



Communications and Complaints Procedure and Guidelines 2024 – 2026



Document History	Date	Reviewed by	Due for Review
Version 1.0	February 2024	WESS School Leadership Team and School Council	2027
Version 1.1	June 2025	Updated DOE Policy	2027

Contents

Principles of Communication	4
Purpose	4
Expectations of School Staff.....	4
Expectations of Parents/Carers	5
Communication Considerations	5
School Communication Modes.....	6
Complaints Management	8
Responsibilities	8
Recording of conversations	9
Concerns within the community.....	9
Procedure for raising a concern.....	9
Parent and Community Code of Conduct.....	10
Related Document and Resources:.....	10
Final things to note.....	10
Policy review.....	11
Appendix 1 - Formal Complaint Procedure	12

Principles of Communication

West End State School's "*Communications and Complaints Procedure and Guidelines*" serve to set clear expectations and effective strategies for communication and **customer complaints*** management, while also fostering respectful interactions. By following these guidelines, we aim to nurture open channels of communication between the school and home, promoting collaboration and ultimately improving learning and wellbeing outcomes for all members of our school community.

* A customer complaint is defined as *"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."*

Purpose

1. Establish comprehensive communication protocols and complaints procedures for parents¹ and community members engaging with the school.
2. Foster a harmonious relationship between the school, parents and the broader community through effective communication.
3. Set clear expectations for positive, accurate, meaningful, and respectful communication to uphold high standards for all staff, students, parents and members of the broader community.
4. Provide parents with a framework to engage with school staff and support student learning and wellbeing consistently.
5. Simplify educational terminology for parents to enhance understanding, enabling better discussions at home and more effective communication with staff.
6. Build a sense of community by nurturing caring, respectful, and inclusive interactions among staff, students, parents and the broader community.
7. Ensure open and honest communication processes are in place among all school community members.
8. Guarantee timely dissemination of information about school events, activities, and achievements to parents and the wider community, fostering increased engagement and participation.

Expectations of School Staff

- Staff will promptly contact a student's parent via phone or email to arrange an in-person meeting to address any concerns.
- Email correspondence about sensitive or contentious matters should be avoided, with face-to-face meetings preferred.
- While we are committed to responding to parent and carer emails in a timely manner, non-urgent matters may take a minimum of 2 or more business days, with allowances for part-time staff.
- Ensure clear and accessible language in communication, avoiding confusing educational terms and supporting understanding of learning terminology.
- Activate an "out of office" auto-reply message when on leave, detailing relevant information.

¹ The term 'parent' refers to parents, carers, guardians and people who exercise parental responsibility for a child.

- All official school emails should adhere to standardised formatting guidelines, including size, colour, font, and signature format.
- Maintain privacy by using the BCC function for group emails to parents.
- Offensive or abusive emails should be forwarded to the Deputy Principal or Principal without response from staff.
- Record relevant communication with parents in the OneSchool Record of Contacts.

Expectations of Parents

- Parents must ensure the school has their updated contact details, including phone numbers, emergency contacts and email addresses.
- To schedule a meeting with the classroom teacher, parents can send an email, call the school, or visit the office to arrange a suitable time.
- Refrain from discussing detailed academic progress, learning expectations, or behavioural concerns via email. Reserve emails for brief information, simple requests, or to arrange a meeting with the teacher.
- Avoid sending lengthy emails regarding sensitive or contentious matters. The school prefers face-to-face meetings for such discussions. If lodging a formal complaint, it's advisable to attach your concerns as a file.
- Direct all school-related inquiries and concerns to the school directly. Refrain from discussing matters on chat apps or directly contacting other students, parents, or other community members regarding school issues or concerns.
- Maintain appropriate behaviour and language in emails, mirroring the standards expected in face-to-face interactions at the school.

Communication Considerations

Confidentiality: Respect the privacy of students and staff. Do not share sensitive information without consent. Avoid discussing confidential matters in public forums or social media platforms.

Constructive Feedback: Provide feedback and suggestions in a constructive manner. Encourage open dialogue for continuous improvement.

Follow Official Channels: Use designated communication channels provided by the school for inquiries and feedback. Refrain from spreading rumours, misinformation or making assumptions.

Reporting Misuse: Report any misuse or inappropriate behaviour observed on social media platforms or online chats to the school Administration Office via email to admin@westendss.eq.edu.au.

Effective communication between the school, parents, and community members is essential for promoting a collaborative and supportive environment. By following these guidelines and utilising designated communication channels, we can ensure transparent and constructive dialogue for the benefit of all stakeholders, in particular your children.

Please also refer to the Department of Education Resource [Communicating with your child's school](#).

School Communication Modes

The following table outlines the range of formal communication modes used at West End State School:

Mode	Description
Office Locations and Operating Hours	The main WESS Administration Office (located in B Block) is open from 8:00am to 3.30pm Monday to Friday during school terms. WESS Student Services (located in N block) is open from 8:00am to 3.00pm Monday to Friday during school terms.
Telephone	For urgent matters, student absences, enrolment inquiries, changes to contact details, or to arrange a time to meet with the teachers or members of the leadership team, please contact the office via telephone (07) 3010 8222. Office Hours are Monday to Friday from 8:00am to 3.30pm
QParents	QParents is a secure, online portal created by the Department of Education to provide parents of Queensland State School students with 24-hour access to their child/ren's information. The QParents portal is located online: https://qparents.qld.edu.au QParents is a major communication tool for WESS and will allow parents to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Notify the school of an absence (edit historic attendance/absence details). 2. View and print Academic report cards (for current year and all past years). 3. View fees and make payments (view unpaid invoices and payment history). 4. View and update personal student details. 5. View upcoming events and activities. 6. Provide consent and permissions.
Whole School Newsletter	Our school newsletter is distributed electronically in Week 3 and Week 7 each term. School, P&C and community information is included in each newsletter. Separate emails include date claimers and reminders of upcoming events.
Website	The West End State School website contains information about the school including important policy documentation, relevant contact details, and links to other resources and documents. A WESS School Calendar can also be found on the website that highlights the most current upcoming events.
Facebook Page	West End State School (WESS) Facebook page is used to provide updates on events and activities for the school. The WESS Facebook Page is a public page. Please adhere to the Queensland Department of Education Acceptable Use Guidelines and the Social Media Guidelines. Follow and engage with the official school social media accounts for accurate information. We kindly remind all community members to <u>only share appropriate content</u> and to <u>keep discussions focussed on school-related matters</u> . The Facebook page is an excellent place to check for any last-minute updates and reminders. Please note that the WESS Facebook page is also able to be viewed and accessed via the school website (homepage).
Student Absence Text Message	WESS utilises an automated text message service to notify parents of unexplained student absences. These messages are usually sent by 10.00am in the event that a student is not in attendance and the school has not been notified of this absence. Generally, the text message is sent to one parent per child, unless other arrangements have been made.
Email	All families are requested to provide their email details on enrolment and continue to provide administration with a current email address. At WESS, our teachers and school leadership team members are dedicated to providing timely communication and support to our students and their families. During school terms, teachers are available to respond to emails between 8:00 AM and 8:25 AM, Monday through Friday. However, outside of this timeframe, teachers are actively engaged in teaching, attending meetings, and preparing for classes, which limits their ability to immediately respond to emails. In instances where emailing is necessary, please understand that due to the volume of messages, staff may require a few days to provide a thorough and thoughtful response. While we are committed to responding to parent emails in a timely manner, non-urgent matters may take a minimum of 2 or more business days. The administration office email address is admin@westendss.eq.edu.au For anything urgent to do with a student, the best communication method is via a phone call to the WESS Administration Office on (07) 3010 8222.

Mode	Description
eFlashes	Used for urgent, emergent notifications.
Electronic Sign	WESS has a digital sign on the corner of Vulture St and Hardgrave Road. This sign is managed by Administration Officers to provide updates and reminders for school events and activities.
Parent Handbook	The WESS Parent Handbook provides an overview of school policies, procedures and operational matters for your information. This is available on the WESS website and updated annually.
Year Level Newsletters	<p>Year Level Newsletters are distributed electronically fortnightly by the year level teachers via email. Year Level Newsletters may include the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of the curriculum content being taught and assessed for the current term. • Excursions, incursions and events' information. • Timetable information such as swimming days, library borrowing • Opportunities to participate / volunteer in classroom activities.
School Sector Assemblies	Sector Assemblies are held on Friday mornings in the School Performing Arts Centre (PAC), according to the school calendar.
Principal Assemblies	Principal Assemblies are usually held on Friday mornings in Weeks 5 and 9 of each term in the School Hall, according to the school calendar. Awards are given to students in recognition and celebration of their achievements across a broad range of categories. Parents are encouraged to attend.
Parent Information Sessions	Parent Information Sessions (Meet the Teacher) usually occur in Week 3 Term 1 annually to outline the year ahead. Teachers and school leadership team members will discuss the processes, procedures, expectations and curriculum. They will also outline ways you can be involved in your child's education and support their learning and wellbeing.
Parent Teacher Interviews	Formal Parent Teacher Interviews are scheduled twice per year, usually in Weeks 9 and 10 of Terms 1 and 3. This is an opportunity to discuss student progress, concerns, goals and any other concerns. Bookings are made online, and the link is distributed in the weeks prior via email.
Semester Report Cards	Report Cards are issued via email twice per year in Week 10 of Terms 2 and 4. Report Cards are also accessible via QParents.
School Opinion Survey	School Opinion Surveys are undertaken by the Department of Education for all Qld State Schools annually. They are designed to obtain the views of parents, students and staff from each school on what they do well and how they can improve. The department of Education shares some items of the SOS in the School Annual Report in June each year.
P&C Association	<p>WESS P&C Association generally meets 6 times per year in the N Block staffroom, according to the P&C calendar. The P&C consists of parents, carers and community members who have created a warm and caring community within our school. They work closely with the Leadership Team and school staff to give our students the best education possible. The P&C manages the following operations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outside School Hours Care (OSHC), including Vacation Care • Uniform Shop • Tuckshop • Swim Club • Casual evening and weekend tennis court hire.
School Council	WESS School Council welcomes questions related to the school's strategic direction, as well as school plans or policies of a strategic nature.
Parent and Community Groups Online Chats <i>(Not authorised by the school or P&C)</i>	<p>Exercise caution when participating in community groups discussing school-related topics. Verify information is factual and accurate before sharing.</p> <p>Online chat etiquette for parents and community Members:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Be respectful in all interactions Avoid defamatory or discriminatory language by using appropriate language and tone Avoid aggressive or confrontational behaviour <p>This is not the platform to make complaints. Please refer to the <i>Complaints Management</i> and <i>Procedure for raising a concern</i> sections below.</p>

Complaints Management

During your child's enrolment at the school, you may have cause to raise a concern or make a complaint about an issue with their education. West End State School and the Department of Education are committed to ensuring that all concerns raised are dealt with in a fair, equitable and respectful manner. There are processes and support structures in place to enable families to work through any issues they may have.

Raising your concern in a timely manner with the school provides an opportunity to identify issues and take action to improve service delivery and customer experience, while also driving a culture of continuous improvement across the school.

When managing a customer complaint or concern, West End State School appreciates and acknowledges that you have a right to:

- Raise a concern or make a complaint
- Be treated with respect and courtesy
- Be treated equitably and fairly
- Be informed of the conduct that is expected of you.

Responsibilities

When raising a concern or making a complaint, it is in the best interest of complaint resolution to ensure that you:

Complainant

- Collaborate respectfully and refrain from engaging in unreasonable behaviour.
- Express concerns through various channels: in person, by phone, or in writing.
- Clearly outline the problem and specify the desired resolution.
- Include all pertinent facts and evidence when lodging a complaint.
- Recognise that complex complaints may require time to assess and resolve.
- Acknowledge that certain decisions are final and will not be reversed.
- Keep the school informed of any changes related to the concern or complaint, including if assistance is no longer needed.
- Avoid making unreasonable demands on the school's time, resources, or staff.
- Refrain from lodging frivolous, vexatious or misleading complaints.

All staff involved in managing customer complaints

- Ensure acknowledgment of customer complaints, either in writing or verbally within 3 days.
- Assess whether a complaint is frivolous or vexatious.
- Take into account human rights considerations when addressing complaints.
- Resolve complaints in a timely manner (no more than thirty (30) days).
- Maintain comprehensive records to document each stage of the complaints management process.
- Uphold procedural fairness for both complainants and individuals mentioned in the complaint.
- Maintain an updated register of customer complaints and integrate complaints management into planning and risk management efforts.

Additional responsibilities for principals or deputy principals

- Ensuring that information regarding the process for raising concerns or filing complaints, as well as the procedures for managing complaints, is readily accessible on the school website.
- Seeking guidance from the Regional Office as needed.

West End State School values the confidentiality of personal information shared during the complaints process.

However, it's important to note that when lodging a complaint against a staff member, they will typically be informed of the complaint and given the opportunity to respond. You also have the right to have a support person involved throughout the process, as do staff members.

Recording of conversations

You are encouraged to take notes if you wish to document a meeting or contact. However, out of respect for everyone involved, if you intend to record audio, please declare this at the outset of the meeting or phone call. Please note that a staff member has the right to decline the recording of the meeting or contact.

Concerns within the community

West End State School is legally obligated to uphold the privacy of individual students and staff. While we understand the curiosity of other students, staff, and parents for additional information, we will only disclose or discuss such information with the relevant staff member or student's family.

If your complaint pertains to suspected official misconduct or criminal activity, please direct your complaint to the Crime and Corruption Commission at www.ccc.qld.gov.au or the Queensland Police Service at www.police.qld.gov.au. Alternatively, if your concern involves behaviour within the school community outside of school hours, please seek support from the following agencies as appropriate:

- Emergency services: 000
- Police Link: 131 444
- eSafety commissioner: <https://www.esafety.gov.au/>

Procedure for raising a concern

School staff are committed to working collaboratively with families to resolve concerns in a timely and respectful manner. The following procedure outlines the steps to support positive outcomes in the best interests of the child.

Step 1: Discussing your concern with the relevant teacher

- In most cases, the best starting point is a conversation with your child's classroom or specialist teacher. They are closest to your child's day-to-day learning and interactions and are often best positioned to address concerns such as, attendance, teaching and learning, behaviour and social issues or alleged bullying. To support this process:
 - Share any relevant information or observations with the teacher.
 - Allow the teacher time to investigate or gather further details if needed.
 - Work together to explore solutions or next steps.
 - If the concern cannot be resolved at this level, the teacher may refer the matter to a Deputy Principal for further investigation and support.
- Any serious concerns about a staff member should be made in writing to the Principal by email: principal@westendss.eq.edu.au.
- Any other minor concerns that are not classroom related should be made in writing to the school Administration Office by email: admin@westendss.eq.edu.au.
- **Email Response Times:** Any emails or complaints sent during school terms will be acknowledged within 3 business days. Any emails or complaints sent during school holidays will not be acknowledged until school resumes. (NB Staff will respond to emails from 7am to 5pm on school days.)

Step 2: Discuss your concern with the relevant Deputy Principal of the school

Where Step 1 does not result in a resolution, make contact with the relevant year level Deputy Principal to discuss the issue further. Alternatively, you and the teacher may agree to ask the Deputy Principal to assist with a resolution.

Step 3: Discuss your concern with the Principal

Where the Deputy Principal has been approached as above but the issue remains unresolved, make contact with the Principal to discuss the issue further.

Early Resolution

- If additional information is needed to confirm the raised concern or desired outcome, the relevant staff member will reach out to the complainant.

- The staff member will ensure that the complainant stays informed about any updates or emergent issues affecting the resolution of their concern or complaint.
- Procedural fairness will be ensured for both the person subject to the customer complaint and the complainant.
- Records of the raised concerns will be maintained on OneSchool, and a summary of the concern and its outcomes may be provided to the principal by staff.

Communicate the outcome

The complainant will receive:

- A clear, concise explanation of the ultimate decision.
- Any suggestions or recommendations.
- Details about available review options, including internal or external review processes, if applicable.

You can make an anonymous complaint, however, if you do not identify yourself, or if you advise that you do not wish to be contacted, it may limit how your complaint can be assessed and resolved. If no contact information is provided, the complaint will still be addressed but the school cannot reply back to you.

What are my responsibilities if I make a customer complaint?

You have a right to make a complaint, however, you also have responsibilities as a complainant to:

- be respectful and understand that unreasonable conduct will not be tolerated by school, regional or departmental staff as outlined in the [Managing unreasonable complainant conduct procedure](#)
- clearly outline what the problem is, what you are unhappy about and your desired outcome
- provide all relevant information when making a customer complaint and inform the department of any changes impacting on your complaint
- understand that if the complaint is complex, it can take time to assess, manage and resolve.

See also Appendix 1 - Formal Complaint Procedure.

Parent and Community Code of Conduct

West End State School highly regards the collaboration between the school and families to achieve optimum educational outcomes for every student. We appreciate the contributions of our school community and prioritise the welfare of our students. Our aim is to address issues at the local level to cater to the academic and well-being requirements of our students.

The Department of Education's [Parent and Community Code of Conduct](#) lays out the anticipated conduct for parents and visitors while on Queensland state school grounds, during school events, and in interactions with fellow members of the school community. This code is designed to uphold the health and well-being of staff and foster a secure and respectful work environment. It mirrors our school's core values of creativity, confidence, challenge, compassion, and community, as well as our expectations of being "Ready, Kind, Safe."

Related Document and Resources

The Department of Education's Customer Complaints Management [framework](#), [policy](#) and [procedures](#).

Final things to note

All email communication with WESS staff are official Department of Education records and must comply with the [Queensland Government's Records governance policy](#) as outlined in the Department's records management policy and associated procedures. All emails are captured within WESS's records management system as part of the Department of Education's [Information Asset and Record Keeping Procedure](#).

Policy review

The School Council in conjunction with the Executive Leadership Team will review the School Communications and Complaints Procedure and Guidelines every three (3) years, or when Queensland Department of Education amends relevant policy.

Principal: Tony Maksoud Signature:  Date: 26/6/2025

School Council Chair: Emma Heard Signature:  Date: 26/6/2025

Appendix 1 - Formal Complaint Procedure

Informal Resolution

We encourage parents and community members to first attempt to resolve any concerns informally by discussing them directly with the relevant teacher, staff member, or school administrator. If the issue remains unresolved after this initial step, or if the nature of the complaint requires immediate attention, proceed to the formal complaint's procedure outlined below.

Formal Complaint Procedure

Step 1

Submitting a Formal Complaint

- To initiate a formal complaint, parents or community members must submit a written complaint to the school office. The complaint should include a clear description of the issue, relevant details, and any supporting documentation.
- Complaints can be submitted via email, mail, or in person, addressed to the Principal or delegated officer.

Step 2

Acknowledgment and Investigation

- Upon receipt of the formal complaint, the school will acknowledge receipt within 3 days.
- An investigation will be conducted promptly and impartially by the designated complaints officer or a relevant member of the school's leadership team.
- During the investigation, the complainant may be contacted for further clarification or information if necessary.

Step 3

Resolution and Outcome

- The school will endeavour to resolve the complaint as swiftly as possible, aiming to provide a response within 30 working days. Depending on the nature of the complaint, resolution may involve mediation, disciplinary action, policy review, or other appropriate measures.
- The outcome of the investigation and any actions taken will be communicated to the complainant in writing.

Step 4

Appeals Process at School Level

- If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the formal complaint's procedure, they may appeal to the school principal. The appeals process will involve a review of the original complaint and the steps taken to address it, with a view to ensuring fairness and transparency. The decision of the principal will be final at the school-based level.

Step 5

Internal Review

- If, after taking the early resolution step, you are dissatisfied with the way your complaint was handled or if you believe the outcome to be unreasonable, you can ask the local Regional Office to conduct a review:
(<https://education.qld.gov.au/contact-us/state-schools-regional-contacts>)
You need to submit a Request for internal review form within 20 days of receiving the complaint outcome:
<https://ppr.qed.qld.gov.au/attachment/customer-complaints-request-an-internal-review.docx>

Step 6

External Review

- If you are dissatisfied after the internal review, you can contact a review authority, such as the Queensland Ombudsman (www.ombudsman.qld.gov.au) or Queensland Human Rights Commission (www.qhrc.qld.gov.au) and request an external review.

Conclusion

At West End State School, we value the feedback and input of parents and community members and are committed to addressing any concerns or complaints in a fair and transparent manner. We encourage open communication and collaboration to ensure the continued success and well-being of our students.