



POLICY

Complaints

Youth Futures Community School Hubs -
Community Schools, Anchor Point and
Comet Connect

Policy title & category	Complaints policy
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Acknowledgement of Country

Youth Futures students, staff and parents/carers acknowledge and respect the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters on which we live and are educated in Western Australia.

Complaints

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide information to students, parents/carers and staff within Youth Futures Community School (YFCS) Hubs regarding the complaints process. Embedded in this process are guiding principles including a timely response, fairness, confidentiality, accountability, natural justice and an appeals process. Reflective of Youth Future's commitment to [National Child Safe Principles](#), this policy reinforces the provision of accessible and age-appropriate complaint processes for students as part of a culture where young people's voices are heard and valued.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- **Students** raising concerns about school life, learning processes, facilities and resources, peer interactions or staff behaviour,
- **Parents/Carers** raising concerns about school decisions, communication, wellbeing support, facilities and resources or staff conduct,
- **Staff** raising concerns about school operations, student behaviour, or parent/staff conduct but excluding human resource and employment issues which are managed via Youth Futures Human Resource policies,
- **External advocates and relevant authorities** supporting any of the above parties and/or raising concerns on their own right particularly if the concern relates to the safety of young people.

Please note:

- YFCS Hubs are committed to making this policy publicly available to demonstrate its commitment to transparent, fair and timely resolution of complaints. However, internal procedural documentation will be kept confidential to protect sensitive operational processes, maintain privacy and uphold the integrity of investigations.
- Complaints will not be accepted from friends of students or extended family members unless they are directly affected by the matter or are raising concerns related to child safety or wellbeing that they have personally observed.

3. Principles

[Trauma Aware and Responsive Education](#), [Child Safe Organisations](#) and the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) underpin all services and supports provided to students enrolled with YFCS Hubs.

Additional principles that underpin the complaints policy include:

- Managing complaints (including grievances) promptly, respectfully and sensitively,
- Delivering procedural fairness and recognising the right to be heard,
- Maintaining privacy and confidentiality to the greatest extent possible,
- Providing support to all parties involved,
- Aiming for a fair resolution for all parties,
- Prioritising maintaining positive relationships where possible and
- Viewing complaints constructively to improve school processes and relationships.

4. Policy statement

The YFCS Hubs **Complaints** policy outlines the organisation's commitment to providing a fair, timely and transparent resolution process for concerns (and grievances) raised by students, parents/carers and staff. Guided by trauma-informed, strengths-focused and student-centred practices, the policy ensures that young people's voices are valued and age-appropriate processes are known and accessible.

The policy establishes a framework that upholds procedural fairness, confidentiality and accountability, while recognising the importance of cultural safety. It ensures that all parties are equally heard, conflicts of interest are avoided and statutory obligations are met, including mandatory and non-mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse to relevant authorities. Detailed provisions include timelines, record-keeping, communication of outcomes, opportunity for appeal along with an emphasis on safeguarding personal information in accordance with privacy laws and providing ongoing support where required.

5. Definitions

Appeal process – a formal procedure that allows a person to request a review of a decision they believe was unfair, incorrect or not made in accordance with policy or due process. The process will provide an opportunity for the decision to be reconsidered by an internal or external person or body not involved in the original outcome.

Conflict of interest – a situation where a person's personal, professional or financial interests, relationships or obligations could improperly influence (or be perceived to influence) their judgement, decisions or actions in carrying out their duties.

Complaint – an expression of dissatisfaction or concern about a decision, action, behaviour or process perceived to be unfair, inappropriate or unreasonable.

Complainant – person registering a complaint.

Grievance – a formal, written complaint often associated with a formal process for resolution, typically involving a violation of rights or a significant injustice.

Natural justice – an overarching legal and ethical principle that decision-making must be fair, unbiased and based on sound evidence. It embodies core rights such as the right to be heard and the right to an impartial decision-maker.

Procedural fairness – refers to the practical rules and processes used to uphold natural justice in practice. These rules typically include allowing each party to present their case, ensuring decisions are supported by evidence and avoiding actual or perceived bias.

6. Key considerations

6.1 Complaint accessibility

YFCS Hubs are committed to ensuring easy accessibility of the complaints process to ensure that students, parents/carers and staff can raise concerns without barriers and potentially resolve issues early and avoid further escalation. This policy will be publicly available via the Youth Futures website, referenced in the student, parent/carer and staff handbooks and otherwise available on request. Multiple channels will be available to lodge complaints i.e. in person, online, by phone, in writing or anonymously to ensure that individuals can choose the method that best suits their circumstances. Additional support will be provided when required, including assistance to write and/or record the complaint and the appointment of a staff advocate.

6.2 Young person focused

The complaints processes will focus on meeting the needs of young people by prioritising accessibility, safety and empowerment to ensure that students feel comfortable and confident in raising concerns. The process will use age-appropriate language, offer the option to make a complaint verbally or in writing and provide trusted adults or advocates to support them through the process.

The approach will actively seek to remove barriers including fear of repercussions, a lack of understanding of the process or cultural and communication differences. This will create an environment where young people's voices are genuinely heard and respected.

6.3. Staff roles and responsibilities

Principals and Heads of School are responsible for:

- Establishing and maintaining this complaints policy,
- Promoting a culture of openness,
- Ensuring all complaints are managed in accordance with legislative requirements and referring matters to the appropriate authority where necessary,
- Overseeing investigations and making or delegating final decisions,
- Allocating resources to support the process and
- Monitoring complaint trends to inform continuous improvement.

All other staff are responsible for:

- Listening to concerns from any party,
- Providing clear information about the process,
- Providing advocacy support where required and
- Documenting details accurately.

A complaint must not be used to challenge or overturn an existing policy. If a party believes a policy is outdated, inappropriate or inconsistent with YFCS Hub values or relevant legislation, they should request a formal review of that policy through the designated policy review process (outlined in section 10) rather than lodging a complaint.

6.4 Obligation to act and report

All complaints must be taken seriously regardless of their perceived severity and addressed in a manner that reflects Youth Future's commitment to fairness, accountability and young people's safety. This requires promptly acknowledging the complaint, initiating an appropriate and thorough response and ensuring that all necessary steps are taken to investigate and resolve the matter. Staff must recognise their responsibility to report concerns through the correct internal channels and, where required, to external authorities such as child protection agencies or police.

6.5 Cultural safety

Cultural safety ensures that individuals from all cultural backgrounds feel respected, valued and safe to raise concerns without fear of prejudice, misunderstanding or discrimination. It involves recognising and addressing power imbalances, being mindful of cultural protocols and actively seeking to understand and honour the diverse identities and lived experiences of students, parents/carers and staff.

A culturally safe complaints process uses inclusive language, provides access to interpreters or cultural support staff when needed and incorporates cultural awareness training for those handling complaints.

6.6 Confidentiality and Privacy

Complaints will be dealt with in a confidential manner that is respectful to both complainant and respondent. All reasonable steps will be taken to protect personal information from loss, unauthorised access, use, disclosure or any other misuse during the complaint-handling process. However, YFCS Hubs cannot give an assurance of absolute confidentiality, given statutory obligations and principles of natural justice.

6.7 Fairness and Natural Justice

Fairness and natural justice in the complaints process ensures transparency and that all parties are treated with respect and impartiality. This means giving each person involved a genuine opportunity to be heard, providing clear information to everyone about the process and making decisions based on relevant evidence rather than assumptions or bias. Procedural fairness requires that decision-makers are free from conflicts of interest, that they disclose any factors that may influence their judgement and they remain objective throughout the investigation.

Natural justice also demands that all parties are informed of the allegations or issues being considered, have adequate time and support to respond and are advised of the outcome and reasons for the decision. Applying these principles builds trust in the complaints process, upholds the rights of individuals and strengthens the integrity of YFCS Hub decision-making.

6.8 Responses and Timelines

Complaints are handled promptly as indicated by the table below:

YFCS Hubs – Complaint management timelines			
Steps	Description	Maximum Timeline	Tasks
1.	Receive complaint and record	Day one	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receive complaints in person, by phone, online, or in writing. Log in complaints register. Complete an immediate risk/safety check and take appropriate action if required. If child safety risk identified, make mandatory and/or non-mandatory report as appropriate.
2.	Acknowledgement	Day two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Send an acknowledgement to the complainant <u>WITHIN 24 HOURS</u> explaining the process, expected timeframes, confidentiality limits and supports available (e.g., interpreter, advocate).
3.	Triage and scope	Day three	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirm the issue can be managed via this policy, identify all the parties, and categorise: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Minor/early resolution</i> (likely fix at first contact) - <i>Standard</i> (requires limited inquiries) - <i>Complex/serious</i> (multiple parties, harm/risk, or systemic implications). Advise the complainant of the pathway and timelines.
4.	Early resolution	Day four to five	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resolve where possible via a clarification, apology and/or corrective action. Confirm outcome to complainant in writing and outline review rights.
5.	Investigation	Day ten to twenty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appoint an impartial investigator not previously involved. Gather records, meet/interview parties (age-appropriate methods for young people) and assess evidence. <i>Standard</i> investigation: completed within ten days. <i>Complex/serious</i> investigations: completed within 20 business days. <p>*Updates provided at least every 10 business days and if more time is required, explain why and revise timeline to a maximum of sixty days.</p>
6.	Decision and outcome	No more than five days after investigation concluded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make findings, decide remedies (e.g., apology, practice change, training, restitution) and communicate the outcome in clear, respectful language – orally first, with written follow-up. Written outcomes must include reasons, actions taken, supports offered, how privacy was handled and how to seek a review.
7.	Implement and close	No more than five days after outcome concluded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement agreed actions. Record closure in register. Schedule any follow-up checks. De-identify and consider systemic learnings for continuous improvement.

6.9 Managing conflicts of interest

Managing conflicts of interest in the complaints process is essential to preserving impartiality, transparency and trust. A conflict of interest arises when a person involved in handling a complaint has a prior involvement or a personal, professional or financial relationship that could reasonably be perceived to influence their judgement or decision-making. To address this, all staff involved must disclose any real, potential or perceived conflicts as soon as they become aware of them.

Once identified, conflicts should be managed by reallocating the matter to another suitably qualified and impartial person or by implementing safeguards such as independent oversight or joint decision-making. In cases where complete removal from the process is not possible, the conflict and the steps taken to mitigate it must be documented in the complaints register.

6.10 Reporting to relevant authorities

Interactions with relevant authorities requires professionalism, transparency and adherence to both legal obligations and this policy. YFCS Hubs must first identify whether the complaint triggers mandatory reporting requirements, including matters involving child safety, criminal behaviour or regulatory breaches, and promptly notify the appropriate authority such as police, Department of Communities or the Education Department. All communication should be factual, evidence-based and limited to information relevant to the complaint, thereby ensuring compliance with privacy laws and the principles of natural justice.

Throughout the process, the Principal or other authorised senior leader should act as the main point of contact, ensuring consistency and accuracy in information sharing. Records of all interactions including dates, times, persons spoken to and advice received must be maintained in the complaints register. Where authorities request cooperation, the organisation should respond promptly, provide requested documents in an organised manner and facilitate access to relevant staff or witnesses.

6.11 Resolution and Outcomes

Resolutions and outcomes provide closure for all parties and demonstrates that YFCS Hubs takes concerns seriously and acts to address them. A resolution may involve a range of actions depending on the nature and findings of the complaint including:

- Offering an apology,
- Providing an explanation,
- Amending a decision,
- Implementing corrective measures,
- Offering mediation,
- Delivering staff training and
- Reviewing and changing policies or procedures.

Outcomes should be communicated clearly, respectfully and in writing to the complainant, outlining the decision made, the reasons for it, any actions taken and any opportunities for review or appeal. Where appropriate, the response should also highlight the supports available to those affected. Documenting resolutions in the complaints register ensures accountability, facilitates analysis of trends and supports continuous improvement within YFCS Hubs.

6.12 Review and Appeal

Review and appeal processes provide an important safeguard in the complaints process, ensuring that decisions can be reconsidered if a complainant believes the matter was not handled fairly, thoroughly or in line with this policy.

An *internal review* allows a fresh examination of the complaint by the Principal or delegated staff member who was not involved in the original investigation or decision. This step ensures impartiality and gives the complainant an opportunity to present new evidence or clarify existing information. Reviews should be conducted promptly, following the same principles of fairness, transparency and procedural justice as per the original process, with clear communication of findings and reasons for any changes to the outcome.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied after the internal review, they should be advised of *external appeal* options relevant to the nature of the complaint, including education regulators, child safety authorities or ombudsman services. YFCS Hubs has a responsibility to cooperate fully with external review bodies, providing all relevant records and evidence as required.

6.13 Record-Keeping and Reporting

Record keeping and reporting are critical components of an effective complaints process, ensuring transparency, accountability and the ability to identify and address systemic issues. All complaints, regardless of how they are received or resolved, should be documented in a secure complaint register (components outlined below in section 7 – Complaints register). Records must be factual, accurate and stored in accordance with privacy laws with access restricted to authorised personnel only. Maintaining comprehensive records not only protects the rights of all parties but also supports evidence-based decision-making if the matter is reviewed internally or externally.

Regular reporting on complaints data is essential for YFCS Hub learning and improvement. Aggregated and non-identifiable information will be shared with the leadership team, Board of Directors and funding stakeholders to identify trends, recurring issues and areas for policy or practice change. This reporting will also include the number and types of complaints received, resolution timeframes, outcomes and any systemic improvements identified and implemented.

6.14 Role of the Director General

As required by the Department of Education, information about the role of the Director General is included in this policy. The Director General of the Department of Education is responsible for ensuring that YFCS Hubs observe the registration standards, including Standard 9 which focuses on the complaints handling system. Any student, parent, staff or community member is entitled to contact the Director General with concerns about how YFCS Hubs has dealt with a complaint. Information on this process is available on the [Department of Education/non-government school complaints](#) website. While the Director General may consider whether YFCS Hubs has breached the registration standards, the Director General does not have power to intervene in a complaint or override a YFCS Hub decision.

7. Complaints register

YFCS Hubs will maintain a detailed complaints register with the capacity to record:

- Date of complaint,
- Name of complainant and relationship with the school,
- Subject matter of the complaint including the name of any person complained about and his or her relationship with the school,
- Complaint investigator and position or role at the school,
- Date investigation completed,
- Whether the complaint was upheld,
- Resolution agreed with or offered to complainant,
- Date of referral for review (for example by the governing body),
- Complaint reviewer and relationship with the school,
- Date review was finalised and
- Review resolution agreed with or offered to complainant.

8. Legislative considerations

The following legislation has been considered in the development of this policy for YFCS Hubs:

The [School Education Act 1999](#) and the [School Education Regulations 2000 \(WA\)](#) establish the framework for how schools operate including behaviour expectations, decision-making processes and student participation in policy development.

The [Public Sector Management Act 1994 \(WA\)](#) outlines standards of conduct, accountability and integrity for public sector employees.

The [Teacher Registration Act 2012 \(WA\)](#) mandates that teachers in Western Australia are registered and adhere to professional standards. The Teacher Registration Board of Western Australia (TRBWA) sets out the [Professional Standards for Teachers](#), which inform ethical and professional expectations.

The [National Vocational Education and Training Regulator \(Compliance standards for NVR RTOs and fit and proper person requirements\) instrument 2025](#) underpins ethical and professional expectations for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) and their key personnel. These standards require RTOs (including Futures Education and Training RTO: 52844) to demonstrate privacy considerations, including the handling of personal information during complaints management, to align with state and Commonwealth privacy laws.

The [Work Health and Safety Act 2020](#) outlines the responsibilities of schools to ensure a safe working and learning environment and emphasises the duty of care owed to both staff and students.

The [Equal Opportunity Act 1984 \(WA\)](#) prohibits discrimination in various areas including education and ensures that complaints processes are fair, inclusive and equitable.

The [Children and Community Services Amendment Bill 2021](#) strengthened the [Children and Community Services Act 2004](#) implementing key recommendations from the [Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse](#) and the [2017 Statutory Review of the Children and Community Services Act 2004](#).

9. Policies and other resources

9.1 YFCS Hub policies

- Child Abuse Prevention, Reporting and Response policy,
- Privacy policy,
- Positive Behaviour Support for Students policy and
- Student Safety and Wellbeing policy.

9.2 Other resources

- Student and staff handbooks.
- [National Office for Child Safety – complaint handling guide](#)

10. Policy review process

YFCS Hubs are committed to continuous improvement and will undertake annual reviews of this policy informed by the following approach:

- Establish a review framework,
- Assemble a review team,
- Gather 360-degree feedback from multiple sources including students, parents/carers, staff and key stakeholders from within and outside of YFCS Hubs,
- Analyse incident and practice data for systemic trends,
- Draft revisions to the existing policy and share widely for input,
- Obtain endorsement from Principal and CEO,
- Communicate changes to all staff (and provide additional training where relevant) and
- Implement and monitor the updated policy.

11. Policy version control

11.1 Current

This version	Complaints policy
Category	Youth Futures Community School
Date effective from	August 2025
Developed by	Policy Manager Youth Futures
Owner (Job title)	Principal – YFCS Hubs
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11.2 History

Previous versions	Effective dates
Grievance policy (consolidated)	2023
Disputes and complaints (YFCS)	2019
Policy 24 - Complaints	Unknown
Policy 8 - Grievance	2017
Policy 1 - Appeals	Unknown