

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide an outline of the complaints process at Sandringham East Primary School so that parents and members of the community are informed of how they can raise complaints or concerns about issues arising at our school
- ensure that all complaints regarding Sandringham East Primary School are managed in a timely, effective, fair and respectful manner.

SCOPE

This policy relates to complaints brought by parents, carers, students or members of our school community and applies to all matters relating to our school. In some limited instances, we may need to refer the complainant to another Department of Education and Training process where there are different mechanisms in place to review certain decisions, for example, expulsion appeals.

POLICY

Sandringham East Primary School welcomes feedback, both positive and negative, and is committed to continuous improvement. We value open communication with our families and are committed to understanding complaints and addressing them appropriately. We recognise that the complaints process provides an important opportunity for reflection and learning.

We value and encourage open and positive relationships with our school community. We understand that it is in the best interests of students for there to be a trusting relationship between families and our school.

Our **Statement of Vision and Values**, available on the policies page of our website, outlines the expectations of all Sandringham East Primary School community members – including staff, parents/carers and students – to uphold our values of **Care, Aspiration and Respect**. Sandringham East Primary School acknowledges that the actions and behaviours of all stakeholders has an impact on our school community and culture. We acknowledge a shared responsibility to create a positive learning environment for the children and young people at our school.

When addressing a complaint, it is expected that all parties will:

- be considerate of each other's views and respect each other's role
- be focused on resolution of the complaint, with the interests of the student involved at the centre
- act in good faith and cooperation
- behave with respect and courtesy
- respect the privacy and confidentiality of those involved, as appropriate
- operate within and seek reasonable resolutions that comply with any applicable legislation and Department of Education and Training policy.
- recognise that schools and the Department of Education and Training may be subject to legal constraints on their ability to act or disclose information in some circumstances.

Preparation for raising a concern or complaint

Sandringham East Primary School encourages parents, carers or members of the community who may wish to submit a complaint to:

- carefully consider the issues you would like to discuss
- gather relevant details relating to the issue/s
- think about how the matter could be resolved
- be informed by checking the policies and guidelines set by the Department of Education and Training and Sandringham East Primary School (see “Further Information and Resources” section below).

Support person

You are welcome to have a support person to assist you in raising a complaint with our school. Please advise us if you wish to have a support person to assist you, and provide their name, contact details, and their relationship to you. Note that this also applies to school staff, who may opt to have a colleague present, such as a member of the leadership team, during any meetings with parents/carers or community members.

Complaints process

Sandringham East Primary School is always happy to discuss with parents/carers and community members any concerns that they may have. Most concerns are easily and quickly resolved. Where possible, school staff will work with you to ensure that your concerns are appropriately addressed. Most concerns in the first instance should be directed to your child’s teacher, such as if your concern regards your child’s learning, homework, and friendship/social issues. Depending on the nature of the concern, it may be more appropriate to direct the concern to the Assistant Principal or Principal. Similarly, if the parent/carer is not satisfied with the initial response to the concern, or if the concern has been escalated and remains, a formal complaint to the school should next be made internally.

Where concerns cannot be resolved as outlined above, parents or community members may wish to make a formal complaint to the school Principal.

If you would like to make a formal complaint, in most cases, depending on the nature of the complaint raised, our school will first seek to understand the issues, discuss with relevant parties, and if required will then convene a resolution meeting with the aim of resolving the complaint together. The following process will apply for **formal complaints**:

- 1. Complaint received:** Please either email, telephone or arrange a meeting through the front office with the Principal, to outline your complaint so that we can fully understand what the issues are. We can discuss your complaint in a way that is convenient for you, whether in writing, in person or over the phone.
- 2. Information gathering:** Depending on the issues raised in the complaint, the Principal, Assistant Principal or nominee may need to gather further information to properly understand the situation. This process may also involve speaking to others to obtain details about the situation or the concerns raised. Please be aware that information gathering may take a matter of days, however we will endeavour to provide an expected timeline (see Timelines below).
- 3. Response:** Where possible, a resolution meeting will be arranged with the Principal, Assistant Principal or nominee to discuss the complaint with the objective of reaching a resolution satisfactory to all parties. If after the resolution meeting we are unable to resolve the complaint together, we will work with you to produce a written summary of the complaint in the event you would like to take further action (see Escalation below). In some

circumstances, the Principal may determine that a resolution meeting would not be appropriate. In this situation, a response to the complaint will be provided in writing.

Timelines: Sandringham East Primary School will acknowledge receipt of your complaint as soon as possible (usually within one-two school days) and will seek to resolve complaints in a timely manner. Depending on the complexity of the complaint, Sandringham East Primary School may need some time to gather enough information to fully understand the circumstances of your complaint. Whilst the school understands the desire for issues to be resolved quickly, it is important to take the time necessary to ensure an effective and informed outcome. We will endeavour to complete any necessary information gathering and hold a resolution meeting where appropriate within 5-10 working days of the complaint being raised. In situations where further time is required, Sandringham East Primary School will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

The school will:

- keep a written record of serious, substantial or unusual complaints that require resolution actions and document all steps taken to achieve agreement, and
- keep written records of complaints which relate to the Child Information Sharing Scheme and the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme to meet regulatory requirements - refer to [Child and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes](#) for further information.

Please note that unreasonable conduct (e.g. vexatious complaints) may need to be managed differently to the procedures in this policy. The school can support and/or advise parents/carers and community members of complaints process which differ to those outlined above, if required.

Resolution

Where appropriate, Sandringham East Primary School may seek to resolve a complaint by:

- a change of decision
- a change of policy, procedure or practice
- offering the opportunity for student counselling or other support
- other actions consistent with school values that are intended to support the student, parent and school relationship, engagement, and participation in the school community
- an apology or expression of regret.

In some circumstances, Sandringham East Primary School may also ask you to attend a meeting with an independent third party, or participate in a mediation with an accredited mediator to assist in the resolution of the dispute.

Escalation

If you feel the school's complaints process has been exhausted and you are not satisfied that your complaint has been resolved by the school, or if your complaint is about the Principal and you do not want to raise it directly with them, then the complaint should be referred to the **South Eastern Victoria Region**. Sandringham East Primary School may also refer a complaint to the South Eastern Victoria Region if we believe that we have done all we can to address the complaint.

Email: sevr@edumail.vic.gov.au

Phone: 1300 338 738

Complaints may be escalated to the **Central Office** if the South Eastern Victoria Region have not been able to assist with your complaint, or if the complaint remains unresolved.

Email: school.complaints@education.vic.gov.au

Phone: (03) 8688 7885 (message callback service)

It might not always be possible to resolve your complaint in the way that you would like. We can only resolve complaints in ways that are in line with Department of Education and Training values, policies and the law. If you have followed the school's complaints process, and escalated to both the South Eastern Victorian Region and Central Office, parents/carers and community members can contact the **Victorian Ombudsman**.

Website: www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au/

Phone: (03) 9613 6222

COMMUNICATION, FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

For more information about the Department of Education and Training's parent complaints process, including the role of the Regional Office, please see: [Raise a complaint or concern about your school](#) .

This policy will be:

- available publicly on school website
- included in staff induction processes
- available in hard copy available from school administration upon request.

The Department's Policy and Advisory Library (PAL):

- [Complaints - Parents](#)

The Department's parents website:

- [Raise a complaint or concern about your school](#)

APPENDIX

DET'S 'Complaints quick reference guide'

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

This policy was last review in **September 2021** and approval by School Council.
This policy will be reviewed as part of the regular policy review cycle every **3-4 years**.

Parent Concerns and Complaints

HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN OR COMPLAINT ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S EXPERIENCE AT A VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT SCHOOL

Preparing to raise a concern or complaint

- Seek a copy of your school's parent complaint policy.
- Be clear about your concern and how the school's actions relate to it.
- Understand that you may be required to share information with the school to help them understand your concerns.
- Have suggestions about how to resolve your concern and be open to suggestions from the school about how to support your child.
- You may need to discuss your concerns with your child and how to resolve it.

Step 1. Speak with your school

The simplest and best way to address your concern is to speak with your child's school.

- **Depending on the school's policy, speak** with your child's classroom teacher, year level coordinator or another staff member first about your concern. If you are unable to resolve the issue, advise that you will raise your concern with the principal.
- **Schedule an agreed time to meet** so you can both focus on the issue.
- **Treat each other with respect**, listen to each other and be considerate of each other's role in the situation.

Remember, both you and the school want what is best for your child's education and wellbeing. By working together to resolve a concern, you will have the best opportunity to maintain a positive relationship and place your child in the best position to achieve their educational goals.

Step 2. Talk to the regional office

If you have worked with the school and are not satisfied with the outcome, you can speak with staff at the regional office who will be able to discuss your concerns. The regional staff member may also discuss your concerns with the school or other specialised team members as needed.

The regional staff member will contact you to explore potential outcomes.

For information about how to contact your closest regional office, visit: www.education.vic.gov.au (search: our office locations). You can also call **1800 338 663**.

Step 3. Talk to the central office

If you have discussed your concern with the region and are still dissatisfied, you can contact the Department's complaints team at the central office. The team will discuss your concerns, help everyone involved in the complaint, and will look at different ways to resolve the issue.

Remember, you need to speak with your school and the region before contacting the central office.

Sometimes the complaints team may forward your concern to the Independent Office for School Dispute Resolution. The Independent Office will review their processes with you and give you the option of working with them if you wish.

To contact the central office, call **(03) 8688 7885** (message callback service) or email: school.complaints@education.vic.gov.au

If you are still unhappy with the result, you can contact the Victorian Ombudsman on **(03) 9613 6222** or email: complaints@ombudsman.vic.gov.au



Interpreting services

You can use the National Translating and Interpreting Service by calling **131 450**.

Additional support

We understand that raising a concern or complaint with a school can be stressful for parents and carers.

You can have a support person to help you at any time while making a complaint including someone in your family, a friend, community member or someone from a support agency.

If you need assistance, please contact a support service such as **Parentline** on **13 22 89**.

For further information about our parent complaints process and policy, please visit: www.education.vic.gov.au (search: parent complaints)