



PARAFIELD GARDENS HIGH SCHOOL PARENT COMPLAINTS POLICY

Parafield Gardens High School, a partnership of students, staff, parents and the community, encourages every student to be the best they can be now and for the future, providing a caring and supportive environment with a culture of high expectations.

Our school is committed to a complaints procedure that ensures anyone with parental responsibilities for a young person can raise a concern or complaint, with confidence that it will be heard and responded to in an appropriate and timely fashion.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Safety of children and young people is always the first priority. Our procedures are underpinned by the following principles:

1. All persons in the Parafield Gardens High School community, including students, parents, staff and volunteers have the right to be treated with respect and courtesy in accordance with the school's values.
2. Parents have the right to raise concerns and make enquiries or complaints about any aspect of school life.
3. Information about how, where and to whom complaints can be made should be visible and accessible through school procedures.
4. Complaints should be acknowledged and addressed promptly within agreed timelines.
5. Individual complaints should be assessed objectively and without bias using principles of natural justice.
6. The rights and responsibilities of all parties should be considered and balanced in finding a mutually acceptable outcome to complaints.
7. The confidentiality of all parties should be maintained.

Step 1: Talk to us

If your concern or complaint relates to an issue concerning your child's teacher, you should talk to the teacher as soon as possible. Contact Student Services on 8258 9855 and the receptionist will transfer your call to the teacher or ensure that a message is given to the teacher to return your call.

You may prefer to organise a mutually convenient time to meet the teacher rather than discuss the issue via a telephone conversation. If you prefer a face-to-face meeting, you can bring a support person with you, if you wish. *"All of the parties involved in a DECD complaint management process can bring a support person to any of the meetings held to resolve your complaint."*

The role of the support person is to provide advice and support during the process and not to answer questions on behalf of any of the parties or interfere with the discussion. If at any point during the complaint management process a party engages legal representation then the process will be stopped until advice can be sought from the DECD Legislation and Legal Services Unit.

Our staff will:

1. following a direct complaint made about their work:

- listen to the complainant
- consider relevant legislation, DECD policy & guidelines and school procedures and/or seek advice/support
- acknowledge that an identified situation may have caused distress
- identify & discuss possible courses of action & timeline that could resolve the complaint as soon as reasonably possible (5 working days)
- follow up on actions and ensure the complainant is notified of the strategies implemented to address the concern
- document the complaint, process, progress and outcome
- if appropriate, refer the matter to the appropriate Line Manager

2. following a complaint made about another staff member or issue outside their responsibility:

- direct or discuss with the complainant the School's Complaint Procedures
- assist, if required, the complainant with making a complaint
- refer the complainant to the appropriate Line Manager.

If the matter is not resolved, is school wide or you wish to have a person act as a mediator, you may want to meet and raise the issue with the Line Manager. To do this, contact Student Services on 8258 9855 and you will be referred to the appropriate person by the Receptionist.

For example:

(Year 8-Year 12)

Issue	Responsible person	Line Manager
Home group issues – attendance, lateness to school, uniform, Pastoral Care etc.	Home Group Teacher	Year Level Coordinator
Class work issues - homework, subject/curriculum matters, tests, assignments, due dates, assessment etc.	Subject Teacher	Learning Area Coordinator
Behaviour issues – (in class) bullying, harassment, disrupting lessons, etc.	Subject teacher	Year Level Coordinator
Behaviour issues – (in general)	Year Level Coordinator	Student Inclusion Coordinator (Y8-9) Student Inclusion Coordinator (Y10-12)
Serious behaviour issues	Year Level Coordinator	Senior Leader Middle School (Y8-9) Senior Leader Senior School (Y10-12)
Level/quality of support services	Appropriate teacher/Manager or Coordinator including: Aboriginal Education Teacher Special Needs Teacher	Senior Leader Middle School - /Student Support Services.
SACE (South Australian Certificate of Education) issues	Senior Leader – Senior School Senior School Counsellor	Senior Leader – Senior School

If your concern has not been resolved following discussions with the Line Manager, you should contact the school and you will be referred to the appropriate Senior Leader. If the matter is not resolved with the delegated person, contact the Deputy or the Principal.

The Principal will:

- acknowledge receipt of the complaint as soon as reasonably possible (within 5 school days)
- listen to the complainant
- determine if support needs to be provided to the complainant or staff member while the complaint is considered
- consider relevant legislation, DECD policy and guidelines, school procedures and/or seek advice
- investigate, consider & determine the most appropriate way to resolve the issue fairly & promptly including negotiations between parties
- inform all parties if there has been a delay in the process
- ensure the complaint process and outcome is documented
- ensure that the outcome of the process is communicated to the parties involved verbally and, if appropriate, in writing, including advice about the right to refer the matter to the Northern Adelaide Regional office.

Please note:

- Interpreters and Aboriginal Education Teachers are available to assist parents in communicating with us. Please contact Student Services / Front Office or the Northern Adelaide Regional Office on 8256 8111 for assistance.
- Any written or verbal complaints that contain personal abuse, inflammatory statements, and comments of a threatening nature or intended to intimidate will not be addressed and the parent will be advised accordingly.

Step 2: Contact our local DECD Regional Office

If you don't believe the issue has been addressed by our school, contact our local DECD Northern Adelaide Regional office.

Northern Adelaide Regional Office**1st Floor Elizabeth House****50 Elizabeth Way****Elizabeth 5112****Phone: 82568111****Regional office staff will:**

- refer, if appropriate, any complaint that has not been raised at the school level to the school
- determine the appropriate person to handle the complaint, for example the Manager, Regional Support Services or the Assistant Regional Director
- acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing
- make an *assessment* of the complaint and if required, a negotiated /mediated solution or undertake a *formal review* following DECD guidelines
- if no solution is reached or agreement is made with the delegated regional office person contact the Regional Director who oversees the Northern Adelaide Regional office
- your Regional Director will review the complaint and make a decision in relation to the complaint according to the weight of the evidence and on the balance of probabilities

Step 3: Contact the Parent Complaint Unit

Parents may contact the Parent Complaint Unit at any stage of the process for support and advice. If your complaint remains unresolved after working together with our school, regional personnel and Regional Director, you should submit, in writing, your complaint to:

Manager, Parent Complaint Unit

Level 6

31 Flinders Street

ADELAIDE SA 5000

Ph: 1800 677 435

A free call hotline has been established for parents on 1800 677 435. The unit may also be contacted by email at DECD.ParentComplaint@sa.gov.au

It is important that these grievances are kept CONFIDENTIAL.

Parents may seek support from friends or an advocate.

You should include information about the complaint, including why it remains unresolved and an outline of what actions could be feasibly taken to resolve the complaint.

The Parent Complaint Unit, on behalf of the Chief Executive, will:

- acknowledge receipt of the complaint
- assess and make a recommendation to the Head of Schools that:
 - a review is not warranted and that the complainant is to be advised that no further action is considered necessary and that the complaint is now concluded; or
 - a review is necessary; or
 - the complaint should be referred to an external agency for investigation or review.

The Head of Schools will review the advice and decide that the complaint (in full or in part):

- can be resolved (all parties agree on an appropriate response)
- should be dismissed (complaint is either unsubstantiated, vexatious, outside of reasonable expectations in relation to confidentiality, cooperation, courtesy and respect or is orientated towards conflict)
- remains unresolved and that an independent review by an external agency is required.

In circumstance where the complaint remains unresolved contact the State Ombudsman. The Ombudsman will assess and investigate the complaint and try to resolve the problem.

Further information is available at: www.ombudsman.sa.gov.au

Additional Information

Scope of these procedures

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

- Concerns and allegations of misconduct by staff, volunteers and service providers (criminal matters, child protection, corruption, etc.)
- Employee disputes and grievances. (Employees should refer to HR17 Complaints resolution for employees 2000 for these types of complaints.)
- Complaints or appeals relating to student suspension and expulsion
- Duty of care or mandatory reporting responsibilities
- Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare related issues
- Health support planning

Requesting your identity to remain confidential

Parents may request that their identity remain confidential when making a complaint. In this situation, every effort will be made to keep the parent's identity confidential but this may limit options for negotiating a resolution. (For example, an apology is unlikely to be forthcoming if the identity of the complainant is not known.) These circumstances also raise issues in relation to procedural fairness for those who have a complaint made about them as they have a right to know the particulars of the complaint.

While every effort will be made to comply with a request to keep the parent's identity confidential, Freedom of Information requirements may result in a parent's identity becoming known. More information about confidentiality in the complaint management process is detailed in the '*DECD Complaint resolution for employees procedure*'.

Anonymous complaints

Parafield Gardens High School will assess every complaint that is made. The extent to which an anonymous complaint can be investigated will be limited, as school staff cannot liaise with the parent about the complaint. Anonymous complaints also raise issues in relation to natural justice for those who have a complaint made about them as they have a right to know the particulars of the complaint.

The Principal will determine upon receipt of an anonymous complaint to what extent the complaint will be investigated. Where the complaint is in relation to a Principal, the Assistant Regional Director will make the determination and for Regional Directors, the Head of Schools will make the final decision.

Possible approaches that may be used to resolve a parent complaint

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

- an acknowledgement that the complaint is valid and is worthy of investigation (overall or in part)
- 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
- acknowledgement that the situation could have been better handled (this does not constitute an admission of negligence)
- 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
- recognition that the situation presents an opportunity for changes or alternate 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 recur
- an undertaking to review school policy, procedures or practices.

This policy and procedures will be reviewed every two years.

For more information

DECD Policy for managing parent concerns and complaints

DECD Procedures for managing parent concerns and complaints

REVIEW

Ratified by Staff: July 2012

Ratified by Governing Council: May 2012

Principal: Nanette van Ruiten

Governing Council Chair: Steve Andrews