

PARENT COMPLAINTS

1. Rationale

- 1.1 The school's approach to handling concerns and complaints is based on:
- providing a safe and supportive learning environment
 - building relationships between students, parents and staff
 - providing a safe working environment for staff.

2. Guidelines

- 2.1 These procedures cover concerns and complaints about:
- general issues of student behaviour that are contrary to the school's code of conduct
 - incidents of bullying or harassment in the classroom or the school yard
 - learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
 - communication with parents
 - school fees and payments
 - general administrative issues

3. Implementation

- 3.1 The school will develop its procedures to address concerns and complaints in collaboration with parents and the school community.
- 3.2 The school expects a person raising a concern or complaint to:
- do so promptly, as soon as possible after the issue occurs
 - provide complete and factual information about the concern or complaint
 - maintain and respect the privacy and confidentiality of all parties
 - acknowledge that a common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
 - act in good faith, and in a calm and courteous manner
 - show respect and understanding of each other's point of view and value difference, rather than judge and blame
 - recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced.
- 3.3 The school will address any concerns and complaints received from parents:
- courteously
 - efficiently
 - fairly

- promptly, or within the timeline agreed with the person with the concern or complaint
- in accordance with due process, principles of natural justice and the Department's regulatory framework.

3.4 Raising concerns or complaints

- In the first instance, a complaint should be made to the school.
- The complainant should telephone, visit or write to:
 - the student's teacher or home group teacher about learning issues and incidents that happened in their child's class or group
 - the principal about issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members or very complex student issues.

3.5 Help with raising concerns or complaints

- The school recognises that personal support is most appropriate in situations where the complainant and others involved in the complaint process have emotional issues related to the complaint.
- Complainants can seek the services of an advocate when they feel they are unable to express their concern clearly. An advocate can be a friend or someone who is available through an appropriate support organisation who does not receive a fee for service.
- All parties involved in addressing a complaint may seek the services of a mediator when there is difficulty coming to an agreement.
- The school will ensure that the complainant is aware of these support services. A complainant who wishes to use these support services should ensure the person addressing the concern or complaint is aware of their intention and is in agreement.

3.6 Managing parent concerns and complaints information

- In the first instance, when the complaint is easily resolved in a telephone call, a brief note in the school's/principal's/teacher's diary recording the issue and the resolution may be all that is required
- In cases of more serious complaints, as determined by the principal, the following information will be documented:
 - name and contact details (with permission) of the person with a concern or complaint
 - the date the concern was expressed or complaint made
 - the form in which the concern or complaint was received (such as face-to-face, by telephone, in writing, by email)
 - a brief description of the concern or complaint
 - action taken on the concern or complaint
 - the outcome of action taken on the concern or complaint
 - any recommendations for future improvement in the school's policy or procedures.

3.7 Addressing concerns or complaints

- The school will make every effort to resolve concerns and complaints before involving other levels of the Department.
- The school will give a complainant a copy of its complaints procedures.

- The school will determine whether a concern or complaint should be managed through the school's concerns and complaints process or through other complaints processes of the Department.
- All complaints will be noted and acted on promptly by the staff member who receives the complaint.
- The school will acknowledge all complaints made in writing. It will provide the complainant with a timeline for investigating the complaint.
- Concerns and complaints about general school matters (such as the timing of events, school policies and facilities) will be addressed by the principal or a relevant staff member.
- The school will make every attempt to resolve a concern or complaint as quickly as possible.
- If your complaint involves many students and a range of issues, the school will need more time to investigate and resolve it.
- Should the complaint involve complex issues, the school might need to take advice from the Department's regional office which may take more time. The school will tell the complainant the new timeline for addressing the complaint and the reasons for any delays. In all cases, the school will try to resolve a concern or complaint within 20 school days.

3.8 Remedies

- If a concern or complaint is substantiated in whole or part, the school will offer an appropriate remedy. For example, at its discretion and depending on the circumstances, the school might offer:
 - an explanation or further information about the issue
 - mediation, counselling or other support
 - an apology, expression of regret or admission of fault
 - to change its decision
 - to change its policies, procedures or practices
 - to cancel a debt (such as for school payments)
 - a fee refund
- The school will implement the remedy as soon as practicable.

3.9 Referral of concerns or complaints

- If a person with a concern or complaint is not satisfied with the outcome determined by the school, they should contact the Department's appropriate regional office. The officer from the region will ask the complainant for a complete and factual account in writing of the concern or complaint and the complainant's opinion about why the school did not resolve it to their satisfaction.
- If the matter remains unresolved after discussions with the regional office you can send your complaint, in writing, to:

Deputy Secretary,
Office for Government School Education,
c/o General Manager, Group Coordination
Division, GPO Box 4367 Melbourne VIC 3001

3.10 Communication and training

- The school will make information about procedures for addressing concerns and complaints readily available to parents and the school community, in clear and easy-to-understand

language and, where appropriate, in a range of community languages and formats that are accessible to everyone so that no-one is disadvantaged.

- The information will include:
 - how a person can make a complaint
 - the person's responsibilities
 - information to be provided by the person
 - who the person should contact and their contact details
 - the process and timeframes for managing complaints.
- The school's procedures for addressing concerns and complaints will be:
 - published on the school's website
 - available in the office
- The school will:
 - brief all members of staff (including volunteers) about its procedures to address concerns and complaints annually
 - provide staff with (or provide access to) training and support appropriate to their responsibilities under the procedures
 - ensure staff who manage complaints demonstrate the personal attributes outlined in the *Good Practice Guide: Ombudsman Victoria's guide to complaint handling for Victorian public sector agencies*.

3.11 Monitoring the parent complaints policy

- The school will monitor parent concerns and complaints and consider issues raised through the parent complaints process, and any other relevant information from the parent opinion survey, when undertaking a review of the school's policies, procedures and operations.
- The School Council will regularly review its policy and procedures to effectively address parent concerns and complaints as part of its cyclic policy and procedures review schedule.
- The school will review its information about complaints made over time to:
 - identify common or recurring issues that may need addressing
 - assess the effectiveness of these and other procedures and whether they are being followed
 - use information provided to the school through the parent opinion survey on the views of parents.

4. Evaluation:

- 4.1 This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle. This policy was last ratified by School Council on the 20th July 2015.