

Complaint Handling Policy and Procedure

PART 1: POLICY

Overview

Primary Ethics provides ethics classes to students in New South Wales government primary schools. A registered charity, Primary Ethics relies on volunteers to deliver classes to children and liaise with school communities to coordinate these classes.

Complaints received by Primary Ethics will be investigated and resolved as set out in this document.

Primary Ethics staff and volunteers should also refer to the corresponding 'Guidelines for Use' of this policy in the Learning Centre.

This document explains how to make a complaint, and what happens when a complaint is received. It applies to complaints about Primary Ethics' program, staff, volunteers or contractors.

Our commitment

Primary Ethics is a child safe organisation providing services to children, as such the safety and well-being of students is paramount. Primary Ethics will ensure timely and appropriate action in investigating and resolving all complaints.

Complaints are handled according to the following principles:

- responsiveness
- transparency
- fairness
- impartiality
- confidentiality (as appropriate)
- efficiency.

Complaints provide an opportunity to improve our approach to ensure children, parents and volunteers have a positive experience of Primary Ethics.

How to make a complaint

Primary Ethics encourages complaints to be lodged in writing, where possible. Complaints may be posted or emailed:

Email: complaints@primaryethics.com.au

Mail: Primary Ethics – complaints
Suite 408, 24-30 Springfield Avenue
Potts Point NSW, 2011

Need more information on our complaints policy? Call 02 8068 7752 during business hours to speak to our General Manager.

Responsibilities of the Department of Education

The NSW Department of Education *Special Education in Ethics Implementation Procedures* require principals who receive a complaint about an ethics class to notify Primary Ethics of the complaint.

If the principal receives allegations of improper behaviour or other complaints of a serious nature then the complaint may be managed in accordance with the Department's policies and procedures. The principal must refer allegations of a child protection nature to the Department's Employee Performance and Conduct Directorate.

Your privacy

In order to investigate complaints effectively and ensure procedural fairness, Primary Ethics requests that the person making the complaint gives permission for all details of the complaint, including their identity, to be disclosed during the course of the investigation. If this permission is not granted Primary Ethics will make every attempt to investigate and resolve the matter and will contact the complainant if the investigation is limited by a requirement for privacy.

Please note that while we will attempt to investigate anonymous complaints, our ability to do so is limited and we cannot guarantee that information provided anonymously will be acted on, except in identifying the need for systemic change. We cannot provide feedback on the outcome of complaints received anonymously.

What to expect when you make a complaint

Primary Ethics will:

1. Contact you to confirm that the complaint has been received.
2. Advise you of the action we plan to take and give you the name and contact details of the person handling the complaint.
3. Investigate the issues surrounding the complaint.
4. Contact you again if further information is required.
5. Notify you of the outcome once the complaint has been investigated.

If you are dissatisfied with the way a complaint has been handled, you can contact the Chief Executive Officer by email on ceo@primaryethics.com.au or by phoning the office (02) 8068 7752.

Further review of or appeal against complaint handling outcomes should be addressed to the Chair of Primary Ethics at the postal address listed above.

Process review

Primary Ethics will assess each complaint to identify any systemic issues that need to be addressed to prevent future issues arising.

PART 2: PROCEDURE

Receiving and allocating complaints

Complaints received according to the Complaints Handling Policy will be logged, reviewed by the General Manager and allocated for investigation and management.

In general, complaints will be allocated to the member of staff with responsibility for the issue raised, provided they are not the subject of the complaint, as follows:

Matter of complaint	Area of responsibility
Training or classroom support	Training Manager
Volunteer	Volunteering Manager
Primary Ethics employees (inc.CEO)	General Manager
General Manager	CEO

Investigating and managing complaints

The seriousness and nature of the complaint will determine the exact way in which any complaint is investigated and managed. In general, the following procedures should be followed, unless reasons to alter the approach have been approved by the General Manager.

Step 1: Contact the complainant as soon as practicable after receipt of the complaint (wherever possible within 2 business days).

Where the complainant made direct contact with Primary Ethics the person allocated to manage the complaint will make contact with the complainant to:

- confirm that the complaint has been received
- provide their name and contact details as the person handling the complaint and invite the complainant to contact them as needed
- clarify the details of the complaint
- confirm any privacy requests and explain how it may limit the way the complaint is managed if the complainant is not willing to have any information about the complaint disclosed to the person they are complaining about.

Step 2: Contact the person who is the subject of the complaint by telephone as soon as practicable (wherever possible within business 2 days) to:

- explain that a complaint has been made against them
- provide details of the complaint, as appropriate
- explain the next steps (which might include gathering further information)
- invite a response to the complaint, within a suitable and mutually agreed time period which takes the seriousness of the complaint into account
- enquire whether they would like to have a support person during the investigation.

Step 3: Send a follow up email on the same day as the phone call, when possible, to the person who is the subject of the complaint to:

- confirm what was discussed during the phone call and provide, where possible, written details of the complaint as received
- provide them with a copy of this Policy and Procedure
- provide a copy of the Guidelines for the Primary Ethics Complaint Handling Policy and Procedure
- confirm, if known, the next steps and timing.

Follow up with a telephone call to: ensure the email has been received, invite any questions and identify any need for support.

Step 4: Investigate the complaint:

- determine how the complaint will be investigated, taking into account the seriousness of the allegations, any privacy request and the type of evidence that might be available
- collect the evidence necessary to investigate – emails, interviews, phone interviews, documents, details of the allegation and the response to the allegation
- determine options and expectations regarding resolution
- document all evidence collected.

Regularly update the complainant and the person who is subject to the complaint on the progress of the investigation including an estimate of the likely length of time until resolution.

Step 5: Keep stakeholders and complainant informed as necessary throughout the process:

- inform the school principal about any child protection or safety related issues that emerge during the course of the investigation or any issue that could impact the school community
- inform the ethics coordinator and regional manager of any issues that arise which will impact their roles – in particular, when it is appropriate, the ethics coordinator and regional manager should be aware that there is a complaint investigation underway.

Step 6: Decide and communicate the outcome:

- make a determination based on the evidence
- determine the actions that need to be taken, in consultation with relevant parties, as appropriate
- notify all parties of the outcome and inform them that if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of the process they can contact the Chief Executive Officer by email on ceo@primaryethics.com.au or by phoning the office
- further review of complaint handling outcomes (or the review of complaints about the CEO) should be addressed to the Chair of Primary Ethics at 408/24-30 Springfield Ave Potts Point NSW 2011.

Step 7: Document the outcome and identify areas for improvement:

- ensure all details of the complaint are recorded
- identify any systematic, procedural or policy issues that contributed to the situation that arose
- make recommendations to prevent recurrence.