

Raising Community Concerns and Complaints Process

School specific POLICY

Rationale:

This Derrimut Primary School “Raising Concerns and Complaints” policy has been developed in response to the Department of Education and Early Childhood, (DEECD) expectations following a review, in 2005, by the Ombudsman Victoria on the handling of parents’ complaints and concerns.

Aim:

To support community awareness and understanding of how they can raise concerns and complaints and have them dealt with in a timely and professional manner.

To ensure the school has in place a range of procedures for dealing with concerns and complaints.

To recognise that parent complaints mostly relate to one of the following areas:

- the management of an incident between students at the school
- the educational (or other) progress of a student
- the development and implementation of school and general education policy.

School Values:

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

- Academic Rigour
- Leadership
- Teamwork
- Respect

We also recognise the importance of:

- providing a safe and supportive learning environment for our students
- providing a safe working environment for staff
- building positive relationships between all stakeholders - students, parents, staff and the wider community

What is covered by this policy?

Procedures that cover concerns and complaints relating to:

- general issues of student behaviour that are contrary to the schools code of conduct.
- incidents of bullying or harassment in the classroom or school yard.
- learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning.
- communication with parents and carers.
- school fees and payments.
- general administrative issues.

The policy and procedures **do not cover** concerns and issues related to:

- student discipline involving expulsions.
- complaints about employee conduct or performance. (as these should be dealt with by performance management, grievance resolution or disciplinary action)
- complaints by employees relating their employment.
- student critical incident matters.
- other criminal matters

Ownership and Scope:

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

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 in a calm and courteous manner.
- show respect and understanding of each other's point of view and value differences rather than to judge and blame.
- recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced.

The school will address any concerns or complaints received by parents in the following manner:

- courteously
- efficiently
- fairly
- promptly, or within a timeline agreed upon by both parties
- in accordance with due process, principles of natural justice and the DEECD regulatory framework.

How to raise a concern or complaint:

In the first instance, a complaint should be made directly to the school.

The complainant should telephone, write to or visit:

- the student's classroom teacher about learning issues
- the leading teacher or assistant principal about issues relating to complex student issues
- the principal about issues relating to staff members, school policy, school management, or extremely complex student issues

If you are unsure of whom to contact, please telephone the principal on (03) 8361 1000. The principal will then organise for an appointment to be made with the appropriate personnel.

Support available when raising a concern:

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 organisation who does not receive a fee. All parties involved in addressing a complaint may seek the services of a mediator when there is difficulty coming to an agreement.

An interpreter will be provided if required.

Managing and addressing complaints and concerns:

The school will record the following details of all complaints received onto a template which includes the provision for:

- the name and contact details (with permission) of person making complaint/raising concern
- the date the concern was expressed
- the form in which the concern was received (e.g.: face to face, letter, telephone, email)
- a brief description of the complaint
- the details of the school's response
- the action taken relating to the concern /complaint
- any recommendations for the future

However, when the complaint is easily resolved in a telephone call, briefer notes will be kept.

All records of complaints received will be stored in a secure location within the school security room.

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

The school will provide a complainant with a copy of the complaints procedure

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 DEECD.

Timeframe:

The school will make every effort to resolve a concern or complaint as quickly as possible. If a complaint involves a number of students and/or a range of issues, the school will require additional time to fully investigate and resolve the complaint.

Should the complaint involve complex issues, the school may need to take advice from the DEECD regional office which may take additional time. The school will then inform the complainant of the adjusted time frame and any reasons for delay. In all cases the school will try to resolve a concern or complaint within twenty working days.

Remedies:

If a concern or complaint is substantiated in part or whole, the school will offer an appropriate remedy. This may include one of the following:

- an explanation of further information about the issue
- mediation, counselling or other support
- an apology, expression of regret or admission of fault
- a change of decision
- a change of policy, procedure or practice
- the cancellation of a debt or a refund

Referral of complaints or concerns:

If a person with a concern or complaint is not satisfied with the outcome determined by the school, they should contact the South Western Regional Office

The officer from the regional office will ask the complainant for a complete 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 DEECD Group Coordination Division.

The Division will ask the complainant for a complete and factual account in writing of the concern and request the complainant's opinion as to why the issue was not resolved and their course of action on how the issue can be resolved.

When the complainant is unable to provide a written account, the Group Coordination officer should act on the information provided.

Reviewed 2014