procedure March 2012 and Raising and complaint with DECD, 2017, and in consultation with Kapunda Primary School Staff and Governing Council. This policy will be reviewed every two years.

### **DEFINITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

- 'Parent' includes a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for a student at Kapunda Primary School.
- 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
- A 'complaint' is an expression of grievance or resentment where the parent is seeking redress or justice
- DECD – is the Department for Education and Child Development.