



Innisfail State College

Individual Success

Community Pride

Complaints Management Procedure

Purpose

This procedure outlines the school's approach to managing complaints in a fair, transparent, and timely manner. Complaint management is guided by Section 46 of the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006* and the Department's *Complaints, Enquiries and Feedback Procedures*. All complaints are handled respectfully, positively and with a commitment to resolution and continuous improvement.

Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by a person directly affected by the actions, decisions, services, or conduct of the Department or its employees. This includes concerns relating to:

- Decisions made, or not made, by departmental employees.
- Actions or omissions of the Department.
- Proposed actions, recommendations, or intentions of the Department.
- Customer service provided by departmental employees.

Matters That Are Not Complaints

The following are generally not considered complaints:

- Requests for information, services, or service changes.
- Suggestions for service improvements.
- General feedback or concerns.
- Reports of incidents or provision of information.
- Matters raised by individuals not directly affected by the decision or action.

Lodging a Complaint

Complaints may be submitted by:

- Telephone
- Email
- In person
- Written correspondence

Complainants may be supported by an advocate, friend, interpreter, community elder, or another agreed representative. Reasonable assistance, including translation or accessibility support, will be provided where required.

Anonymous complaints may be accepted; however, anonymity may limit the school's ability to investigate and respond effectively.

Receiving and Managing Complaints

Verbal Complaints

When receiving a verbal complaint, staff will:

- Listen carefully and respectfully.
- Clarify and summarise the issues raised.
- Acknowledge the complainant's concerns.
- Discuss the desired outcome.
- Explain available support options.
- Resolve the matter where possible or refer it to the appropriate staff member.
- Explain the next steps and thank the complainant for raising the issue.

Where a complaint cannot be resolved immediately, it is referred to the Principal as soon as practicable. The complainant may be asked to provide the complaint in writing or may be assisted to formally document the complaint.

Written Complaints

All written complaints are date-stamped upon receipt and forwarded to the Principal for consideration and action.

Documentation Requirements

The school maintains records of all complaints. Documentation should:

- Clearly state facts using objective language.
- Present information in chronological order where possible.
- Include relevant quotations where necessary.
- Be clear, legible, and appropriately corrected and initialled if amended.
- Record the author, date, time, and position of the person preparing the document.

Where a complaint remains unresolved at the first point of contact, acknowledgment will be provided within five working days.

Complaint Response Timeframes

The time required to resolve a complaint depends on its complexity. As a guide:

Complaint Type	Indicative Timeframe
Simple complaints	Up to 20 working days*
Complaints requiring enquiries	Up to 45 working days
Complaints requiring investigation or referral	Up to 90 working days or longer
Human rights-related complaints	Up to 45 business days
Internal reviews	Up to 45 working days

*For school-related complaints, working days refer to school days during term time.

Complaints Management Process

Phase 1 – Receiving and Clarifying the Complaint

All staff may receive complaints and are expected to:

- Treat complainants respectfully and professionally.
- Provide their full attention.
- Remain impartial and non-defensive.
- Focus on understanding and resolving the issue.

Phase 2 – Deciding How to Handle the Complaint

Upon receiving a complaint, staff assess whether the matter can be resolved as a concern or requires formal complaint management.

The Principal may decide to:

- Take no further action.
- Resolve the matter through discussion, mediation, or other resolution strategies.
- Refer the matter to an appropriate internal or external agency.
- Initiate a formal investigation.

The Principal retains overall responsibility for complaints relating to school management and may delegate aspects of the process to appropriate staff.

Complaints relating to departmental policy, official misconduct, student protection, or privacy matters will be referred to the relevant departmental authority.

Phase 3 – Finding Out About the Complaint

The Principal or delegate will:

- Gather and analyse relevant information.
- Consult with involved parties.
- Identify contributing factors.
- Ensure procedural fairness and natural justice.
- Document findings and outcomes.

Phase 4 – Making a Decision

Following consideration of all available information, the Principal or delegate will determine the outcome of the complaint.

Within 28 days of receiving the complaint, the complainant will be provided with:

- A written response outlining the decision and reasons; or
- Written advice that the matter has been referred to another agency.

Phase 5 – Review

If a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome, they are encouraged to discuss the matter further with the Principal and may be advised of options to seek review through the relevant regional office.

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

The school is committed to:

- Customer-focused service delivery.
- Fair, objective, and equitable complaint handling.
- Continuous improvement through review of complaint trends and outcomes.
- Appropriate staff training and support.
- Maintaining accurate records in accordance with departmental information management requirements.