

Community complaints: rights and responsibilities

The department is committed to creating positive environments that support student learning, with the best education happening when students, parents, and schools work together.

Parents and carers play an important role in the school community. The [School Community Charter](#) informs parents and carers on how to engage with NSW public schools.

The Community Complaint procedures outline expectations for respectful and reasonable behaviour from both department employees and community members during the complaint process.

Our expectations of people raising concerns, making complaints or providing feedback

Parents, carers, educators and other staff are all responsible for ensuring our learning environments are collaborative, supportive and cohesive. When raising a concern, making a complaint or providing feedback, we ask that you communicate in a positive and constructive manner, and treat others with respect and fairness.

Our staff will find a time to talk to you when they can give you their full attention. While our staff are in class or dealing with other matters, they may not be available to answer your questions immediately.

People in the community have a responsibility to:

- treat others with respect to create a trustworthy environment and behave in ways that are ethical and lawful
- raise their concern directly with the decision maker, principal or manager at the time of the event or situation (or as soon as reasonably possible afterwards), noting that action

may not be taken to address concerns relating to a situation that occurred more than 12 months ago or could reasonably be considered too long ago to allow meaningful inquiries or opportunities for resolution

- provide information that is clear, concise and without unrelated or unnecessary detail
- be clear about the relevant facts with a focus on resolution
- be willing to work cooperatively to resolve concerns and actively participate in any related complaint handling processes
- respond promptly and cooperatively when a complaint manager or reviewer requests information
- maintain confidentiality and only share information with those who need to know
- know, understand, and comply with the School Community Charter
- ask for further information and support (if required)
- ask for help if it is needed.

People in the community have a right to:

- access information about the process for raising and addressing concerns
- be heard and have their concerns genuinely considered
- be provided with sufficient time to engage a suitable support person to be available at the time of a scheduled meeting and who can monitor their psychological and cultural safety
- seek advice from another person or organisation to assist them to address their concerns
- be informed whether or not action will be taken as a result of their complaint
- receive regular and appropriate communication throughout the complaint process
- a reasonable complaint process with impartial decision-making
- make a complaint without being subject to detrimental action.

Unreasonable behaviour

Effective complaint resolution depends on all parties behaving in a respectful and reasonable manner. While making or responding to a complaint can be stressful, the standards of behaviour required under the [School Community Charter](#) (relates to everyone) and the [Code of ethics and conduct policy document](#) (employees only) continue to apply during the complaint process.

Managers must address any unacceptable, improper or unreasonable behaviour by a complainant or other party involved in the complaint that raises substantial health, safety, resource or equity issues. This behaviour includes:

- aggressive or intimidating actions, language or tone
- treating employees differently due to aspects such as their identity, religion or disability
- raising complaints repeatedly that lack substance
- inappropriate and excessive communication.

When addressing concerns, the complaint manager should try to build, maintain and restore a positive relationship with the person raising the concern.

If addressing a complaint would require the unreasonable and substantial diversion of resources (which outweigh the substantive concerns) and/or the complainant does not reasonably participate in the complaint process, complaint managers may decide:

- to finalise a complaint on the available information
- not to take action
- to limit the scope of inquiries.

Managers can decide to limit communication, for example, by advising that further communication that does not raise substantively new information will be noted and filed without further response.

More information

- [Community complaint procedures](#)
- [Making a community complaint](#)