

Moonee Ponds West Primary School



Management of Parent/Carer Concerns and Complaints Policy

PURPOSE

Moonee Ponds West recognises that involving parents in their child's education is critical to children's development and learning. We value positive relationships with parents and families and strong school community partnerships.

From time to time parents/carers may have concerns that they wish to take up with the school. We welcome feedback and encourage parents/carers to raise any issue so that it can be dealt with in a timely and professional manner.

In the development of this policy and procedures, it is important to clarify underlying principles and values which underpin our roles and accountabilities, including the recognition that complaint/conflict management is a shared responsibility. All issues and complaints should be resolved at the school level if possible.

AIMS

Moonee Ponds West's approach to addressing concerns and complaints is based on a commitment to:

- Providing a safe and supportive learning environment for students
- Building relationships between students, parents and staff
- Providing a safe working environment for staff.

Concerns and complaints covered by the policy

The concerns and complaints covered by this policy and associated procedures include issues related to:

- General issues of student behaviour that are contrary to the school's policies including incidents of bullying and harassment
- Learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
- Student class placements
- Communication with parents
- School fees and payments
- General administrative issues
- Other school-related matters except as detailed below.

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

Those 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.

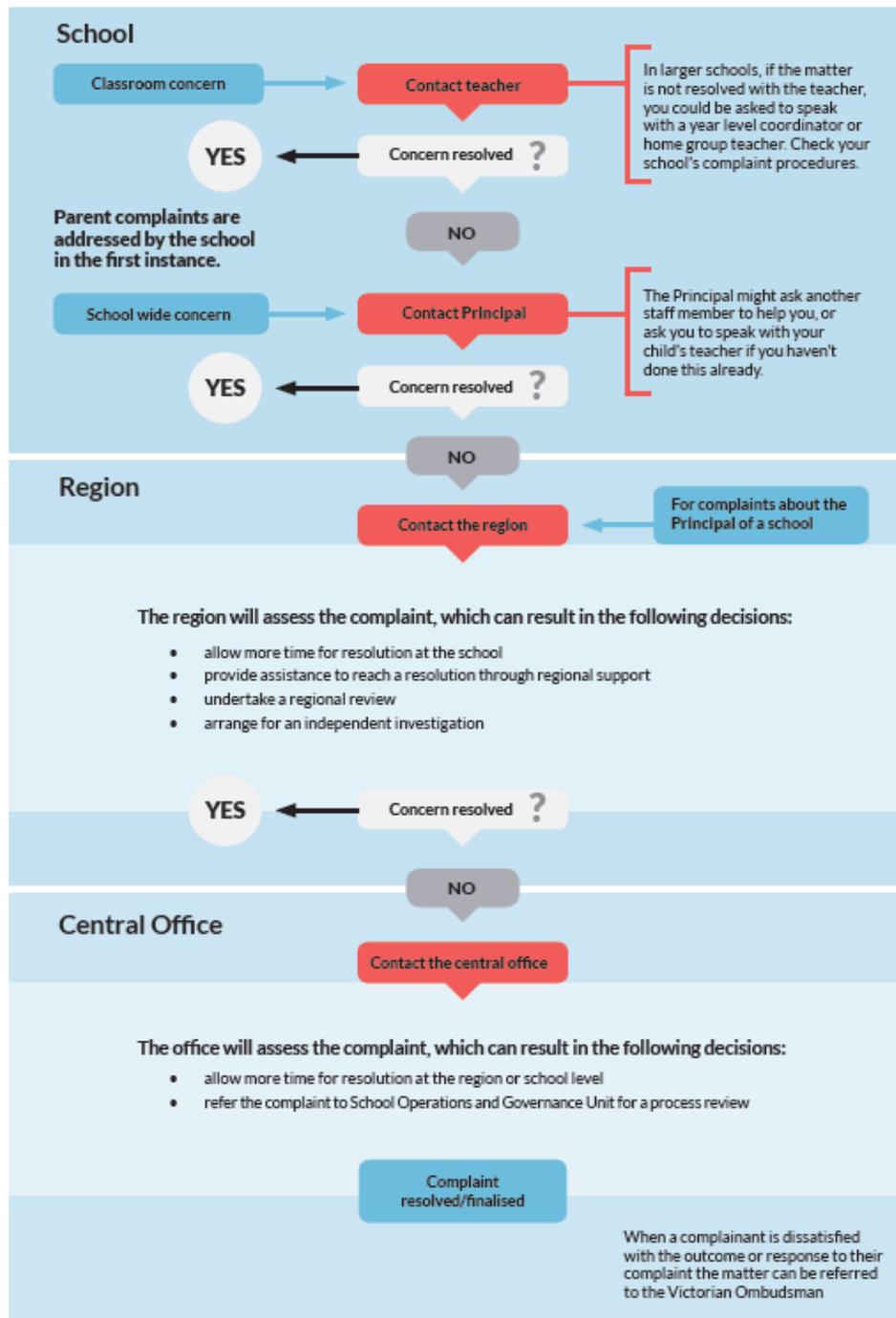
Process for developing and reviewing the policy:

The school develops its procedures to address concerns and complaints in collaboration with parents/carers and the school community. School Council will regularly review its policy and procedures to effectively address parent/carer concerns and complaints as part of its cyclic policy and procedures review schedule.

Expectations

The following procedure will be used to assist parents/carers in addressing any concerns within the school community. This procedure has been developed in consultation with the school community and endorsed by School Council.

Parent/Carer Complaint Management Process Flowchart:



Source; Department of Education and Training

Endorsed by School Council: 29th May 2017



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/carers:

- Courteously
- Efficiently
- Fairly
- Promptly (Please refer to Timelines on page 4 below)
- In accordance with due process and where appropriate, the principles of natural justice and the Department's (DET) regulatory framework.

Raising concerns or complaints

In the first instance, any concerns or complaints should be raised directly with the school as per the above guidelines. Contact with members of staff can be made directly or through the school office on 9370 6875. If you are not sure who to contact, please contact the Principal.

Please contact:

- The student's classroom or specialist teacher about learning issues and incidents that happened in their class or group
- The team leader if students from several classes are involved
- The student welfare co-ordinator relating to student issues of a confidential or complex nature
- The Principal about issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members or very complex student issues

If you feel your concern or complaint has not been dealt with, please address your concern in writing to the Principal.

Role of the Principal

- A commitment to an effective complaints handling system that reflects the needs, expectations and rights of complainants
- Recognise the need to be fair to the complainant and the person against whom the complaint is made
- Ensure the rules of natural justice are applied to all parties
- Ensure that complaints are dealt with quickly, courteously, fairly and within established timelines
- Ensure complaint information is handled according to the relevant privacy legislation and other act that prescribes how information should be handled
- Include processes to record complaints such as a complaints register
- Use complaints data to allow analysis to guide school system improvement.

Staff Training

- Provide staff (and external education providers and volunteers) with complaints handling training and support appropriate to their responsibilities.
- Ensure that staff who manage complaints are informed of their responsibilities to demonstrate the personal attributes of the *Good Practice Guide: Ombudsman Victoria's Guide to Complaint Handling For Victorian Public Sector Agencies*.

Help with raising concerns or complaints

Complainants can seek the services of an advocate when they feel they are unable to express their concern or complaint 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.

Timeframes

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 inform the complainant of 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

Where a complaint is found to be justified, the school will be able to resolve the complaint by:

- An apology or expression of regret
- A review of the decision
- To review its policy, procedure or practice
- A refund of parent/carer payments
- Offering the opportunity for student counselling or other support.

Regional Office

The Principal may contact the regional director and request the region's intervention to help resolve a complaint. The Principal would have exhausted the school's parent/carer complaint-handling procedures and be of the belief that the complaint would not be able to be resolved at the school level. The parent/carer will be advised that their complaint will be handled by staff from the region.

Referral of concerns or complaints

If a person with a concern or complaint is not satisfied with the outcome determined by the school, they should contact the Department's South Western Victoria Regional Office (03) 9291 6500; swvr@edumail.vic.gov.au

Communicating complaints procedures

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

- Published on the school's website
- Printed in a leaflet given to a parent when their child enrolls
- Printed in the parent's handbook
- Published in the school newsletter periodically.

Monitoring the complaints policy

The school will monitor parent concerns and complaints and consider issues raised through the parent complaints process, and any other relevant information from the parent opinion survey, when undertaking a review of the school's policies, procedures and operations.

School Council will review its Management of Parents, Concerns and Complaints Policy and procedures as part of its cyclic policy and procedures review schedule. Any changes to the policy will be advised to the school community as part of the implementation process of the policy.

Evaluation

Endorsed by School Council May 29th 2017. This policy is reviewed annually.

Endorsed by School Council: 29th May 2017



Standards

The school's complaint-handling process reflects guiding principles, which are informed by the Australian/New Zealand Standard – Guidelines for complaint management in organizations (AS/NZS 10002:2014)

Visibility	Information about how and where to make a complaint, as well as how a complaint will be handled, will be regularly publicised within the school community. The actions taken to respond to a complaint will be well documented and include the reasons underpinning any decisions made.
Accessibility	Information about how to make a complaint and the school's procedures when responding to a complaint will be easily accessible. The complaint-handling process will be flexible and include the ability to make a complaint in person, by phone and in writing. Support will also be given to parents with special needs, including translations and access to interpreters.
Responsiveness	Receipt of written complaints will be acknowledged by communicating with parents as soon as possible. Complaints will be addressed promptly and the parents kept informed of the progress of their complaint when the matter is complex and will take time to bring to resolution.
Objectivity	Each complaint will be treated in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner.
Accountability	School will have a fair, effective and efficient complaint-handling process. The school will be accountable, both internally and externally, for its decision-making and complaint-handling performance. School will provide explanations and reasons for its decisions.
Student Focussed	The school will keep the educational attainment and wellbeing of the student at the forefront of its thinking and action

Reference:

- (1) Schools are required to establish a policy and procedures to address parents' concerns and complaints in consultation with the school community. The policy and procedures must be consistent with the Department of Education and Training (DET) regulations.
- (2) 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; a '**complaint**' is an expression of grievance or resentment where the complainant is seeking redress or justice.

Further information

Department Policy on handling complaints:

www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/complainschool.aspx

Department parent complaints website:

www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/parentcomplaint.htm

Department Dignity and Respect Statement (2006):

www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/schacc/dignityrespectstatement.pdf

Victorian Public Sector Complaint procedures:

www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au/www./html/93-complaint-handling-uide-forthe-victorian-public-sector.asp

Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct:

www.vit.vic.edu.au

Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees:

www.ssa.vic.gov.au