



Concerns and Complaints Resolution Policy

Rationale:

Our school has both a desire and a responsibility to ensure that high standards of conduct are maintained by staff, parents and students at all times, and that concerns and complaints are managed and resolved fairly, efficiently, promptly and in accordance with relative legislation.

Aims:

- To provide a harmonious, positive and productive school environment for students, parents and staff.
- To resolve complaints fairly, efficiently, promptly and in accordance with relative legislation.

Concerns and Complaints covered by this Policy:

- 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 and the school community.
- School fees and payments.
- General administrative issues.
- Staff concerns and complaints.

Expectations:

The school expects a person raising a concern or complaint to:

- Do 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 of 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.
- Any concerns or complaints should in the first instance be raised with the school directly.

Implementation Approach:

- The school has developed its procedures to address concerns and complaints in collaboration with parents and the school community.
- It is the Principal's responsibility to provide a healthy and positive school environment that is free from discrimination and harassment. In doing so the Principal must ensure that all staff are aware of their rights and responsibilities when addressing concerns or complaints raised
- The Principal is required to use local complaints resolution procedures, where appropriate, for resolving complaints in relation to issues that fall within the school's area of responsibility. All cases of serious misconduct – sexual offences, criminal charges, or other serious incidents – must instead be referred to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development – DEECD, Conduct and Ethics Branch.
- It is incumbent upon the Principal to act where unacceptable conduct is observed or brought to his or her attention.

- A complainant may at any stage choose to take their complaint directly to an external agency such as the Merit Protection Boards, Australian Education Union, Victorian Equal Opportunity Commission, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission or the Ombudsman.
- The Principal may choose to respond to a complaint through an informal process in cases where the concern or complaint is minor, the complainant wishes the matter to be dealt with informally or the complaint has arisen from lack of or unclear communication.
- It is important that all formal complaints, ensuing procedures and outcomes are fully documented.
- Formal processes will be used when informal processes haven't been successful, a complainant seeks a formal process, or the Principal believes the complaint warrants formal investigation.
- Full details regarding formal complaint resolution procedures are contained within the DEECD 'Local Complaints Resolution Procedures' handbook, with the following steps.
- The formal process involves: -
 1. Investigating the complaint including formal interviews, written statements, conveying the details of the concern or complaint to the respondent in writing providing the opportunity for a written response.
 2. Dismissing or accepting the complaint. Acceptance may involve the Conduct & Ethics Branch, verbal or written warnings, conciliation, counselling or consequences etc.
 3. Preparation of a detailed confidential report.
 4. Monitoring of the situation.
- If a person with a complaint is not satisfied with the outcome determined by the school, they should contact the Department's Regional Office. The officer from the regional Office 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 not satisfied at this level of escalation, the Regional office may escalate the Department's Group Coordination Division.
- All matters must be treated with utmost confidentiality, and professional respect always.

Evaluation:

- This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle.
- The school will also review its information about concerns and complaints made over time to:
 - Identify common or recurring issues that need addressing.
 - Assess the effectiveness of these and other procedures and whether they are being followed.
 - Use information provided to the school through other sources on the views of parents (e.g. surveys).

Resources:

If you would like further information about raising a concern or making a complaint you can visit the School Policy and Advisory Guide on the Department's website at: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au>.

This policy was ratified by School Council – December 2014