



Community Concerns

POLICY

Rationale:

We seek to handle concerns and complaints based on our values of:

- providing a safe and supportive learning environment
- building relationships between students parents and staff
- providing a safe working environment

Aims:

The school through the implementation of this policy will have procedures in place to address community concerns and complaints promptly, consistently and fairly. This will be in accordance with due process and where appropriate, the principles of natural justice and the departments regulatory framework.

Implementation:

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
- any other school-related matters except as detailed below.

These procedures do not cover matters for which there are existing rights of review or appeal, as detailed in the *Victorian Government Schools Reference Guide*.

Those matters include:

- student discipline matters involving expulsions
- complaints about employee conduct or performance and complaints that should be dealt with by performance management, grievance resolution or disciplinary action
- complaints by the Department's employees related to their employment
- student critical incident matters
- other criminal matters.

Raising Concerns:

The complainant should telephone, email, visit, write to:

- the student's teacher or home group teacher about learning issues and incidents that happened in their class or group
- the year level coordinator if students from several classes are involved
- the assistant principal about issues relating to staff members or complex student issues
- the principal about issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members or very complex student issues.

For contact details for any staff member, call the office on 0359 624088

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.

Managing Concerns:

The School will record the following on a dedicated form available in the office:

- 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
- details of the school officer responding to 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

However, 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. All complaints will be recorded.

Addressing Concerns:

All complaints will be noted and acted on promptly by the staff member who receives the complaint.

The school will acknowledge all formal complaints made in writing. It will provide the complainant with a timeline for investigating the complaint. The principal team will investigate all complaints and will provide a response to the complainant.

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.

Substantiated Complaints:

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.

Referral of unresolved 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.

Training of Staff:

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*.

Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle

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.

This policy was last ratified by School Council in....

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