

# PARENT /COMMUNITY GRIEVANCE POLICY



## Rationale:

Positive, clear and effective processes for resolving grievances between the school and community members assists in the building of strong relationships, dispels anxiety, and ultimately provides students with an enhanced learning environment

- Our school prides itself on clear, consultative and open communication
- While we accept our responsibility to consult, and to communicate both clearly and effectively with the community, community members also have an obligation to read notices and newsletters, to attend briefings, and to seek clarification when required
- There may, however, still be times when members of the community disagree or are unclear about the decisions made within the school

## Aims:

- To provide clear, positive and fair processes that allow grievances to be aired and resolved in a timely and effectively manner

## Procedure

It is essential that the established process as outlined below is followed to resolve grievances:

- ❖ Try to establish the facts as clearly possible, be wary of third hand information or gossip
  - ❖ If the matter involves your child or an issue of everyday class operation, **make an appointment** to see their classroom teacher, detailing the reasons for the appointment
  - ❖ **An appointment** should be made with the principal to discuss issues involving school policy, operations beyond your child's classroom, concerns regarding staff, or grievances that are not resolved to the complainant's satisfaction
  - ❖ The principal will provide the concerned community member with a copy of this '*Parent/Community Grievances Policy*' unless the matter is easily and satisfactorily resolved
  - ❖ While 'in principle' support may be sought from the School Council, it will not simply become a conduit for community complaints, will not become involved in confidential or personal issues, and will generally refer specific grievances about individuals to the principal or the School Council president, if applicable
  - ❖ All grievances are to be kept confidential
  - ❖ Community members may be accompanied by another person, in a support role, at appointments to resolve grievances
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- All formal discussions and processes involving grievances will be documented
  - The Principal and School Council president will exercise his/her judgement as to whether or not they will act upon anonymous complaints
  - The Principal may provide community members with appropriate departmental contact names and numbers if grievances are not resolved
  - A complainant may at any stage choose to take their complaint directly to an external agency such as the Victorian Equal Opportunity Commission, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, or the Ombudsman

## Evaluation:

- This policy will be reviewed by School Council as part of the school's three-year review cycle, in consultation with the wider school community

## ***Additional information from DET website***

### **How best to raise your concern or complaint**

The school is committed to good communication and treating everyone with dignity and respect. It is important to remember that everyone in the school community should work together in a spirit of cooperation and understanding and should conduct themselves in a respectful, courteous and calm manner.

For the Department's statement on treating everyone with equal respect, see:  [Dignity and Respect Statement \(PDF - 288Kb\)](#)

Matters of general concern best raised with the school principal include:

- school facilities
- sports days
- excursions
- school fees and charges
- student assessment and reporting
- timing of special events
- student free days
- before and after school care
- homework policy
- student dress codes.

Matters of personal concern that should be raised confidentially and directly with the relevant teacher in the first instance include:

- individual student needs
- academic progress
- behaviour and student discipline issues
- non-attendance or truancy
- challenging or changing family circumstances.

### **Raising your complaint - by phone or in person**

- You should make some notes as a guide prior to approaching the school as this helps to set out all the facts in a logical order. You can then use this information when you are speaking with the person dealing with your problem.
- Make a note of the people you speak to about your complaint and the date you spoke with them.
- Stay calm. Remember the person you are speaking with is genuinely trying to help you. If you are unable to stay calm have someone else speak on your behalf.
- Outline the steps you have already taken to resolve the issue.
- Explain what action you think should be taken to resolve the issue. Be reasonable and realistic about your expectations.
- If the complaint you are raising involves another student at the school it is very important that you do not approach them or their parent/s directly as this could make matters worse.
- Understand you could be referred to a more appropriate person within the department, or to another agency.

### **Raising your complaint - in writing**

If you are not using the Parent Complaint Form, remember to sign and date any correspondence and provide your full name and address. Provide as much relevant information as possible including:

- relevant dates, places and times
- a description of the incident or problem
- details of any phone conversation or meetings
- details of who you have contacted previously

- any explanations that you think are important
- copies of relevant documents (if appropriate).

The Department of Education may not fully investigate a complaint if it is an anonymous or unreasonable complaint or if the complaint is not within our jurisdiction.

To help you to put together all the information you need to submit a complaint in writing, see:

 [Parent Complaint Form \(pdf - 111.93kb\)](#)

### **Anonymous complaint**

Anonymous complaints will be accepted, however, it may not be possible to investigate the matters thoroughly without sufficient detail or the ability to maintain effective liaison.

### **Unreasonable complaint**

An unreasonable complaint is one that is vexatious, trivial or frivolous in nature, such as a complaint that is:

- an abuse of the complaint process
- not made in good faith
- an attempt to reopen an issue that has already been resolved by raising the same, or similar, issues again
- the result of unreasonable complainant behaviour.

### **Further review**

You may submit your complaint to an external agency if you feel that your issue has not been dealt with appropriately by the school or the Department of Education. Other agencies may include:

- [Victorian Ombudsman](#)
- [Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission](#)

You can also seek advice and/or mediation services from an organisation such as:

- [Dispute Settlement Centre Victoria](#)
- [Parents Victoria](#)

There are also a number of community organisations that may assist with advocacy.

*This policy was last ratified by School Council on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2017*