

# Understand the complaints process

**Our schools are committed to providing quality education to all students in a safe, inclusive and caring learning environment. We value working together with parents, carers and communities as critical partners in student learning outcomes.**

Communication between you and your school is an important part of your child's education. You should feel confident that we will listen and respond to your concerns, and work with you to resolve complaints.

Issues may arise during your child's schooling and these are more productively resolved if you raise them with the school directly, as early as possible. If you are not sure who to speak to, you can start with your child's teacher. For some matters, it may be appropriate to talk directly to the school principal or the residential college manager. If you have approached your child's school but haven't been able to resolve the issue, we can work with you to address concerns in a prompt, visible and fair process, where all parties are heard and respected.

## You can make a complaint



Contact your school or education regional office. Find contact details: [education.wa.edu.au/schoolsonline](https://education.wa.edu.au/schoolsonline)



Phone the complaints advice line: [1800 655 985](tel:1800655985)  
8:30am to 4:30pm Monday to Friday



Make a complaint and understand the complaints process: [education.wa.edu.au/complaints](https://education.wa.edu.au/complaints)



Make a complaint using our [online form](#)

Making a complaint can be overwhelming for some people. Support is available to:

- parents and families living in regional or remote areas
- people with disability
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples
- people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Contact the [school](#), [education regional office](#) or phone the complaints advice line on [1800 655 985](tel:1800655985) if you need support with the complaint process.

**We can work with you to address concerns in a prompt, visible and fair process, where all parties are heard and respected.**

# Raise a concern with the school

Contact the school as early as possible if you have concerns. Talking to your child's teacher, year coordinator, school administration or principal is the best place to start.

Raise the matter with the principal if:

- you were not able to achieve a satisfactory outcome with the teacher or staff member
- the matter is about the conduct of a teacher or staff member
- the matter is about another aspect of school life that is impacting your child's education.

Contact the [school](#) to request an appointment to discuss your concerns.

Raise the matter with the [education regional office](#) if:

- you believe that your concern was not satisfactorily resolved or addressed by the school
- the matter is about the conduct of the principal.

If the matter is not about the conduct of the principal or a previous unsatisfactory resolution, the education regional office may refer it back to the school, unless there is a reason preventing the school from managing it.

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## Types of complaints

### The types of issues you might raise are:

- enquiry – when asking for information
- concern – when raising a matter of interest informally to provide feedback or get clarification
- complaint – an expression of dissatisfaction that relates to a product or service, or the complaints-handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.

Any person affected by service provision or the actions of a school can make a complaint. You can make a complaint anonymously, however, it may be difficult to resolve it if we can't talk to you about details of your complaint, clarify issues or get further information.

You can make a complaint about:

- the provision of education
- any decision, including those about enrolment or support for your child's learning
- our policies or procedures
- the conduct or behaviour of a staff member.

This complaints process cannot be used for:

- public interest disclosures (whistle blower)
- disputes and grievances between staff members
- mandatory reporting responsibilities (mandatory reporting legislation requires only specific people or professionals to report suspected child sexual abuse)
- matters relating to family court (restraining orders, access agreements)
- complaints relating to Catholic and independent schools, or other government agencies.

## The complaint journey

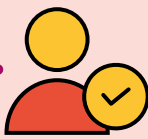
If you have concerns, talking to your child's teacher or principal is the best place to start.



**1**

### Make a complaint

Submit a complaint in person, by phone, letter, email or online.



**2**

### Assign

The complaint will be reviewed and assigned to the appropriate area.



**3**

### Assess

The complaint, evidence and other supporting material will be assessed.



**4**

### Resolve

An outcome will be provided explaining the reason for any decisions.

#### Internal review (optional)

A review can be requested if a satisfactory outcome was not received or there is a belief it was not handled properly.

#### Independent review

An independent review can be requested at any stage throughout the process.

## Understand the complaints process

### Expectations

Persons who are the subject of a complaint, who make a complaint or provide information in the course of managing a complaint shall not be subjected to prejudice, intimidation, and harassment or be subject to any detriment because of their involvement.

### When you raise a concern or decide to make a complaint, we aim to:

- treat all people equitably, with respect and dignity
- deal with your complaint in a confidential and timely manner
- provide you with access to appropriate and easily understandable information about the complaint handling process
- consider your complaint impartially and in accordance with due process and principals of natural justice
- keep you informed of the progress and outcome of your complaint.

### We ask that when making a complaint you will:

- treat all parties with respect and dignity
- be respectful of confidentiality if you choose to share information about your complaint
- raise the concern or complaint as soon as possible after the issue has arisen
- provide complete and factual information about the concern or complaint
- ask for support or further information if you need to
- act fairly and honestly, considering the interests of all parties involved, to achieve an acceptable outcome
- act in a way that acknowledges the interests of all parties, see things as they are, and deal with them in a practical way when considering a course to resolve the concern or complaint.

We manage all complaints in line with our [Complaints and Notifications Policy](#).

### Make a complaint

You can make a complaint in person, by phone, online, or in writing.

**In person or by phone** – when you make a complaint the staff member will acknowledge the complaint as part of their conversation with you. The staff member may ask you to put your complaint in writing if it can't be resolved straight away. Usually we will ask you to put your concerns in writing if you need to tell us about multiple or complex issues.

**Online** – you may choose to make a complaint by completing the online [complaint form](#). You will be asked to provide the relevant information to assist us to work with you in resolving your complaint. You will receive an automatic notification to let you know that we have received your complaint.

**In writing** – when you make a written complaint (by email or letter) where possible an acknowledgement will be sent within two (2) working days.

Complaints made through social media platforms will not be addressed through the complaint handling process.

## Assess

The complexity of your complaint will have an impact on how it is managed and the amount of time it may take to resolve.

We will let you know which office will manage your complaint and how you can contact them. We will advise you if your complaint is referred to another business area and give you updated contact details.

It may require several business areas to be involved with the resolution process. There will be a primary contact that will liaise with you.

If you become aware of new information after you submit your complaint and it is not yet resolved, contact the school or business area that is handling your complaint as soon as possible. It's really important that all relevant information is provided when submitting a complaint so a thorough process can be carried out.

When we assess your complaint we may determine it is not substantial enough to take further. This may be because the complaint does not contain enough information, has been made before, forms part of a pattern of inappropriate behaviour or is trivial, without basis or relevance.

The complaint resolution process may involve meetings with the different people involved. There might be times where you ask for a face to face meeting. You can request a meeting at the school, or another mutually convenient location, to discuss the issue. Talking about problems can often be the best way to start resolving them. It may be possible to meet via phone or video meeting if everyone is comfortable with that method. If you have questions about these types of meetings you should raise them with the person handling your complaint.

Meetings should be arranged at places and times that are mutually suitable for all parties. You should make sure enough time is allocated for you to be able to raise your issues, and you can prioritise if you have a few things to raise. Ask for details of what is going to be discussed at the meeting, and what outcome is hoped to be achieved. It's important that everyone is aware of who will be present at the meeting, and what their purpose or involvement at the meeting is.

You may feel more comfortable if you have a friend, relative or support person to assist you with the process. It is important to communicate clearly with the person handling your complaint about who your support person is, what their role is, and what you are happy to discuss with that person present.

A support person can attend meetings with you to help you feel more comfortable, but they don't participate during meetings or speak for you as you move through the complaint process. They can take notes to talk to you about later, and they can ask to stop the meeting if they think you need a break. Your support person also needs to follow the complaint resolution process.

The Parent Liaison Office is able to provide support by acting as a liaison point between schools, education regional offices, central services, parents, carers and members of the school community.

The Parent Liaison Office can:

- provide information to parents, carers and members of the school community to assist them with understanding the complaint management process
- provide support and advice to parents, carers and members of the school community on complaints resolution
- broker specialist advice in assisting with complex matters.

You can contact the Parent Liaison Office for advice at any time during the complaint management process.

**The complexity of your complaint will have an impact on how it is managed and the amount of time it may take to resolve.**

## Confidentiality

We understand that the confidentiality of the information shared throughout the process is important to everyone involved and ask that you contribute to that. Respecting people's choices about what information is shared and with whom is important to achieving a positive outcome. If your complaint is about another person, we will usually tell them what has been said to give them a chance to respond.

Confidentiality is a set of rules about how information shared by different people in different roles will be treated. You may want everyone to agree to what types of information will be considered confidential during your meetings but it is important to remember that some information, when it concerns people's safety and wellbeing, must be reported to others by law.

The purpose of confidentiality is to place limits on who will share what information with whom. Because of their job (psychologists, police officers, medical doctors) some people who may be involved in the complaints process will have very strict rules about sharing information and will need to get permission/consent from others. They may also be compelled by law to share information to protect a person's safety or wellbeing.

This means that sometimes information can be disclosed without your consent. If this is the case, you will be told the circumstances and what information will be disclosed and to whom. If you would like to discuss the limits of different people's confidentiality including your own, you may choose to speak to your contact person or ask them to refer you to someone that can answer your questions.

## Resolve

When your complaint has been assessed and the process is complete, we will let you know the outcome and explain the reasons for any decisions.

Some possible outcomes are that we may:

- provided with an explanation
- provide feedback to the individual or school
- action taken to fix the matter or improve the situation
- acknowledge that the solution could have been handled better or differently
- to engage in a restorative process

If one of the outcomes recommends a change to a policy or procedure, we will include that information in our response to you.

## Withdrawal

You can choose to remove yourself from the complaint process at any time. If you lodged your complaint in writing, then you should withdraw it in writing. If you withdraw your complaint verbally, the staff member will make a note of the contact and any reason you provide at the time.

The staff member will notify any parties affected by the complaint that it has been withdrawn.

There may be circumstances where we continue the complaint process without you.

## Request for review

Let us know if you are not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint, or you believe it was not handled properly.

We understand that sometimes you will not get the outcome that you wanted. If you think you can show the outcome was not fair, the process was not followed properly, or another reason related to procedural justice; such as not all parties able to tell their story, then the complaint may be reviewed.

You will need to give the reason you want the review, simply being unhappy with an outcome is not a reason to request a review.

The complaint review process is about making sure the correct process was followed, it is not about starting the complaint management process from the beginning.

Your complaint will not be reviewed by the person who managed your complaint.

## Independent review

If you are not happy with the handling of your complaint or believe the outcome is unreasonable, then you may wish to request an independent review at any stage throughout the process.

The Ombudsman Western Australia investigates complaints about the decision making of government agencies. The Ombudsman always observes an independent and impartial approach to the conduct of investigations as well as observing procedural fairness at all times.