

Feedback and Complaints about a School or Preschool

A parent or student can raise a concern or complaint if they think that the school or a staff member has:

- done something wrong
- failed to do something it should have done
- acted unfairly or impolitely

Your concern or complaint may be about:

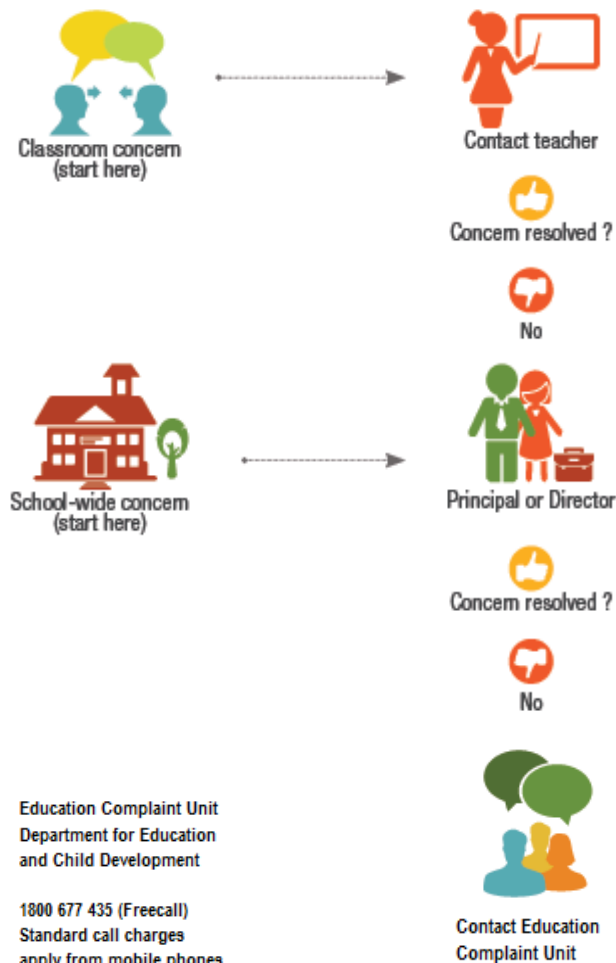
- the type, level or quality of services
- the behaviour and decisions of staff
- a policy, procedure or practice

Teachers, principals, preschool directors, and other education department staff will work alongside you to agree on a plan of action and a timeframe for resolving your issues or concerns.

Sometimes a complaint is about something we have to do because of state or federal law. In such cases we are able to talk to you about the matter and help you understand the requirements and why they exist.



How to Get Help with a Concern or Complaint



Government of South Australia

Department for Education and
Child Development

Guide to Raising a Concern or Complaint

GLADSTONE HIGH SCHOOL

HORROCKS HIGHWAY
GLADSTONE SA

86622171

dl:0775_info@schools.sa.edu.au

Before You Begin . . .

There are some points to keep in mind if you have a complaint about public education and care:

- Clearly identify the issue and let us know what you would like us to do about it.
- Write down key points to refer to when you report the problem.
- A friend or representative from a support organisation can attend any meeting with you. *This person is not there to speak for you or to answer questions on your behalf. It's important that it's your opinions and feelings that are voiced and heard by all parties.*
- If an interpreter is required, please let us know prior to any meeting.
- Written or verbal complaints should focus on the facts or details of what happened - avoid personal insults, inflammatory statements and threatening or intimidating comments.
- It's best to only discuss your complaint with people directly involved in the complaint or resolution process. This will help limit damage that can be caused by rumours.
- When a lawyer is engaged by one of the parties, the issue becomes a legal matter and will be referred to the Legal Services Unit of the Department.



Making a Complaint . . .

1. Tell the school or preschool first

Contact the school to arrange a time to meet with the teacher or have a discussion with them on the phone. They will look into your concerns and get back to you as soon as possible.

If the matter is not resolved, or if your complaint is about a teacher, you may want to meet with or write to the principal or director. They will work with you and the staff member to resolve the issue.

The school or preschool will aim to resolve your concern or complaint as soon as possible - ideally within 15 working days.

2. If you are unsatisfied, contact the Education Complaint Unit

1800 677 435

(standard call rates apply for calls from mobile phones)

DECD.EducationComplaint@sa.gov.au

The complaint unit will:

- assess your complaint
- decide what action is needed
- let you know what has been done and when you can expect to hear about the outcome



The Department's Chief Education Officer or the Executive Director of the Office for Children and Young People, and the Chief Executive's Office will be advised by the Education Complaint Unit of the outcome of the review. One of these senior leaders will make a decision about your complaint.

In most cases you can expect to hear of a decision within 35 working days.

Where to get help . . .

You can contact the unit on **1800 677 435** to discuss your concern or complaint, or to seek advice about resolving school problems. Staff will follow up with you to check about progress.

Will I be treated fairly?

You will not be discriminated against if you make a complaint. All staff are bound by the *Code of Ethics for South Australian Public Sector*, which requires staff to act impartially, fairly and equitably.

You can ask for your identity to be confidential when making a complaint, however keep in mind:

- This may limit options for investigating and negotiating a resolution.
- While every effort will be made to comply with your request, Freedom of Information requirements may result in your identity becoming known.

You can make an anonymous complaint, however:

- The extent to which it can be investigated is limited, as staff cannot liaise with you about the complaint.
- Anonymous complaints raise issues in relation to natural justice - those who have allegations made about them have a right to know the particulars of the allegation.

Other Options

In cases where a complaint requires an independent review by an external agency, the Department's Senior Managers will refer the matter to them.

You also have the right to refer any education or care concern to an external body, such as the **South Australian Ombudsman**.