



Complaints Handling Policy & Procedure

Purpose:	The purpose of this policy is to make sure that student, parent and employee complaints and disputes are dealt with in a responsive, efficient, effective and fair way.	
Scope:	Students, parents and all employees, as well as contractors, volunteers and people undertaking work experience or vocational placements.	
Status:	Approved	Supersedes: Previous
Authorised by:	Board Chair	Date of Authorisation: May 2021
References:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulations 2017 • Australian Education Regulations 2013 • Fair Work Act 2009 • Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld) • Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) • Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld) • Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth) • Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth) • Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth) • Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) • Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth) • DFS Work Health and Safety Policy • DFS Disability Policy & Procedure • DFS Privacy Policy 	
Review Date:	May 2022	
Policy Owner:	School Governing Body	

Policy Statement

Students, parents and employees have the right to raise a concern or complaint about any aspect of our school's operations, or the safety or welfare of a student.

We encourage constructive criticism and complaints, and view them as part of an important feedback and accountability process, which can result in a better service to all involved.

Complaints within the Scope of this Policy

About / Issue	Who to contact	How
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom activities Friendship issues Student/parent communication Learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning 	The relevant Teacher	By email: admin@darlingia.org By phone: 0481 430 585 Or in-person: Make an appointment to ensure there is enough time and a quiet location available to talk about the issue. Appointments with teaching staff are available between 3:30PM-4:30PM, Monday-Friday.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complex students issues Student welfare Staff-members' Code of Conduct Harassment and discrimination Privacy breaches School policy, management, and administration School fees and finances Enrolment and general matters 	Teaching Principal	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching Principal 	Contact the Chairperson of the Board of Directors in writing: Darlingia Forest School, PO Box 525, Innisfail, QLD, 4860	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board of Directors 	Contact the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board: http://nssab.qld.edu.au/Complaints/index.php	

Complaints outside the Scope of this Policy

Nature of the Complaint	Policy / Who to Contact
Student bullying complaints and discipline matters, including suspension or expulsion.	Positive Behaviour Management Policy
Student or employee violence or criminal matters.	Teaching Principal will involve the Police as appropriate
Child safety concerns and reports, including harm or abuse.	Child Protection Risk Management Policy
Employee complaints related to their employment, including workplace bullying and sexual harassment.	Teaching Principal Workplace Bullying & Sexual Harassment Policy
Formal legal proceedings.	Board of Directors

Students, Parents and Employees please:

- Raise your concern or complaint as soon as possible;
- Give detailed information (which may be requested in writing);
- Keep and respect everyone's privacy and confidentiality;
- Be calm, courteous, honest and sincere;
- Recognise everyone has rights and responsibilities that must be balanced;
- Avoid judgement and blame;
- Value differences and respect each other's point of view;
- Acknowledge that the common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to everyone involved.

Employees receiving Complaints please:

- As above, and additionally;
- Give the complainant a copy of this document to help them lodge their complaint;
- Keep appropriate records;
- Forward complaints to the Teaching Principal or Board of Directors, if appropriate.

We will:

- Make sure this policy is available to all on the school website and at the school's reception.
- Make sure all employees are trained in how to resolve complaints according to this policy and procedure;
- Treat anonymous complaints the same way as non-anonymous complaints;
- Take complaints seriously and address them as promptly and efficiently as possible, and within a timeframe that is agreeable to all parties involved;
- Keep and respect everyone's privacy and confidentiality in accordance with legislative requirements;
- Keep records of formal complaints, discussions and actions;
- Report to the School Board any claims for legal redress;
- Inform the school's insurer if a complaint could be connected to an insured risk.

Complaint Procedure Level One

The first step is to **go and speak informally to the person with whom you have an issue**. Many complaints can be resolved by communicating openly, honestly and in a non-threatening manner and environment, while also providing information, an explanation, an apology, and/or recognition of the effect the situation has had on the person.

When receiving a verbal or written complaint, employees should:

1. (If the complaint is written) respond within 2 working days of initially receiving the complaint;
2. Remain calm, respectful, helpful, and positive;
3. Clarify the issues raised to make sure you understand what the complainant is telling you;
4. Empathise and acknowledge the complainant's feelings;
5. Ask what the complainant wants to happen as a result of the complaint;

6. Resolve the complaint if possible, or
7. Tell the complainant that you will pass their complaint on to the appropriate person;
8. Thank the complainant for their feedback; and
9. Lodge the complaint in the 'Complaints and Grievances Register' within 2 working days.

Complaint Procedure Level Two

If the issue cannot be resolved, or you are uncomfortable taking the complaint to the person concerned, please **send your complaint to us in writing**. When receiving a written complaint, the Teaching Principal and/or Board-Member should follow the steps in 'Level One' (if appropriate). Assurances from a more senior staff member may improve the situation and prevent further escalation.

Otherwise, an appropriate person will conduct an investigation:

- Reviewing any relevant documents (e.g. injury, incident, or behaviour reports);
- Reading and referencing any relevant policies, procedures, legislation, or appropriate peak-bodies; and
- Meeting with relevant parties to confirm events.

A suitable person **must** be present as an independent witness during meetings. For a child that should be their parents if possible. For an employee that may be a union delegate.

Based-on the information gathered, the investigating person will make a decision on the complaint and write to the complainant within a reasonable timeframe. The letter/email will include a record of the complaint and investigation, details of the actions or strategies or resolutions taken in response to the complaint, and the following attachments:

- Relevant incident or behaviour reports; and
- Minutes/notes of meetings with parties involved;

Complaint Procedure Level Three

If the issue is still not resolved, the Teaching Principal will, with your written permission, then **take the matter to the next Board Meeting** to be discussed in-camera (privately), and will invite you to come along if appropriate.

The Board of Directors will be notified as soon as possible with all relevant information compiled, including details of all actions taken and results so far. The Board will review all of the information provided, and may choose to conduct further investigations of their own. Any actions or decisions arising from the meeting should be recorded, including any agreed outcomes, a time-frame in which the resolution is to be achieved, and actions to review the resolution if necessary. The minutes of the meeting should be signed by all parties involved.

Complaint Procedure Beyond School Level

If you still feel your issues have not been satisfactorily addressed, you can advise the Board of Directors and they will take the matter to a higher body, such as the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board, and request unbiased assistance which could mean mediation from an impartial third-party or legal proceedings. This step should be viewed as the last resort, *once all the previous stages have been undertaken*.