

# Making a customer complaint

## Information for parents and carers

### What is a customer complaint?

As a parent or carer, you can express dissatisfaction with the service or action of the department or its staff, including decisions made or actions taken in a school and/or by the local education Regional Office.

For general information about how the Department of Education manages customer complaints you should refer to the [Customer Complaints Management Framework](#), [policy](#) and [procedure](#) online.

For information privacy reasons, the department is unable to provide you with information about other people involved in your complaint.

### How do I make a complaint?

Communication is key. The best place to raise any concerns is at the point where the problem or issue arose. This means that if you have a concern about something in the classroom, you should discuss this with your child's class teacher.

You can do this in writing by sending the teacher an email, or in person by making an appointment through the office. Most concerns can be resolved after a discussion with the class teacher.

### What information should I include in my complaint?

For the best chance of reaching a positive outcome, you should be very clear about your concern and what you want to happen. Consider providing the following information:

- What happened? When and where did it happen?
- Who was involved?
- Why do you find this concerning?
- What should happen now, to make this better?

### What if my complaint is not about the classroom, or not resolved by the class teacher?

If your complaint is not about something in the classroom, or you have spoken with the class teacher and feel they did not address your concerns, you can escalate your concerns to the year level Deputy Principal. If you are not satisfied with the outcome, you can then escalate your concerns to the principal. You can also do this in writing, or by making an appointment through the office.

Please understand that school staff, including teachers and the Principal, may have other responsibilities and commitments, such as a class to teach or prepare for, and may not be able to meet with you or answer your email straight away. As a general guide, complaints requiring some investigation or review may take longer to resolve. Refer to the [Customer Complaints Management Framework](#) for response times.

### What can I do if my concern remains unresolved?

If you have discussed your concern with the class teacher (where appropriate) and school administration, and feel that it has not been resolved, you can contact the North Coast Regional Office on telephone 3203 9000 (option 2) or by email at [northcoastregion@qed.qld.gov.au](mailto:northcoastregion@qed.qld.gov.au), and request that the school's actions be internally reviewed.

An internal review is a formal process conducted by appropriately trained departmental staff which seeks to establish whether the complaint management process in response to your original complaint to the school was appropriate and/or the outcome reached was reasonable. It is not a re-investigation of the original complaint.

When you lodge your request for internal review, include information about what has happened, who at the school you have spoken with, and what outcome you would like. You may like to complete a [request for internal review form](#) and email it to [northcoastregion@qed.qld.gov.au](mailto:northcoastregion@qed.qld.gov.au).



If your request for internal review is accepted, the Principal of that school will often be advised of the internal review. This is to allow them a right of reply to your concerns. You can make an anonymous complaint; however, please understand that if you do not identify the school, it may limit how your complaint can be assessed and resolved. If no parent or carer contact information is provided, the regional office cannot reply back to you. The information you provide to regional office will only be used for the purpose of responding to your complaint.

### **How does regional office look into my complaint?**

Regional office staff will review the information you have provided; access relevant school records (for example, your child's OneSchool contact and behaviour history); seek a statement from the school's Principal in response to your concerns; and compare the actions of the school against Departmental policies and procedures, and legislation. You may also be contacted, if further information or clarification is required.

Please note there are some decisions Principals can make that regional office does not have the authority to change, such as decisions about suspensions of 10 days or less, or the enrolment of a student who lives outside the school's catchment area. If your complaint is about one of these matters, regional office will look into the process the school used to make the decision.

Once all relevant information is reviewed, a response addressing your concerns will be provided to you. Depending on the findings, this response may include some information to help explain why a particular action has been taken, and it may include some recommendations for the school to consider.

### **What review options are available?**

If you feel the response from regional office is not appropriate and/or does not address your concern, you may wish to contact a review authority, such as the Queensland Ombudsman, and request an independent, external review. More information about external review options is available at [www.ombudsman.qld.gov.au](http://www.ombudsman.qld.gov.au).

### **Is there anything else I need to know?**

- It is important that the school has an opportunity to address your concerns. If you contact regional office before sharing your concern with the school, your complaint will be redirected to the school for direct response to you.
- Neither the school nor regional office can share information about other parents or students with you, including information about consequences that may have been given to other students.
- Social media can be an excellent platform for positive communication and general feedback. However, it is not a suitable option to resolve complaints. Raising matters of concern on social media will not cause your concerns to be dealt with or responded to, and such posts may cause harm to the reputation and personal wellbeing of those involved.
- Your complaint provides important feedback to the department so it is expected that you will:
  - present a clear idea of the problem and your desired solution;
  - provide all relevant information when making a complaint and inform the department of any changes impacting on your complaint;
  - understand that if a complaint is complex, it can take time to assess, look into and respond; and
  - be respectful and reasonable in your conduct throughout the complaints process.
- Your desired solution helps to guide the process, but complaints may be resolved in a variety of ways. For example, you may be provided with an explanation and reasons for certain actions; a compromise solution may be reached; or an apology may be issued if warranted.
- Further information can be found on the Department of Education's [Compliments, suggestions and customer complaints](#) webpage.

