

## RAISING CONCERNS & COMPLAINTS (November 2015)

### BACKGROUND

The school will develop its procedures to address concerns and complaints in collaboration with parents and the school community.

Concerns and complaints are addressed in line with the Department of Education and Training's (DET) Dignity and Respect statement which says

- The Department is committed to providing safe and supportive work environments where diversity is valued and everyone is treated with respect, fairness and dignity.
- Discrimination, sexual and other forms of harassment, bullying, violence and threatening behaviour are unacceptable.
- All employees, students, parents and visitors in schools and other Departmental workplaces are expected to act accordingly.
- The Department (which includes schools) and school councils, will act to ensure that the safety, security, health and wellbeing of all employees, students, parents and visitors in schools and other Departmental places are protected.

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

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

### PURPOSE

- to provide guidance when addressing parent concerns and complaints
- to ensure that effective protocols for dealing with complaints are followed and clearly communicated to the school community
- to ensure that all complaints are dealt with promptly in a fair and consistent manner
- to promote the spirit of cooperation in the resolution of complaints

### Concerns and complaints covered by the procedures

These procedures cover concerns and complaints about

- general issues of students behaviour that are contrary to the school 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

These procedures do not cover matters for which there are existing rights of review or appeal. These include

- student discipline matters involving expulsion
- 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 or criminal matters

### 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
- 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

### Raising concerns or Complaints

In the first instance, a complaint should be made to the school. Concerns are best resolved at school. The Department expects that most complaints will be resolved by 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 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 9772 1393
- If you are not sure who to contact, contact the Assistant Principal on 9772 1393

### Help with raising concerns and complaints

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 parent concerns and complaints information

The school will record the following details of all complaints received, even if the complaint appears to be minor

- 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.

### Addressing concerns or complaints

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

The school will give a complainant a copy of its complaints procedures.

The school will determine whether a concern or complaint should be managed through the school's concerns and complaints process or through other complaints processes of the Department.

All complaints will be noted and acted on promptly by the staff member who receives the complaint. The school will acknowledge all complaints made in writing. It will provide the complainant with a timeline for investigating the complaint.

The assistant principal or principal 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.

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.

### Remedies

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 concerns or complaints

## Edithvale Primary School - Policies & Procedures

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.

### Communication and training

The school will make information about procedures for addressing concerns and complaints readily available to parents and the school community. The information will include

- how a person can make a complaint
- the person's responsibilities
- information to be provided by the person
- who the person should contact and their contact details
- the process and timeframes for managing complaints.

The school's procedures for addressing concerns and complaints will be

- published on the school's website
- printed in the parent's handbook

The school will brief all members of staff about its procedures to address concerns and complaints annually.

The school council will regularly review its policy and procedures to effectively address parent concerns and complaints as part of its cyclic policy and procedures review schedule.

Complaints are an important way for the community to provide information and feedback to a school.

Complaints –as well as praise – provide valuable feedback about how well you and the school are meeting parents' needs. The complainant is inviting the school to enter into a problem-solving process to find a solution.

RATIFIED BY SCHOOL COUNCIL ON	10 November 2015
PRINCIPAL	James Whitla
SCHOOL COUNCIL PRESIDENT	Martin Taylor
EVALUATION	This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three year review cycle, or as required due to changes in relevant Acts, Laws or should situations arise that require earlier consideration.