

Public Concerns/Complaints Process	
Adopted: January 19, 2016	Last Reviewed/Revised: June 21, 2022
Next Scheduled Review: 2024-2025	
Associated Policies & Procedures: <a href="#">I-23 Catholic School Councils and Catholic Parent Involvement Committee</a>	

## Purpose

The Halton Catholic District School Board (HCDSB) is committed to encouraging a strong relationship with parents/guardians, students and community. The HCDSB is committed to addressing public concerns/complaints in a fair, transparent, respectful and effective manner.

## Application and Scope

This policy applies to all parents/guardians, adult learners or ratepayers that have a concern/complaint regarding a school related issue or any HCDSB operating policy. All concerns/complaints raised by employees shall be reviewed by the HCDSB's Human Resources Department, in accordance with relevant HCDSB policies.

## References

[Education Act](#)

[Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act \(MFIPPA\)](#)

## Principles

- The HCDSB is a model learning community, widely recognized as distinctively Catholic, providing exceptional education while nurturing the call to love and to serve as a people of faith, living out God's plan.
- The HCDSB is guided by their approved Governing Values Our Catholic Faith, The Whole Child, Excellence in Learning, Relationships and Partnerships and The Importance of Contributing to Our Communities while addressing public concerns/complaints.

- The HCDSB believes that the process of public concerns/complaints is an opportunity to improve relationships with our parents/guardians, students and community. Persons who make a complaint shall be free from reprisal.
- It is the practice of the HCDSB that public concerns/complaints and questions should be dealt with at the level closest to the issue.
- All information shared is bound by the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* as governed by legislation in Ontario ensuring confidentiality is maintained by all parties concerning student and personnel matters.
- The HCDSB believes that the tracking and written documentation during an investigation process is important to ensuring all concerns/complaints are dealt with in a timely, responsible and fair manner.
- The *Education Act* requires trustees to entrust the day-to-day management of the Board to its staff through the Director of Education, when parent(s)/guardian(s) or individual members of the public raise concerns/complaints, it is the staff that will investigate, manage and provide resolutions to the identified issue in a timely manner in accordance with relevant HCDSB policies. Concerns/Complaints regarding HCDSB operating policies may be addressed with members of senior staff or a trustee.

## Requirements

### Guidelines for All

Only those concerns/complaints will be considered by HCDSB staff where the complainant or inquirer provides their name and contact information for correspondence purposes.

Parent(s)/guardian(s), adult learners or ratepayers will be directed, as appropriate, to address concerns/complaints at the level at which the concern/complaint originates.

### Guidelines for Trustees

When a Trustee receives a concern/complaint from a parent(s)/guardian(s), adult learner or ratepayer, the Trustee shall review the process as outlined in this guide with the individual and direct them to contact the appropriate staff. The process will allow the parent(s)/guardian(s), adult learner or ratepayer to engage in communication with the most appropriate staff member.

Where a Trustee has an inquiry regarding a school related matter which was initially brought to their attention by a parent(s)/guardian(s), adult learner or ratepayer, the Trustee is directed to contact the Family of Schools Superintendent or area of responsibility.

### Guidelines for Principals

Where a concern/complaint is raised by a parent(s)/guardian(s), adult learner or ratepayer the Principal will consult with the Family of Schools Superintendent, as appropriate, and endeavour to resolve the issue at the local level in accordance with HCDSB policies.

Where a concern/complaint cannot be resolved locally to the satisfaction of the parent(s)/guardian(s), adult learner or ratepayer, the Principal will refer the matter to the Family of Schools Superintendent.

### **Guidelines for Superintendents**

Where a matter cannot be resolved at the school level, the Family of Schools Superintendent will consult with the Principal regarding the concern/complaint and endeavour to resolve the issue in accordance with HCDSB policies. The Superintendent will inform the parent(s)/guardian(s), adult learner or ratepayer of the resolution to the matter.

Where requested, Superintendents will apprise respective Trustees, as appropriate, of the resolution of a particular matter which was initially brought to the Trustee's attention by a parent(s)/guardian(s), adult learner or ratepayer.

Where a Superintendent is unable to satisfy the concern/complaint, they shall advise the Director of Education of the matter.

If a parent/guardian has a concern/complaint about a school matter, the following procedures for review of the issue are available to the parent/guardian.

#### **Step 1: Review of the Issue with the Child's Teacher**

The parent/guardian should review a concern/complaint or issue with the classroom teacher at a mutually convenient time.

#### **Step 2: Review by the School Principal**

If the parent/guardian and the teacher are not able to resolve the issue, the parent/guardian may request that the matter be reviewed by the school principal (or designate). The principal (or designate) will review the issues and work to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

#### **Step 3: Review by the Superintendent of Education**

If the parent/guardian and the school principal are not able to resolve the issue, the parent/guardian may request that the matter be reviewed by the school's Superintendent of Education. The Superintendent will review the matter as it relates to established policies and procedures and will respond to the parent/guardian about their concern/complaint.

#### **Step 4: Review by Director of Education**

If the parent(s)/guardian(s) and the Family of Schools Superintendent are not able to resolve the issue, the parent(s)/guardian(s) may request the matter be reviewed by the Director of Education. The Director of Education (or designate) will review the matter and respond to the parent(s)/guardian(s) about the concerns/complaints.

#### **Representative of the Parent(s)/Guardian(s):**

From time to time, the parent/guardian may believe or feel that they need support in order that they can adequately address their child's interests. This support may be necessary while parents/guardians are attending meetings with the staff employed by the HCDSB.

Parents/guardians have the right to have a representative of their choosing in attendance at meetings with staff, subject to any limitations established in these procedures. Any costs/expenses associated with such a representative are the responsibility of the parents/guardians.

Principals, staff and parents/guardians will be notified in advance of a meeting as to who is anticipated to be in attendance.

A representative supporting the parents/guardians must agree, at the outset of or in advance of the meeting, to respect and maintain the confidentiality of any matter discussed at a meeting between parents/guardians and staff.

**Matters that should not be discussed with Staff**

Although the subject matter of meetings between parents/guardians and staff (including meetings at which a representative or a parent/guardian is present) may be fairly broad, these meetings will generally relate to the education of the parents'/guardians' child at the school in question. However, there are certain matters that staff are unable to discuss with parents/guardians.

Such matters that cannot be discussed include, for example, personal details or disciplinary measures concerning other student(s), and personal details related to staff or performance issues related to staff.

In the event that discussion cannot be limited to the subject matter that led to the meeting (generally the education of the parents'/guardians' child at the school in question), as necessary, staff will bring closure to any meeting which becomes a discussion of personal details concerning other students or personal details about staff or issues relating to staff performance.

**Role of Trustees**

Parents/guardians may contact trustees at any time. Trustees will facilitate the communication process between the parent/guardian and the appropriate staff and provide information and direction. Trustees shall direct the parent or guardian to the process which should be followed in resolving any concerns/complaints; or to the appropriate person; or step in the process (dependent on the steps the parents/guardians have already undertaken to resolve the concerns/complaints at the time the trustee is contacted) but shall not act as a representative of the parents/guardians.

**Role of Catholic School Councils**

Catholic School Councils are legally constituted bodies of elected and appointed representatives of the local school community established for the purposes of developing, encouraging and promoting activities which will enhance the quality of school programs and improve the levels of student achievement. They are not forums to discuss individual parent/guardian-teacher-student issues. Any of these matters brought to a Catholic School Council member or any Catholic School Council meeting will be referred immediately to the principal. For further information on the role of Catholic School Councils, please refer to the [HCDSB's Public Website](http://www.hcdsb.org).

APPROVED: Regular Meeting of the Board

AUTHORIZED BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Chair of the Board*