

# COMPLAINTS (Parents)

## Policy

### **Rationale:**

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

### **Aim:**

*The school's approach to handling concerns and complaints is based on:*

- Providing a safe and supportive learning environment;
- Building relationships between staff, parents and staff;
- Providing a safe working environment for staff;
- Providing and maintaining an harmonious, positive and productive school environment;
- Resolution of complaints in a fair, prompt efficient manner in accordance with relevant legislation.

### **This policy covers:**

- 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; &/or
- any other school-related matters except as detailed below.

### **Expectations:**

*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; &/or
- recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced.

*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.

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

### **I have a concern / complaint, what do I do?**

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 class or group
- the principal about issues relating to staff members or complex student issues, school policy, school management, staff members or very complex student issues.

### **What happens next?**

Your concern will be dealt with in a confidential and sensitive manner by the relevant staff member and Principal. In discussion with yourself and the relevant staff/student (where appropriate) a mutually acceptable outcome will be decided upon. Implementation of any actions resulting from this concern will occur in a timely manner and you will be informed throughout the process of the status of your concern.

### **Still not happy?**

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 complaint cannot be resolved by the complainant, school and regional office working together, the regional office may refer it to the Department's Group Coordination Division. The Division 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 and regional office did not resolve it to their satisfaction and will ask the complainant to outline their view on the course of action required to resolve the complaint. Where the complainant is unable to provide a written account the officer from Group Coordination Division should act on the information provided

### **Other matters**

Personal support is most appropriate in situations where the complainant and others involved in the complaint process have emotional issues related to the complaint.

Resources available to students, parents, teachers and support staff involved in addressing a concern or complaint may include the use of a mediator or advocate.

The school will make every effort to resolve concerns and complaints before involving other levels of the Department.

- 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.

***NB: The Principal in consultation with School Council may vary this Policy if circumstances require it.***

### **Evaluation:**

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

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

**May 2013**