

Complaints Handling Procedure

1. Statement

Enkindle Village School aims to provide a fair, equitable, legal and ethical environment for all employees, staff and students. The aim of this document is to ensure there is a transparent and consistent process to resolve issues as quickly and fairly as possible.

This document outlines the procedures undertaken at this school to manage complaints. Complaints management at this school is also underpinned by section 46 of the *Education (General-Provisions) Act 2006 (Qld)*.

It has been adapted from the Queensland Government's Department of Education and Training's complaints management template version 2.4 created 30/09/2016.

Complaints come to Principals and other school staff in many forms. Complaints can be from parents/carers, community, staff or students. All complaints are handled in a positive and open way.

2. Documentation

Enkindle Village School documents all complaints. Complaints are recorded and reported to the Principal as soon as practicable after receiving the complaint.

Complaints can be made directly to the Principal.

The record of the complaint:

- uses objective language clearly stating the facts,
- contains information in chronological order as practically possible,
- uses quotation marks, where appropriate and necessary,
- is neatly and legibly written in biro/pen or in print in clear unambiguous language,
- includes, where necessary, initialled and dated corrections,
- includes signature, designation of the author, and time and date of the incident/complaint.

If the complaint is not resolved at the first point of contact, the complaint is acknowledged within five working days by telephone, in person, by email, or in writing.

Documents related to the complaint are kept and stored in accordance with the relevant departmental policies and procedures. Please refer to Enkindle Village School Information Management Policy.

3. Complaints Management Phases

There are four key phases in handling a complaint, with the option of a fifth phase for review of a complaint outcome:

- Phase 1. Receiving and clarifying the complaint
- Phase 2. Actioning the complaint
- Phase 3. Investigating the complaint
- Phase 4. Final decision for the complaint
- Phase 5. Review

Phase 1 - Receiving and clarifying the complaint

Any member of staff can receive a complaint.

All complaints are received in the following manner:

- being respectful and helpful,
- giving the person your undivided attention,
- not being defensive, apportioning blame,
- remaining positive,
- not perceiving anger as a personal attack.

When a staff member receives a verbal complaint, they:

- listen carefully to the issues being raised,
- summarise the issues to clarify and check that they understand what the complainant is telling you,
- empathise and acknowledge the complainant's feelings,
- find out what the complainant wants to happen as a result of the complaint,
- tell the complainant that they may use the support of a third party in progressing the complaint, if they feel this is needed,
- resolve the complaint if possible, or assure the complainant that an appropriate staff member will address their complaint,
- advise the complainant what will happen with their complaint,
- thank them for their complaint.

Complaints are sometimes made with the assistance of an advocate, interpreter or by a third party (as agreed between the complainant and the principal). In this case staff will receive and clarify a complaint from more than one person.

Many complaints are resolved at the first point of contact with information and/or an explanation, together with an apology and recognition of the effect the situation has had on the person. Some complainants may also want an undertaking that action will be taken to prevent the problem recurring.

When the complaint is not resolved immediately, the complaint is referred to the principal as soon as is practicable.

A member of staff who receives a verbal complaint that is not resolved informs the complainant of the further options of:

- putting their complaint in writing, or,
- assisting the member of staff to record, in writing, the particulars of their complaint.

In general, if the complainant agrees to put the complaint in writing, the member of staff takes no further action unless or until a written complaint is received.

However, if the complaint relates to a report about harm (whether physical/emotional/sexual) of a student under 18 years, the process should be directed to the Enkindle Village School Child Protection Policy – all action will be in accordance with legislated requirements and acted upon without delay.

Once the complainant indicates that they would like to register a formal complaint verbally, the member of staff makes a written outline of the issues concerned. The record is read to the complainant, with opportunity for appropriate amendments and the complainant is asked to sign, where possible, the written version of the complaint. The staff member also signs (indicating their personal designation) and dates the complaint.

No signature is required for verbal complaints taken over the phone, but the complainant is asked to provide verbal confirmation of the issues that have been recorded.

If a complainant refuses to sign or confirm a written recording of a verbal complaint, the staff member notes the refusal on the written complaint. The complainant is told that this refusal will be noted and that the process will be reliant on the staff member's interpretation and notes only. The complainant may not, at a later date, make another complaint based on a lack of satisfaction with this record of complaint.

Receiving a written complaint

When a written complaint is received it is date-stamped and forwarded to the principal.

Receiving an anonymous complaint

When an anonymous complaint is received, the complainant is told of the possible limitations associated with making an anonymous complaint.

Phase 2 - Deciding how to handle the complaint

When a staff member receives a complaint, they:

- begin the process of making an assessment about a complaint from the moment the complaint is received,
- make an assessment in the first instance about whether the issue can be dealt with as a concern or a complaint,
- if they are not the principal, refer the complainant or the complaint to the Principal for addressing.

The principal decides whether to:

- take no further action,
- attempt to resolve the complaint through resolution strategies such as mediation,
- refer the complaint to the relevant internal or external agency if required,
- initiate an investigation of the complaint, within the school, if further information is required.

Co-ordination of complaints

The principal has the final responsibility for the management of all complaints that relate to school management issues under his/her jurisdiction. The complaint can be referred to another staff member in the school for action (for example, the principal's delegate).

Record of complaint

The principal ensures that records of a complaint and any referral of a complaint are kept for either internal or external review.

Phase 3 - Finding out about the complaint

The principal or delegate gathers all the necessary facts about the complaint while keeping in mind the principles of natural justice of all parties concerned.

The principal or delegate investigates complaints by:

- collecting and analysing information relevant to the matter,
- working collaboratively with all people involved,
- finding the facts relating to the matter,
- identifying any contributing factors to the matter,
- consulting the relevant *DET Procedure Register* on issues that relate to the complaint,
- documenting the investigation report or outcome.

Phase 4 - Making a decision about the complaint

Based on the facts gathered in Phase 3 about the complaint, the principal or delegate makes a decision on the complaint.

Notifying the complainant of the decision

Within 28 days of the receipt of the complaint, the principal provides the complainant with either:

- a written response, including reasons for the decision, or,
- a written notification that their complaint has been referred to an internal or external agency.

Phase 5 Review Phase

If the complainant is not satisfied with this response, they are encouraged to discuss it further with the principal, or to pursue the matter with external authorities if they wish. The principal is required to provide the following information in regard to appeal/review options should the complainant remain dissatisfied following this discussion.

In the first instance, any request to review a decision about a complaint should be made to the Board of the Townsville Independent School Association, Incorporated (TISAI) as the governing body of Enkindle Village School. The TISAI Board can be contacted with a request to review the decision about a complaint through committee@tisai.com.au.

Other avenues for review of decisions are also available, depending on the nature of the complaint or basis of the request for a review:

- The **Non-State School Accreditation Board (NSSAB)** has jurisdiction under sections 11 and 26 of the *Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act 2017* to address only a limited number of matters relating particularly to compliance with accreditation requirements and other legislated matters. Further information is available at <https://nssab.qld.edu.au/Complaints/index.php>.
- The **Queensland Human Rights Commission** can also be contacted for an external review, especially for complaints involving human rights issues.

It is important to advise the complainant that these bodies will generally refuse to consider a review if the School's internal complaint and review process has not first been exhausted.

If at any stage throughout the process if the matter is considered an emergency, legal, ethical or safety issue, Enkindle Village School staff are encouraged to use their best judgement to expedite the complaint process.

4. Administration

NOTE: Printed copies of this document are uncontrolled, and currency can only be assured at the time of printing.

Approval Details

Policy Domain:	Human Resources
Policy Sponsor:	Principal
Approval Authority:	Board, TISAI
Date for next Major Review:	1 April 2026

Revision History

Approval date – the date the approval authority approved the establishment, minor or major amendment, or disestablishment

Implementation date – the date the policy was published in the Policy Library and is the date the policy takes effect.

Version	Approval date	Implementation date	Details	Author
4.2	19/09/2025	20/09/2025	On advice from NSSAB amended the review options to remove Ombudsmen and QCAT as NSSAB stated they will only review government agencies	Chair, TISAI
4.1	17/09/2025	18/09/2025	Change reference, in cases of complaints concerning harm to students, to the <i>Child Protection Policy</i> instead of the <i>Student Welfare Policy</i> . Amend review options to more clearly define scope of NSSAB purview, and to include alternative appeal options. Minor formatting. Inclusion of this Administration record.	Deputy Chair, TISAI
4	23/05/2025	23/05/2025	Reformatting	Anne English, Principal
3	Jan 2023	Jan 2023	Extension of information in scope of Review Phase	Kiri Pearce, Principal
2	30 July 2019	31 July 2019	Updated Phase 3 appropriate investigation procedures	---
1	June 2018	30/03/2016	Charter Established	---

Contact person: Principal, EVS

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