

Overport Primary School

Parent Complaints: Raising concerns and complaints



Rationale:

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

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

Guidelines:

The procedures within this policy cover concerns and complaints about:

- 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
- Any other school-related matters.

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

- student discipline matters involving expulsions
- complaints about employee conduct or performance
- complaints by the Department's employees related to their employment
- student critical incident matters
- other criminal matters.

Implementation:

- The school will develop its procedures to address concerns and complaints in collaboration with parents and the school community.
- These procedures take effect from date of school council ratification.
- 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, and in

accordance with due process, principles of natural justice and the Department's regulatory framework.

- The complainant should telephone, visit or write to:
 - ❖ the student's teacher about learning issues and incidents that happened in their class
 - ❖ the area 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 9783 8777.
- If the complainant is not sure who to contact, they should contact the Assistant Principal on 9783 8777.
- 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.
- The school will consider recording 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 staff member 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.
- When a complaint is easily resolved in a telephone call, a brief note recording the issue and the resolution is all that is required.
- The school will make every effort to resolve concerns and complaints before involving other levels of the Department.
- A copy of the complaints policy is available on the website and the procedures will be provided to the complainant on request.
- 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.
- 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, however, will at times, require adequate time to investigate.
- 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.
- 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, its policies, procedures or practices
 - to cancel a debt (such as for school payments) or refund a fee.

- 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.
- 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 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 and printed in the Information for Families handbook.
- The school will:
 - brief all members of staff about its procedures to address concerns and complaints annually
 - provide staff with (or provide access to) training and support appropriate to their responsibilities under the procedures
 - ensure staff who manage complaints demonstrate the personal attributes outlined in the *Good Practice Guide: Ombudsman Victoria's guide to complaint handling for Victorian public sector agencies*.

Evaluation:

- 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.
- The school will review its information about complaints made over time to:
 - identify common or recurring issues that may need addressing
 - assess the effectiveness of these and other procedures and whether they are being followed
 - use information provided to the school through the Parent Opinion Survey on the views of parents.
- This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle.

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

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