

Non-State Schools Accreditation Board

Policy for managing complaints about non-state schools, governing bodies, or unaccredited places

September 2026

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Policy background

Policy commitment statement

Non-state schooling plays a vital role in the educational landscape of Queensland. Maintaining its high standards is essential to foster public confidence and parental choice and uphold educational quality.

The Non-State Schools Accreditation Board (the Board) is an independent statutory body that operates under the Education (*Accreditation of Non-State Schools*) Act 2017 (the Act).

Section 100 of the Act outlines the Board's responsibilities, which include:

- assessing and deciding on the accreditation of non-state schools
- assessing and determining the eligibility of governing bodies for government funding for accredited non-State schools
- monitoring whether governing bodies and schools comply with statutory accreditation criteria or government funding eligibility criteria
- investigating and enforcing compliance with the Act and Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2017 (the Regulation), including concerns about places holding out or acting as a school when not accredited.

The Board is committed to managing complaints fairly, impartially, and transparently while adhering to the Accreditation Act and contemporary complaints management principles.

Policy ownership

The Board is responsible for approving and maintaining this policy.

Application/scope of policy

This policy applies to complaints raised regarding:

- non-state schools and their governing bodies
- contraventions of, or non-compliance with, the Act, including the operation of places holding out or acting as school when not accredited.

Complaints that fall outside the Board's jurisdiction, such as operational matters (e.g., school fees, uniforms, awards, student homework, report cards or grades, enrolments, contractual disputes, allocation of teachers or teacher aides), should be directed to the relevant school or governing body.

Where appropriate, the Board may refer complaints to another authority with jurisdiction, such as the Queensland Police Service, for issues such as fraud or child abuse, the Crime and Corruption Commission Queensland, or the Queensland Family and Child Commission in relation to child safe standards and reportable conduct.

Objectives

The objective of this policy is to document how the Board handles complaints and communicate this to stakeholders in a clear and concise way.

Principles of complaint management

The Board is committed to the following principles in managing complaints:

- customer focussed: ensure information about lodging complaints and the Board's processes is accessible to the public
- timely and fair treatment: complaints will be addressed impartially, professionally, in accordance with procedural fairness and in a timely manner
- confidentiality: complaints will be managed confidentially, in line with the Act and the *Information Privacy Act 2009*
- consistency and transparency: clear processes will be in place, ensuring that individuals can easily lodge complaints and understand how they are handled
- accessibility: complaints may be lodged in writing, verbally, or anonymously through multiple channels, at no cost to the complainant
- continuous improvement: data on complaints will be used to identify systemic issues and improve the Board's processes
- accountable: ensure decisions are in accordance with legislative requirements.

Management of complaints

Assessing complaints

It is the Board's preference that complainants seek to resolve their complaint with the school before coming to the Board.

After the complainant has tried to resolve their complaint with the school, the Board will assess the complaint and determine an appropriate course of action, which may include:

- requesting further information from the complainant or other parties
- monitoring compliance with statutory requirements
- investigating the complaint
- referring the complaint to another authority
- deciding not to proceed with the complaint based on insufficient evidence or where the matters raised in the complaint are outside the jurisdiction of the Board.

Responding to complaints

Where the Board investigates a complaint, it will determine what, if any regulatory action is appropriate, using a risk-based approach. This means the Board will consider the risks associated with the case and respond in a way that is proportionate to the risks. More information about the Board's regulatory practices is found in its Regulatory Approach Statement which is on its website.

It is important for complaints to understand that the Board is not a review body. This means it cannot review the merits of a decision made by a non-state school. The Board will examine whether the school acted fairly and in accordance with their policy and procedures and any relevant accreditation criteria but will not review the substance of the decision.

Notifying the outcome of a complaint

Complainants will be notified of the outcome of the Board's investigation within the limits of confidentiality provisions under the Act. Certain information may not be disclosed due to these provisions.

Register of complaints

The Board maintains records in accordance with the *Public Records Act 2002*. These records ensure accurate data collection, meet statutory reporting requirements, and support continuous improvement.

Regular reporting

The Board will submit an annual complaints report to ensure oversight and accountability.

Availability

The Board's website provides up-to-date information on how to lodge complaints and access relevant policies, including this document.

Anonymous complaints and safeguards against retribution

The Board treats complaints as confidential and will take reasonable steps to protect individuals from victimisation.

The Board cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality due to statutory obligations and principles of natural justice. Protected information, as defined in the Act, will be handled in accordance with its associated confidentiality provisions (outlined under section 176).

Please note that while we will keep information confidential if requested and as outlined above, the identity of the complainant may become obvious to the other party when we make enquiries or investigate the complaint.

Unless the complainant says they want the complaint to be anonymous or confidential, the Board will assume that all necessary details of the complaint and the complainant can be shared with the school(s) governing body that is the subject of the complaint.

The Board will accept anonymous or confidential complaints. However, this may limit the Board's ability to act on the complaint because the Board:

- will not be able to seek further information or clarification from the complainant or tell them what the outcome of their complaint is
- may not be able to gather information from the relevant school about the complaint without sharing details which would enable the school to identify the complainant.

Where anonymity or confidentiality is requested, but contact details have been given, the Board may telephone the complainant to explain the consequences of such requests.

Dealing with unreasonable conduct

The Board is committed to respectful communication. Unreasonable conduct (e.g., verbal abuse, excessive demands, or refusal to accept outcomes) will not influence the handling of complaints and may result in restricted communication with the complainant.

Dissatisfaction with a Board decision

Where a complainant is dissatisfied with a Board decision they can

- write to the Minister
- refer their matter to the Queensland Ombudsman.

Implementation

Compliance/policy alignment

This policy aligns with the strategic goals and legislative functions of the Board.

Authorisation

This policy is authorised under the Act and reflects the Board's statutory obligations.

Effective date

This policy is effective from 1 September 2026 and replaces the previous version of the policy.

Monitoring

The Board will monitor the effectiveness of this policy by analysing data and evaluating the outcomes of complaints.

Training

Board members, secretariat officers and authorised persons will undertake training on this policy and associated procedures on induction and annually to ensure consistent and effective implementation.

Updates

Amendments to this policy require prior approval by the Board. This policy will be reviewed every three years, with the next review due by 1 September 2029.

For further details, please visit the NSSAB website (<https://www.nssab.qld.edu.au>).