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 timeframe.

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.

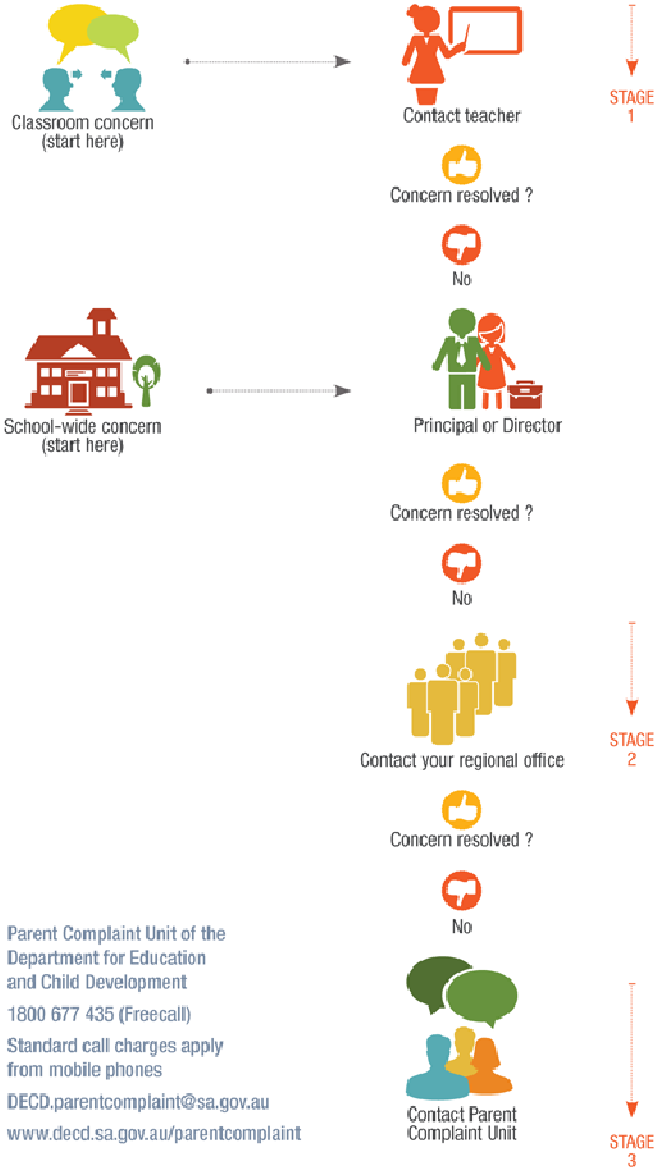
You also have the right to refer any educational and care concern to an external agency, such as the South Australian Ombudsman.

The South Australian Ombudsman

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

Further information is available at www.ombudsman.sa.gov.au.

How to get help with a concern or complaint



Parent Complaint Unit of the Department for Education and Child Development

1800 677 435 (Freecall)

Standard call charges apply from mobile phones

DECD.parentcomplaint@sa.gov.au

www.decd.sa.gov.au/parentcomplaint

Parent guide to raising a concern or complaint

Solving concerns in public education schools and preschools

Gawler East Primary School

tel 8522 2688

email dl.1008.info@schools.sa.edu.au

contact Alec Tibbitts

Gawler Education Office

tel 8522 0900

Government of South Australia

Department for Education and Child Development

Education and quality care are vital for your child's success

We are committed to delivering high quality education and care. Working with you to resolve any concerns or complaints is a key part of how we will deliver on this commitment.

But we recognise that sometimes things go wrong and you may feel that your expectations for your child are not being met. If you have an unresolved issue or a complaint, then you are encouraged to raise it. It is important to work together, talk, listen and find solutions so that we can improve your child's experience and learning, and improve our services to the community.

While this guide aims to help you raise concerns, keep in mind that we also welcome your positive feedback and compliments, which can sometimes be overlooked in our busy lives.

Use this guide to help you think about what you are concerned about and how to resolve the matter respectfully and effectively.

About concerns or complaints

A complaint may be made by a parent if they think that the school has, for example:

- done something wrong
- failed to do something it should have done
- acted unfairly or impolitely.

Your concern or complaint may be about:

- the type, level or quality of services
- the behaviour and decisions of staff
- a policy, procedure or practice.

Sometimes a complaint is about something we have to do because of state or federal law. In such cases we are able to talk to you about the matter and help you understand the requirements and why they exist.

What to do if you have a complaint

So that we can all work together to get the best outcome for your child, there are some simple steps to keep in mind if you have a complaint about public education and care.

Keep in mind that you are welcome to contact the Department for Education and Child Development's Parent Complaint Unit hotline on 1800 677 435 at any time for discussion or advice.

Stage 1 – Talk to the school

The school or preschool should always be your first point of contact. Find an appropriate time to talk to your child's class teacher or other relevant staff member (counsellor, year level coordinator) to discuss your concern or complaint. The school front office may be able to arrange a time for you to meet with the teacher or have a discussion over the phone.

If your concern is about a teacher then you may prefer to talk to the principal or director. If your complaint involves the principal or director then contact your local regional office of the Department for Education and Child Development.

The teacher will look into your concerns and get back to you. However, if you are still not satisfied, you may choose to follow up your complaint with the principal or director. They will work with you and the staff member to resolve the issue. To do this, you may choose to write to the principal or director (who will then acknowledge receipt of your complaint with a written response as soon as possible), or telephone the school to make a time to meet with the principal or director.

The school or preschool will aim to resolve your concern or complaint ideally within 15 working days.

Stage 2 – Contact your regional office

If you are not satisfied that your complaint has been resolved by the school – or if the principal is the subject of your complaint – you may choose to contact your regional office for help. The regional office will review your complaint.

The regional office will aim to resolve your concern or complaint within 20 working days.

Stage 3 – Parent Complaint Unit

This unit has a dual function:

- To provide advice and support to parents about their concern or complaint
- To objectively review complaints that have not been resolved at the school or regional level.

Advice and support

You can contact the unit's hotline (1800 677 435) at any time to discuss your concern or complaint or to seek advice about solving school problems. Staff will follow up with you at a later stage to check about progress.

Impartial review

If the complaint has not been able to be resolved by the school and regional office, the unit will assess your complaint and decide what action is needed. Staff will discuss what has been done with your complaint, and when you can expect to hear about the outcome.

The department's Head of Schools or the Head of Early Childhood Development and the Chief Executive's office will be advised by the Parent Complaint Unit of the outcome of the review. One of these senior leaders will make a decision about your complaint.

You can expect that you will hear of a decision within 35 working days in most cases.