

Raising Concerns or Complaints Policy

(Ratified by School Council: August 2022)

PURPOSE:

The school's approach to handling concerns and complaints is based on the values of:

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

GUIDELINES:

For the purposes of the policy;

- a 'concern' is an issue of interest (because of its importance and effect) which is raised informally in order to improve or change a situation.

For example: I believe that the school's physical education policy and program is inadequate. I don't think that it caters for students who have well-developed skills and who need to be involved in competitive sport. I think the school should review its policy in this area.

- a 'complaint' is an expression of grievance or resentment where the complainant is seeking redress or justice.

For example: My daughter has been left out of the school's netball team for the third time in a row. She is an accomplished netballer and deserves to be part of the team. It is not fair that she is left out and I want you to do something about it.

- 'parent', in relation to a child, includes a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for the child including parental responsibility under the Family Law Act 1975 of the Commonwealth and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides.

These procedures cover concerns and complaints about:

- general issues of student behavior that are contrary to the school's Student Engagement & Wellbeing Policy
- incidents of bullying or harassment in the classroom or the school yard
- Issues of discrimination such as incidents related to aboriginal students, students with a disability and/or students who identify as LGBTQI+
 - learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
 - communication with parents
 - school fees and payments
 - general administrative issues
- any other school-related matters except those for which there are existing rights of review or appeal, as detailed in the Victorian Government Schools Reference Guide. These exclusions 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.

IMPLEMENTATION:

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.

The school will address any concerns and complaints received from parents:

- courteously
- efficiently
- fairly
- promptly, or within the timeline created with a person holding a concern or complaint
- in accordance with due process, principles of natural justice and the Department's regulatory framework.

Parent concern or complaint

In the first instance, a complaint should be made to the school. The complainant should telephone, visit or write to:

- the student's teacher about learning issues and incidents that happened in their class or group
- the year level leader if students from several classes are involved
- the Principal or one of the Assistant Principals about issues relating to
 - staff members
 - complex student issues
 - school policy
 - school management

For contact details for any staff member, call the office on (03) 9802 9938. If you are not sure who to contact, contact one of the Assistant Principals on the telephone number listed above.

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.

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

Resolution of a concern or complaint.

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
- to change its decision
- to change its policies, procedures or practices

The school will implement the remedy as soon as practicable.

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.

International Students:

If the complaint involves a child partaking in the school's International Students Program, the school will follow the procedure as indicated above. However, if the complaint is not resolved satisfactory at the school level, families may escalate the complaint to the International Education Division (IED) of the Department of Education and Training (DET).

LEGISLATION:

All concerns and complaints must be addressed in line with the Department's legislative and regulatory framework, which includes the:

- Education and Training Reform Act 2006
- Education and Training Reform Regulations 2007
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
- Information Privacy Act 2000
- Wrongs Act 1958.
- Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct www.vit.vic.edu.au
- Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees www.ssa.vic.gov.au
- Ministerial Order 1359

RELATED POLICIES:

School Council Policy
Refund Policy
Student Engagement & Wellbeing Policy
Merit & Equity Policy
Child Safe Policy

POLICY EVALUATION:

Evaluation will be conducted every two years by the Education Committee

DUE DATE FOR REVIEW:

Due for review in September 2024