



<b>Policy Name: Policy for Dealing with Complaints about Schools</b>	
<b>Policy Code:</b>	<b>DES</b>
<b>Approved in:</b>	<b>April 2014</b>
<b>Next review in:</b>	<b>April 2018</b>
<p><b>Cross References:</b> This policy should be cross-referenced with the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Handbook for Evaluation of Educational Provision</li> <li>• Cayman Islands Special Educational Needs Code of Practice</li> </ul> <p><b>Guidance documents produced by the Ministry of Education, Employment and Gender Affairs are as follows:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guidance on Dealing with Complaints about Schools</li> </ul>	

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this National policy is to outline the expectations of the Ministry of Education, Employment and Gender Affairs (the Ministry) on how complaints about schools, staff related complaints from students, parents or the public should be dealt with by Government schools. The expectations in this policy reflect international best practice and are based on standards agreed by the Ministry.

## AIMS

Initial concerns, where possible should be dealt with effectively without the need for formal procedures. However, the aim of this policy and accompanying guidance is to provide a method for the resolution of formal complaints that should not undermine efforts to resolve concerns early on. An effective Complaints Procedure will:

- Encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible.
- Be easily accessible and well publicised.
- Be simple to understand and use.
- Be impartial.
- Establish time-limits for action, which keep people informed of progress.
- Ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary.
- Respect people's desire for confidentiality.
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary.
- Provide information to senior management teams to inform service improvement.

## POLICY STATEMENT

- The Ministry values good home/school relations and therefore expects schools to have in place procedures to deal with complaints relating to the school and to any community

facilities or services the school provides. This also means seeking to resolve any concerns or complaints promptly to the satisfaction of all concerned.

- Feedback from parents about what schools do well or not so well is welcomed. Feedback will be carefully considered to inform improvements in policy and practice accordingly.
- The Ministry expects schools to treat all concerns and complaints seriously and to publicise for parents and others about the school's procedures for dealing with complaints. In return, we expect parents and other complainants to behave respectfully towards all members of the school community. In particular, any disagreement with the school should not be expressed inappropriately or in front of students.

## **SCHOOL POLICIES ON DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS**

### **The School Policy on dealing with complaints must:**

- Be based on the National Policy and the Ministry's supporting guidance documents.
- Be developed collaboratively in partnership with key stakeholders.
- Take into account the indicators of good practice within the *Handbook for the Evaluation of Educational Provision*.
- Be approved by The Department of Education Services (DES) before implementation.

### **The School Policy on dealing with complaints must reflect the Ministry's supporting guidance documents and include:**

- Staged procedures for dealing with complaints.
- Protocols for reporting complaints.
- Accessible information to parents on the complaints procedures.
- Information about time frames and expectations when dealing with complaints.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **The Ministry of Education will:**

- Provide National policy expectations and supporting guidance documents.
- Provide a framework as the basis for individual school policies on dealing with complaints.
- Provide expert advice to the DES to support policy implementation by:
  - Devising targeted training for DES and school staff in relation to dealing with complaints.
  - Providing the framework for schools to audit complaints and to use the data to inform associated improvement plans.

### **The Education Standards and Assessment Unit will:**

- In the course of inspections or as required, evaluate the effectiveness of complaint procedures, using the criteria set out in the *Handbook for the Evaluation of Educational Provision* and make recommendations for improvement.
- Provide accurate and timely information to the Ministry on the effectiveness and quality of complaints procedures, when required, in order to inform policy decisions.

**The Department of Education Services (DES) will:**

- Ensure that school policies are developed, implemented and maintained.
- Establish monitoring procedures to ensure school policies are compliant with National policy expectations.
- Monitor the performance of schools in relation to complaints and work with school leadership teams to evaluate data to identify the priorities for improvement.
- Work collaboratively with other agencies and stakeholders to develop and maintain systems for supporting and maintaining good relationships with all members of the school community.

**School leaders will:**

- Develop and implement individual school policies for dealing with complaints.
- Publish the school policy for dealing with complaints to parents, staff, students and the community.
- Ensure the effective implementation of individual school policies for dealing with complaints.
- Monitor and review complaint procedures in their schools.
- Facilitate ongoing professional development about dealing with complaints.
- Be accountable to the DES for standards in responding to complaints.

**School staff will:**

- Effectively implement and follow the school's policy on dealing with complaints.
- Use the Ministry's supporting guidance on dealing with complaints to ensure complaints are dealt with effectively and consistently.



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## **School Guidance for Dealing with Complaints**

**(APRIL 2016)**

## **Overview**

- 1 Parental complaint procedures are currently outlined within the 'Education Department Handbook, Chapter 4: Section N: 4.47.
- 2 Whilst the majority of schools already have a complaints policy in place, the Ministry of Education Employment and Gender Affairs (The Ministry of Education), together with the Department of Education Services (DES) wish to strengthen procedures in an attempt to bring consistency in the way that complaints or parental concerns are dealt with. This document is intended to help schools prepare a complaints procedure if they have not already done so, or to review their existing procedure.
- 3 A model school based policy statement for parents is outlined in Annex A.

## **Part 1: General Principles for dealing with Complaints**

### **Dealing with Complaints – Informal Stage:**

- 1 Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints.
- 2 Concerns ought to be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. In most cases the class teacher or the individual dealing with the initial concern should be able to resolve the issue. Staff should be aware that all concerns and or complaints must be brought to the attention of the Principal for his/her knowledge and input.

### **Dealing with Complaints – Formal Procedures:**

3. The formal procedures will need to be followed when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.
4. The Principal is responsible for the operation and management of the school complaints procedure. The Principal must know and be aware of all concerns or complaints that are made against the school and or any member of staff.

### **Investigating Complaints:**

5. It is suggested that the person investigating the complaint at each stage:
  - Establishes what has happened so far, and who has been involved.
  - Explores the nature of the complaint, what remains unresolved and what would resolve the situation.
  - Meets with the complainant or contacts him/her.
  - Interviews those involved in the matter.
  - Keeps notes of the interview.

### **Resolving Complaints:**

6. At each stage in the process it is important to look for ways in which the complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:
  - An apology.
  - An explanation.
  - An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better.
  - An assurance that the event complained of will not recur.
  - An explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again.
  - An undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.

### **Time-Limits:**

7. Complaints need to be considered and resolved as quickly and efficiently as possible
8. An effective complaints procedure will have realistic time limits for each action within each stage.

## **Part 2: The Formal Complaints Procedure**

### **The Stages of Complaints**

An efficient complaints procedure will have well-defined stages. This policy embraces the following five (5) stages in the complaints process:

- Stage 1 (Informal), complaint heard by a member of staff.
- Stage 2 (formal), complaint heard by Principal
- Stage 3 (formal), complaint heard by Senior School Improvement Officer (SSIO)
- Stage 4 (formal), complaint heard by Senior Customer Services Manager (SCSM)
- Stage 5 (formal), complaint process reviewed by the MEEGA

### **Managing and Recording Complaints:**

9. All staff dealing with complaints are required to record the progress of the complaint and the final outcome. A complaint may be made in person, by telephone, or in writing. An example of a complaint form can be found in Annex B.
10. Ensure that the complainant and the school have the same understanding of what was discussed and agreed. A brief note of meetings and telephone calls can be kept and a copy of any written response added to the record.

# **ANNEX A: Model School Complaints Policy**

**(INSERT OWN SCHOOL LOGO)**  
**[NAME of School] Complaints Policy**

At **[Name of School]**

- 1 We value good home/school relations and will, do everything we can to establish and maintain them.
- 2 We will treat all complaints seriously and expect parents and other complainants to behave respectfully towards all members of the school community
- 3 We agree with and support the Department of Education Services' (DES) belief that parental concerns and complaints should be dealt with at school level wherever possible.

## **Complaints procedure**

### **Stage 1 –Initial contact with the school**

1. The first point of contact for any complaint should be your child's class/home room tutor and once your complaint is made known to us, we will contact you as soon as possible.
2. Any actions that have been agreed will be communicated to you within five (5) working days, except in cases where there are extenuating circumstances
3. If you are still not satisfied with the outcome at stage one, you may decide to follow Stage 2 procedures.

**Written complaints at Stages 2 and 3,** - These stages in our procedures deal with formal written complaints. A complaint form is available from the school's front office or can be accessed on line at [www.education.gov.ky](http://www.education.gov.ky).

### **Stage 2 – Investigation by the School Principal**

- 1 Your written complaint should be addressed to the Principal.
- 2 Once all of the relevant facts have been established, a written response will be sent to you within (5) working days, except in cases where there are extenuating circumstances. You will be invited to discuss the outcome.

### **Stage 3 – Investigation by the Senior School Improvement Officer**

1. If Stages 1 and 2 of the complaints procedure have been completed and you are still dissatisfied, you may request that the Senior School Improvement Officer undertakes a review of the complaint. In this case please complete the complaints form and leave at the school desk, addressing it for the attention of the Senior School Improvement Officer.

2. If your complaint concerns the Principal, please address the complaints form to the Senior School Improvement Officer, who will deal with the matter
3. Stage 3 of the complaints procedure may also be initiated if the Principal feels that the complaint warrants the involvement of the Senior School Improvement Officer.
4. Once all of the relevant facts have been established, a written response will be sent to you within (5) working days, except in cases where there are extenuating circumstances. You will be invited to discuss the outcome.
5. If you are still not satisfied you may decide to follow Stage 4 procedures.

#### **Stage 4 – Department of Education (DES investigation).**

1. First, contact the DES Senior Customer Services Manager (SCSM), who will arrange a meeting with you within five (5) working days, except in cases where there are extenuating circumstances
2. The SCSM will then consider the complaint and, after making appropriate investigations, will decide on the action to be taken.
3. The SCSM will send you and the Principal a letter outlining the decision. The letter will also explain that you may have the complaint reviewed at Stage 5 by the Ministry of Education.

#### **Stage 5 - Review by the Ministry of Education**

1. If Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the complaints procedure have been completed and you are still dissatisfied, you may request that the Chief Education Officer initiates a Ministry of Education review. You will then be instructed to submit a written request to the Ministry of Education, giving full details of your complaint including correspondence between yourself, the school and DES.
2. The purpose of the Ministry of Education review is to establish whether the DES and the SCSM have ensured that reasonable procedures have been followed and that the complainant has been treated fairly.
3. The Ministry of Education investigating officer will carry out a review of the case and contact you within five (5) working days, except in cases where there are extenuating circumstances.
4. **If you address your complaint to the Ministry of Education without first having completed Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4, you will be referred back to the school or DES.**



## Useful Contacts

Insert School Name	School Address	School Telephone and email
Name of school principal	School Address	Principal's number and email
Name of SSIO	SSIO Address	SSIO's number and email
DES Customer Services Manager – Mr James Watler	DES, 130, Thomas Russell Way, Box 910, Grand Cayman. KY1-1103,	Tel -916 -3779, or 945-1199 <a href="mailto:James.watler@gov.ky">James.watler@gov.ky</a>
<b>The Chief Officer</b> - Ministry of Education, Employment and Gender Affairs	Government Administration Building, Box 108, 113 Elgin Avenue, Grand Cayman. KY1-9000	Tel – 244-2417 <a href="mailto:education@gov.ky">education@gov.ky</a>



**DEPARTMENT OF  
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t. (345) 945-1199 f. (345) 945-1457  
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**[Name of School] Complaint Form**

**Please indicate below who you would like to consider the complaint:**

**For the Attention of the School Principal**

**For the Attention of the Senior School Improvement Officer.**

**Your name:**

**Student's name:**

**Your relationship to the Student:**

**Address:**

**PO Box:**

**Day time telephone number:**

**Evening telephone number:**

**E-Mail Contact:**

**Please give details of your complaint.**

**(What is the nature/ extent of the problem? How has this impacted you or other persons?)**

**What action, if any, have you already taken to resolve your complaint?  
(Who did you speak to, and what was the response?)**

**What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?**

**Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

**OFFICIAL USE ONLY**

**Acknowledgement sent by:**

**Date:**

**Complaint referred to:**

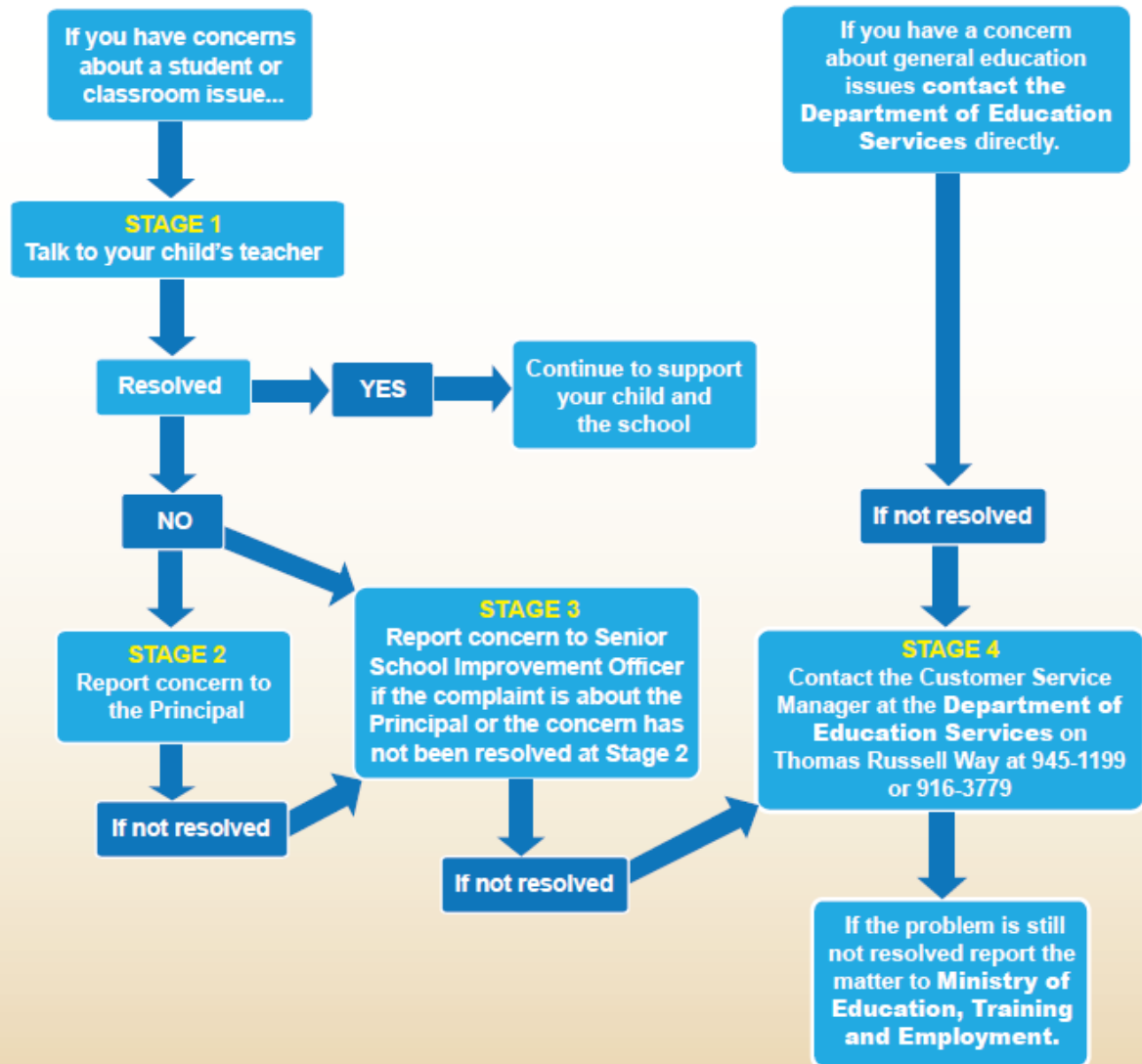
**Date:**

**Notes:**



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## What if I have a complaint about education-related matters in Cayman Islands Government schools?



# HELP US KEEP OUR SCHOOL SAFE

- We value you as partners in educating and caring for our children.
- We will listen to your concerns and do our best to address them.
- We encourage everyone to behave in a respectful manner.

If you have a complaint or concern, please ask the Receptionist for a Complaints Form. Please complete as soon as possible and return for the attention of the Principal (or the officer responsible for complaints in the Department of Education Services).

## WARNING

The Ministry of Education wishes to inform you that the following behaviour will not be tolerated, will lead to your removal from the school, and may be reported to the police for prosecution:

- Using threatening, abusive or obscene language
- Threatening violence or intimidating staff
- Assaulting a member of staff, students or any other person on school premises
- Threatening to or damaging school property
- Being under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Behaving in an indecent manner



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