



COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT

PURPOSE

Merrimac State High School appreciates and acknowledges that parents, carers, students and community members have a right to make a complaint. This document outlines how Merrimac State High School will manage these complaints.

We are committed to ensuring that all complaints are dealt with in a fair and equitable manner. There are processes and support structures in place to enable parents/carers and students to work through any issues they may have with services from the school. Our aim with all complaints is to find a resolution. Therefore, when making a complaint - and in the best interest of complaint resolution the complainant should provide complete and factual information in a timely manner; deliver the complaint in a non-threatening and non-abusive manner and not make frivolous or vexatious complaints or include deliberately false or misleading information.

WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?

When a complaint is made about a staff member, in most instances the staff member will be told of the complaint and offered the right of reply.

In our school, the person making a complaint will usually be a parent, carer, student or other school community member, but could also be anyone else directly impacted by something at our school.

Some complaints must be managed using different processes. These include:

- issues about harm, or risk of harm, to a student attending a state school, which must be managed in accordance with the [Student protection procedure](#); and
- complaints about corrupt conduct, public interest disclosures, or certain decisions made under legislation – refer to the [Excluded complaints factsheet](#) for more information.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

We treat everyone with respect, courtesy and fairness, and aim to act compatibly with human rights. Our responsibilities include:

- following the complaints management [framework](#), [policy](#) and [procedure](#) when managing complaints;
- resolving complaints promptly; and
- providing information about our processes, timeframes and any available review options.

If someone makes a complaint, they also have responsibilities, including:

- cooperating respectfully and understanding that unreasonable conduct will not be tolerated;
- giving us a clear idea of the issue or concern and a possible solution;
- providing all relevant information when making the complaint;
- understanding that addressing a complaint can take time; and
- letting us know if something changes, including if help is no longer needed.



COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT PROCESS

At Merrimac State High School, our complaints management process involves the following steps:

RECEIPT

The complaint should be made where the problem or issue arose. At our school, we ask parents, carers, students or community members who would like to make a complaint to

1. DISCUSS THE COMPLAINT WITH THE CLASS TEACHER/HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

When a complaint relates to an issue concerning a school experience, an appointment should be made with the relevant teacher as soon as possible through the school administration. The complainant may invite a support person to participate in the process.

After discussion of the problem, both parent/carer and teacher should take steps to resolve the problem at this level. The teacher will make an electronic record of the complaint and outcome.

2. DISCUSS THE COMPLAINT WITH THE DEPUTY PRINCIPAL

Where the teacher/Head of Department has been approached as above, but the issue remains unresolved, the Deputy Principal may be asked to participate in further discussion in an attempt to resolve the problem.

When a complaint is related to the school more generally, involving issues of school policy or its compliance or non-compliance, the complaint should be raised directly with the Deputy Principal or his/her delegate. For example, the principal may refer a complaint to a deputy principal or business services manager. The staff member will make an electronic record of complaints and work to resolve issues.

Complaints to the Deputy Principal may be lodged in person, by telephone, writing or via electronic format through office@merrimacshs.eq.edu.au

3. DISCUSS YOUR COMPLAINT WITH THE PRINCIPAL

The Principal will deal with complaints involving the Deputy Principal, matters so severe as to warrant the Principal's immediate attention, or when previous issues remain unresolved.

Complaints to the Principal may be lodged in person, by making an appointment, by telephone, writing or an email to the.principal@merrimacshs.eq.edu.au. You may expect a response within 48 hours.

We accept anonymous complaints, however it is important to understand that this could limit how a complaint is assessed and resolved, and it may also prevent an outcome being provided.

ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT

We will examine the issue(s) raised and try to resolve the complaint. We aim to do this promptly, but understand that we have many other responsibilities and it may not be possible to make contact or resolve a complaint immediately.

PROVIDING AN OUTCOME

Once we finish examining the complaint, we will let the person who has made the complaint know the outcome and any available review options.



REVIEW OPTIONS

If the person who has made the complaint is dissatisfied with the outcome or the way we handled their complaint, they can contact the [regional office](#) to ask for an internal review. A [Request for internal review form](#) should be completed and the request should be submitted within 28 days.

There is also an external review option (for example, the Queensland Ombudsman or Queensland Human Rights Commission), which becomes available once the department's complaints process has been exhausted.

MORE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

The following resources contain additional information:

- Customer complaints management [framework](#), [policy](#) and [procedure](#)
- [Compliments, suggestions and customer complaints website](#)
- [Making a customer complaint: Information for parents and carers.](#)

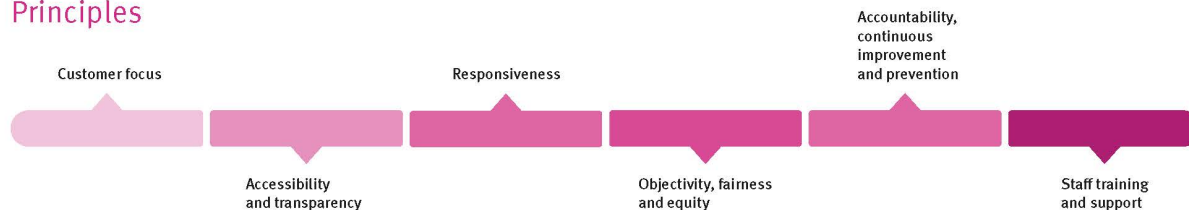
ENDORSEMENT

Effective date: Current

Review date: Annually

Customer complaints management framework

Principles



✔ What is a customer complaint?

An expression of dissatisfaction about the service or action of the department, or its staff, by a person who is directly affected by the service or action, and includes complaints related to:

- a decision made, or a failure to make a decision, by a public service employee of the department
- an act, or failure to act, by the department
- the formulation of a proposal or intention by the department
- the making of a recommendation by the department
- the customer service provided by a public service employee of the department.

Source: section 219A Public Service Act 2008

✘ What is not a customer complaint?

Our customers contact us for many reasons and most of the time our customers do not have a complaint. It is not a complaint when our customers:

- request more information
- request a change in services or request a new service
- make a suggestion for improving our services
- express a concern about a situation
- provide feedback on the department's performance
- are not directly affected by the decision or action of the department
- provide information (e.g. reporting an incident).

💬 Accessibility

Customer complaints can be made by:

- telephone
- email
- in person
- Smart Service Queensland
- QGov website
- departmental social media
- letter.

When making a customer complaint, complainants:

- can be supported by a friend, an advocate, an interpreter or a community elder
- can request other reasonable assistance, such as translation services or text telephone services
- will be provided information about how to make a customer complaint and how complaints will be managed, including any review options available
- can remain anonymous, although this may limit how we can address your complaint.

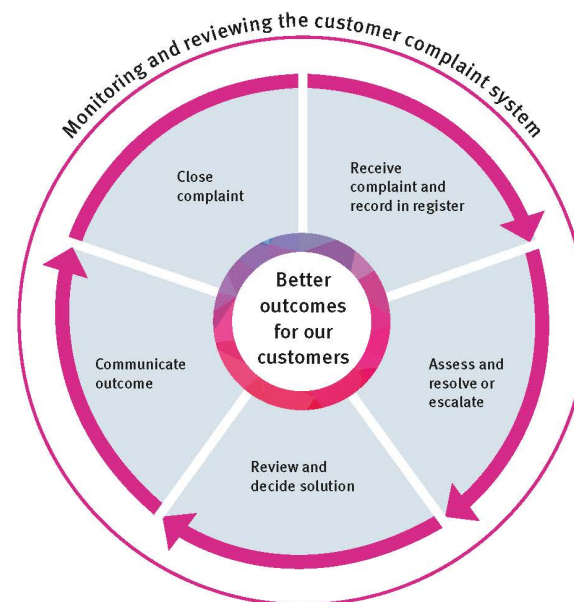
🕒 Complaint type and response times

The time it takes to resolve a customer complaint depends on a number of factors, including when the complaint was made and the complexity of the complaint. As a guide:

- simple customer complaints may take up to 20 working days*
- customer complaints requiring some inquiry may take up to 45 working days
- customer complaints that require investigation and referral may take up to 90 working days or longer in some cases
- complaints involving human rights issues will take up to 45 business days
- an internal review should take 45 working days, subject to complexity.

* For school-related complaints, working days refers to school days during the school term.

Our approach



The Department of Education welcomes feedback from its customers.



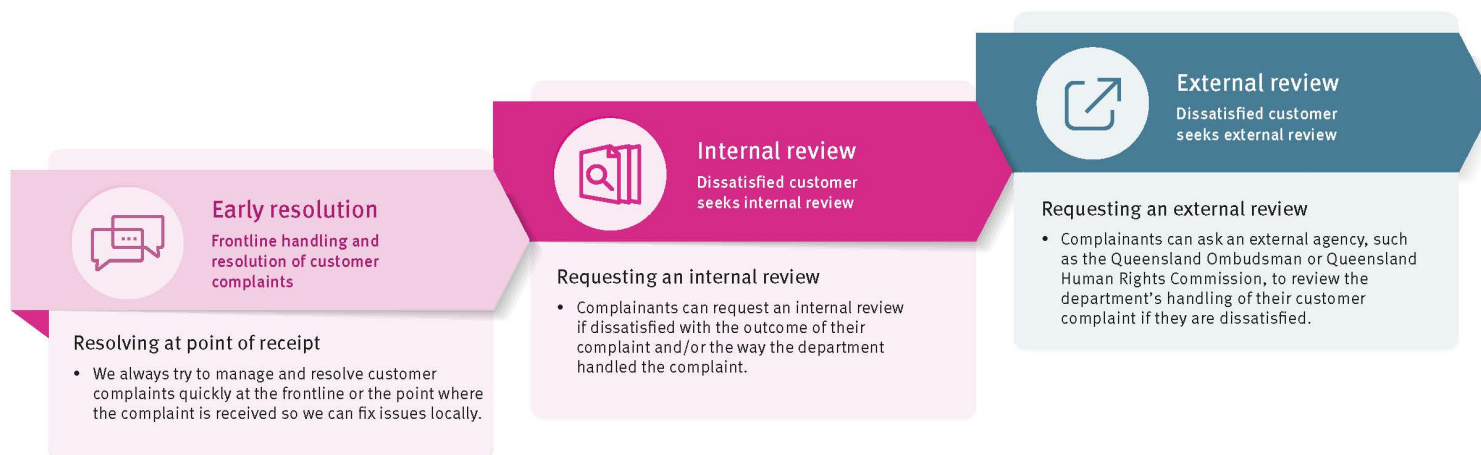
We use customer complaints data to inform improvements and to meet our complaints reporting obligations under the Public Service Act 2008 and Human Rights Act 2019.

Customer complaints management framework

How we handle customer complaints

We try to resolve customer complaints as quickly as possible at the point where the complaint is received or after it is re-directed to the appropriate business area. If a complainant is dissatisfied, they may be able to ask for a review.

Our approach to handling complaints is based on the Australian/New Zealand Standard on complaints management (AS/NZS 10002:2014).



Complaint categories

The department uses set categories to record customer complaints at the organisational level. This helps us analyse customer complaints to identify trends and issues to improve our services. The categories are:

- Health and safety
- Services
- Staff and volunteers
- Policy and procedure
- Third parties
- Assets, infrastructure and information technology
- Procurement, fees and charges
- Privacy
- Other



Excluded complaints

Some complaints are outside the scope of this framework and will be managed through different processes:

- complaints under the *Education and Care Services Act 2013* and the Education and Care Services National Law
- complaints about certain decisions made under legislation
- complaints about decisions made under a contract
- employee complaints about their employment (*Public Service Act 2008* and Public Service Commission Directives)
- complaints involving corrupt conduct (*Crime and Corruption Act 2001*)
- public interest disclosures (*Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010*)



Complainant responsibilities

Customers making a complaint are responsible for:

- cooperating respectfully and understanding that unreasonable conduct will not be tolerated, including abusive, aggressive or disrespectful behaviour
- providing a clear idea of the problem and the desired solution
- providing all relevant information when the complaint is made
- understanding that some decisions cannot be overturned or changed under the framework approach
- informing the department of changes affecting the complaint including if help is no longer required.



Resources

- Customer complaints management policy and procedure
- Internal review procedure
- Information sheets
- Complaints and customer complaints website
- Excluded complaints factsheet
- Information for parents and carers factsheet