Help with a concern or complaint

All department staff—teachers, principals, preschool directors, regional and central office staff—will help you to agree on a plan of action and a time frame.

These people will help:
- explain and guide you through the resolution process
- Gather information about policies and procedures and explain them to you
- Clarify the problem and help you make your complaint
- Follow up on the progress or outcome of your complaint.

We all want the best outcome for you and your child.

You can also call the Parent Complaint Unit Hotline at any stage on 1800 677 435 for information, advice and support.

Other options

Your complaint may require an independent review by an external agency. This will be determined by the circumstances of the complaint.

You also have the right to refer any educational and care concern to an external agency, such as the South Australian Ombudsman.

South Australian Ombudsman

You can make a complaint to the SA Ombudsman about an action or inaction by an agency within the Ombudsman’s jurisdiction.

Further information available at:

Any written or verbal complaints that contain personal abuse, inflammatory statements, and comments of a threatening nature or intended to intimidate will not be addressed and the parent will be advised accordingly.
Step 1: Talk to the school
If your concern or complaint relates to an issue concerning your child’s teacher, you should talk to the teacher as soon as possible. Contact the school and organise a mutually convenient time to meet or have a telephone conversation. During this conversation, clarify the issue and agree on what needs to be achieved.

If the matter is not resolved, is school wide, or you wish to have a person act as a mediator, you may want to meet and raise the issue with the principal.

DECD is committed to a complaints procedure that ensures anyone with parental responsibilities for a child can raise a concern or complaint, with confidence that it will be heard and responded to within an appropriate and timely fashion.

Hint:
It may be helpful to write down the answers to these questions for reference when discussing a concern or complaint:
- What happened, or what is the problem?
- When did it happen?
- Who was involved?
- Where did it happen?
- Why did it happen?
- Did anyone see it?
- How does it affect my child?
- Who can help solve the problem?
- What is an acceptable solution?

Interpreters and Aboriginal Education Coordinators are available to assist parents in communicating with their school. Please contact your school or regional office for assistance.

Step 2: Contact your local DECD regional office
If you don’t feel the issue has been addressed by the school, contact the regional director at your local DECD regional office. The phone number can be found on the front page of this brochure or obtained from your school.

Regional office staff will:
- refer, if appropriate, any complaint that has not been raised at the school level to the school
- determine the appropriate person to handle the complaint
- acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing
- make an assessment of the complaint and if required, a negotiated /mediated solution or undertake a formal review following DECD guidelines
- if no solution or agreement can be made a decision in relation to the complaint will be made according to the weight of the evidence and on the balance of probabilities.

Step 3: Contact the Parent Complaint Unit
If your complaint remains unresolved after working together with the school and regional director, you should submit, in writing, your complaint to:

Manager, Parent Complaint Unit
Level 6
31 Flinders Street
ADELAIDE SA 5000

Add email DECDparentcomplaint@sa.gov.au

You should include information about the complaint including why it remains unresolved and an outline of what actions could be feasibly taken to resolve the complaint.

The Parent Complaint Unit, on behalf of the Chief Executive, will:
- acknowledge receipt of the complaint
- assess and make a recommendation to the Head of Schools that:
  - a review is not warranted and that the complainant is to be advised that no further action is considered necessary; or
  - a review is necessary; or
  - the complaint should be referred to an external agency for investigation or review.

The Head of Schools will review the advice and decide that the complaint (in full or in part):
- can be resolved (all parties agree on an appropriate response)
- should be dismissed (complaint is either unsubstantiated, vexatious, outside of reasonable expectations in relation to confidentiality, cooperation, courtesy and respect or is orientated towards conflict)
- remains unresolved and that an independent review by an external agency is required.

All the parties involved in a DECD complaint management process can bring a support person to any of the meetings held to resolve your complaint.