

MAY 2025

Enquiries and Complaints Management Policy

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1 Purpose

This Policy applies to all Tasmanian Government Schools and Child and Family Learning Centres (CFLCs). It outlines the Department for Education, Children and Young People (DECYP)'s policy position on how government schools, CFLCs and Learning Services will manage enquiries and complaints.

2 Policy Statement

Schools and CFLCs are constantly engaging with parents, guardians, carers, families, students, and the wider community. DECYP recognises that having constructive and inclusive relationships with these stakeholders is the foundation for a positive learning environment for students.

Schools and CFLCs may receive a wide range of feedback from stakeholders, including enquiries, compliments, comments and complaints. All feedback provides an opportunity to identify issues and take action to improve service delivery.

2.1 Responding to enquiries

An enquiry is a request for information or a question needing clarification. A person who has an enquiry is encouraged to:

- Contact the [school](#) or [CFLC](#) directly
- Check the [DECYP website](#) for access to relevant information, or
- Complete an online [Enquiry Form](#).

When an enquiry is received, the school/CFLC should assist by providing accurate and timely information either verbally or in writing. This should be acknowledged within seven working days (excluding school holidays).

2.2 Responding to complaints

Complaints need to be presented in good faith and contain factual and truthful information. They should aim to seek a realistic outcome. Complaints should not be frivolous or vexatious in nature.

When complaints are raised by a student, parent, carer, family, or community member, all parties should aim to resolve these as early as possible at the school or CFLC level, with the learner's education as the most important consideration.

In managing complaints, employees **must**:

- comply with this Policy and associated [Procedure](#) and resources.
- Manage complaints consistently in alignment with the complaints management principles of procedural fairness, accessibility, responsiveness, efficiency, and effectiveness for all parties (see **2.2.1**).
- Adhere to the Complaints Management Process (see **2.2.2**), to resolve complaints as early as possible.

- Recognise a complaint can be made by anyone who is directly impacted by a school or CFLC's decision, action, or service. Each complaint should be treated on its merits, including anonymous complaints.
- Treat complainants courteously, with respect and dignity, and inform all parties (responders, complainants and employees working to resolve the complaint) of their rights and responsibilities during the process.
- Maintain confidentiality of all parties when managing complaints in alignment with policy and legislative requirements.
- Maintain a focus on learner outcomes when resolving complaints.
- Recognise that complaints are a source of feedback. They provide an opportunity to learn and grow, as well as contribute to continuous improvement.

2.2.1 Complaints Management Principles

Learning Services applies the following principles to the management of complaints:

Principle	What this means in practice
Procedural fairness, also referred to as natural justice	<p>Procedural fairness requires a fair and proper process be used in making decisions that may adversely affect the interests of an individual or a group of people. The rules of procedural fairness require:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a hearing appropriate for the circumstances. • lack of bias. • evidence and reasons to support a decision. • inquiry into matters of dispute. <p>This means that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The subject of the complaint (respondent) will be informed of the nature of the complaint. • Complaints will be managed in an impartial, objective, and unbiased manner. • Complainants will not be adversely affected because they have made a complaint.
Accessibility	<p>The complaints management process is free and is accessible to all parties. Information on how and where to raise a complaint will be made publicly available. The process will be simple, clear, and easy to use.</p>

Responsive	<p>Complaints will be acknowledged and responded to in a prompt and timely manner. Complaints will be resolved as soon as possible and practicable. In general:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Early Resolution process can take up to 45 working days to reach resolution, excluding school holidays. • The Internal Review process can take up to 90 working days to complete, excluding school holidays. • If there are delays, the complainant will be informed. • All parties will be kept informed about the progress of the complaint, including the outcome and the reasons for any decisions. Note, there may be restrictions with the information that DECYP can provide in alignment with the Personal Information Protection Act 2004. • Complaints are recorded and tracked to monitor trends, timeframes and resolutions.
Efficient/ Effective	<p>Complaints will be managed efficiently and effectively so that all parties have confidence in the process.</p> <p>The complaint process and level of resources allocated to a complaint will be determined by DECYP, based on the substance of the complaint.</p>

2.3 Policy scope

Some complaints received through the [Complaints Management Process](#) are outside of the scope of this Policy and need to be managed in a different way. These are complaints that are:

- Within DECYP's remit but are subject to another review or statutory process (see **2.3.1**).
- Outside of DECYP's remit and may be the subject of a different agency or a different statutory process (see **2.3.2**).
- Complaints about staff misconduct, which are managed in accordance with Human Resources Policy and Procedures.
- Complaints over 12 months old, which may be excluded from investigation (will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis).

If a complaint is received that is not considered to be within the scope of this Policy, the complainant will be informed and, where appropriate, will be redirected to the correct process.

2.3.1 Inside the operations of DECYP, but not within scope of this Policy

The below are within the remit of DECYP and have either a specific formal review process, or legislative process. Therefore, they will not be considered as a matter to be resolved through this Policy.

Topic	Detail
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Complaints about a child safety mandatory report	<p>All staff members and volunteers must make a report directly to the Strong Families, Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line (ARL) on 1800 000 123 or make an online notification when they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have been made aware of a disclosure of child abuse/neglect • Have reasonable grounds to believe or suspect that a child is suffering, has suffered or is likely to suffer abuse or neglect.
Trespass Notice issued by a principal	Individuals subject to a Trespass Notice are required to seek their own independent advice and address their concerns through the Courts.
Out of area enrolments	<p>Individuals seeking a review of an out of area enrolment decision must complete the form below and provide evidence of the reason(s). This must be returned to Learning Services within 14 days of receiving notification from the principal that the Expression of Interest application was unsuccessful:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request for Review of Out of Area Enrolment Decision Form
Out of area (CFLC access)	<p>Each CFLC has a catchment area which can be viewed on the DECYP website. If a family does not live in a CFLC catchment area, they should contact the CFLC before visiting to discuss out of area access and support.</p> <p>Access is guided by: Child and Family Learning Centres Access and Participation Policy.</p>
Complaints about decisions made under legislation or policy*	<p>If an individual has concerns about a decision made in line with legislation and policy, for example application of the School Student Dress Code and Uniform Policy or the Child and Family Learning Centres Access and Participation Policy, they should speak to the school or CFLC.</p> <p>Alternatively, they can contact Ombudsman Tasmania (telephone 1800 001 170).</p>
Suspensions, Exclusion, Expulsion or Prohibition	<p>Individuals should contact the principal to discuss a sanction decision applied to a student of up to 10 days.</p> <p>Review rights associated with a sanction are limited to cases where additional suspensions exceeding 10 days have been applied to the original sanction. To proceed, the relevant form (as per below) must be completed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application for Revocation of Further Suspension • Application for Review or Revocation of Exclusion • Application for Review or Revocation of Expulsion • Application for Review or Revocation of Prohibition.
School Association Dispute	<p>In the first instance, individuals should contact the chair of the School Association. Alternatively, they can contact schoolassociations@decyp.tas.gov.au or Tasmanian Association of State School Organisations at info@tasso.org.au.</p>

Family Law matters	Family or carer disagreements about the learner are for those parties (and the learner if over the age of 18 years old) to reach agreement on. This agreement must then be communicated to the school or CFLC.
Student Class Placements	Individuals should contact the principal to discuss a class placement decision. Alternatively, they may contact Ombudsman Tasmania .

*A complaint can be made on whether the established process has been followed.

2.3.2 Outside of scope of both DECYP and this Policy

Topic	Advice for public
Incidents outside of school	Schools do not have a duty of care for learners outside of established school hours. Depending on the nature of the incident, individuals can contact Tasmania Police. For emergencies they should contact 000 and for non-emergencies contact 131 444.
Complaints about other parents or members of the school community	This is a civil matter. Individuals should seek independent advice.
Restraining Orders	Where a Restraining Order is obtained and it impacts the school community, a copy of the Restraining Order should be provided to the school/CFLC.
Complaints about a Child Safety matter (such as abuse or neglect of a child).	Contact Advice and Referral Line, telephone 1800 000 123. For complaints about Child Safety Services contact by telephone on 03 6166 3526 or by email cyf.liaison@decyp.tas.gov.au .
Public Interest Disclosure Act 2002	Contact Ombudsman Tasmania , telephone 1800 001 170.
Complaints about Conveyancing Allowance	Contact the Department of State Growth , telephone 1800 030 688.
School Buses	Contact the Department of State Growth , telephone 1800 030 688.

2.4 Rights and Responsibilities

Staff have the responsibility to comply with:

- the [Enquires and Complaints Management Policy](#),
- [Enquiries and Complaints Management Procedure](#) and
- [Internal Review Procedure](#).

Staff **must** act professionally in accordance with the [State Service Act 2000](#). This also includes treating complainants with courtesy and respect, keeping the complainant informed of progress, the outcome and providing information on the reasons for any decisions.

Complainants also have a set of responsibilities when they raise a complaint. This includes:

- clearly identifying the complaint. This includes providing all factual information relevant to the complaint in an honest and organised way at the time of making the complaint.
- cooperating with the school, CFLC or Learning Services during the process and treating all staff with courtesy and respect.
- cooperating with the process, focusing on learner outcomes and working collaboratively to resolve the complaint.

The complainant also has other responsibilities that are broadly outlined within the [Respectful School Visitor and Volunteer Behaviour Policy](#) and are also outlined within the definition of [unreasonable complainant conduct](#). Unreasonable complainant conduct will not be tolerated. This includes any social media posts, emails and telephone contact.

Staff and student safety and wellbeing are a key priority, and DECYP will take appropriate steps to manage any instances of unreasonable complainant conduct.

2.5 Data and reporting

Learning Services records data on complaints to identify trends and emerging issues, identify effective solutions and measure performance. Information will be reported to the Learning Services Directors as requested.

2.6 Monitoring and review

This Policy will be reviewed every three to four years (or earlier if deemed necessary), and will be informed by the following information:

- Feedback from parties on the complaint management process.
- The results of any audits, evaluations, internal feedback, or feedback from external agencies.
- Any changes in contemporary practice, standards, policy, legislation, or DECYP's organisational structure.

3 Related policies

- [Child and Family Learning Centres Access and Participation Policy](#)
- [Conduct and Behaviour Policy](#)
 - [Schedule 1: General Conduct and Behaviour Standards for all workers](#)
 - [Schedule 1.1: Conduct Standards for workers in School and Child and Family Learning Centre settings](#)
- [Respectful School Volunteer and Visitor Behaviour Policy and Process](#)
- [Student Behaviour Management Policy](#)

4 Related procedures

- [Complaints Management - Internal Review Procedure](#)
- [Conflict of Interest Procedure](#)
- [Enquiries and Complaints Management Procedure](#)
- [Respectful School Visitor and Volunteer Procedure](#)

5 Supporting information/tools

- [Complaints Management Process](#)
- [Compliments and Complaints – Information for Parents](#)
- [Enquiries and Complaints Management Resources and Templates](#)
- [Occupational Violence and Aggression](#)
- [Online Complaint Form – Early Resolution](#)
- [Online Enquiry Form](#)
- [Online Internal Review Form](#)

6 Definitions

Complainant

The person/party making the complaint, or an organisation or advocate representing the complainant.

Complaint

An expression of dissatisfaction, either verbal or in writing, from a person who has been directly affected by an action, a decision, or service by a school or CFLC or the failure to take an action, make a decision or provide a service by the school or CFLC.

Enquiry

An information request or a question requiring clarification. This may also include comments or compliments.

Frivolous complaint

A trivial or meritless complaint which does not justify the resources required to action it.

Parent

Parent has the same meaning as in the [Education Act 2016](#) (Tas) which includes:

- (a) A legal guardian of a child; and
- (b) Another person who has the care, control, or custody of a child; and
- (c) Another person who generally acts in the place of a parent of a child and has done so for a significant length of time.

Resolution

A complaint is resolved when the complaint raised is dealt with in line with [Enquiries and Complaints Management Procedure](#). The resolution may or may not be to the parties' satisfaction.

Resolutions may include: An explanation, an apology, changing or reconsidering a decision or action, expediting a decision, reaching a compromise resolution, identifying a different action, addressing, or referring for continuous improvement, concluding that the complaint has been resolved or dismissal of the complaint.

Unreasonable complainant conduct

Conduct is likely to be unreasonable if it involves actions or behaviours which, because of the nature or frequency, raise substantial health, safety, resource or equity issues for DECYP, its staff, other service users or the complainant themselves.

Examples include unreasonable:

- Persistence (e.g. excessive and unnecessary telephone calls, letters, emails, or other correspondence).

- Demands (e.g. demanding more reviews than DECYP procedures allow or demanding a different outcome without showing the original decision was incorrect).
- Lack of cooperation (e.g. refusing to identify the issue of complaint or providing disorganised information).
- Arguments (e.g. making irrational claims).
- Behaviour (e.g. aggression or violence to staff or threatening to harm self and others).

Vexatious complaint

A complaint that is not brought in good faith, and is instead designed to harass, annoy, or create a resource burden for DECYP.

7 Legislation

The following legislation and policy provide the context for this policy.

- [Anti-Discrimination Act 1998](#) (Tas)
- [Disability Discrimination Act 1992](#) (Commonwealth)
- [Disability Standards for Education 2005](#) (Australian Government, Department of Education)
- [Education Act 2016](#) (Tas)
- [Education Regulations 2017](#) (Tas)
- [Integrity Commission Act 2009](#) (Tas)
- [Ombudsman Act 1987](#) (Tas)
- [Personal Information Protection Act 2004](#) (Tas)
- [Police Offences Act 1935 \(Trespass Law\)](#) (Tas)
- [Public Interest Disclosures Act 2002](#) (Tas)
- [Secretary's Instruction No 3 for Unacceptable Behaviour of Students and Volunteers at, and Visitors to, State Schools or School Activities](#)
- [State Service Act 2000](#) (Tas)
- [Teachers Registration Act 2000](#) (Tas)
- [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)
- [Work Health and Safety Act 2012](#) (Tas)

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