



Flowerdale Primary School

Small Schools Are Great Schools

RAISING CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

Rationale:

Flowerdale Primary School's "Raising Concerns and Complaints" policy has been developed in response to DEECD expectations following a review, in 2005, by the Ombudsman Victoria on the handling of parents' complaints and concerns.

Aim:

To ensure the school has in place a range of procedures for dealing with concerns and complaints. It should be recognised 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 Flowerdale Primary School community has an agreed set of five school values. These are Respect, Bouncing Back, Personal Best, Compassion and Teamwork. The values are an important part of our school culture and are expected to be upheld by students, staff and parents. Classroom teachers ensure that students have an appreciation of our school values and understand their importance.

What is covered by these procedures?

These procedures cover concerns and complaints relating to:

- general issues of student misbehaviour 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 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 to 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, and in a calm and courteous manner without abusing staff members
- 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

All complaints should be made to the school.

The complainant should telephone, visit or write to:

- The student's teacher about learning issues and incidents that happened in their class or group
- The principal about issues relating to school policy and school management.

For contact details for any staff member, call the office on (03) 57801264.

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.

The school will ensure that the complainant is aware of these supports. A complainant who wishes to use these support services should ensure the person addressing the concern or complaint is aware of their intention and is in 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 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 the complaint is easily resolved in a telephone call, the principal will make a brief note in the school's/principal's/teacher's diary recording the issue and the resolution.

Addressing concerns and 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 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 the 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. 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.

Referrals 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 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, in clear and easy-to-understand language and, where

appropriate, in a range of community languages and formats that are accessible to everyone so that no-one is disadvantaged.

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 school newsletter

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.

Review

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 council will regularly review its policy and procedures to effectively address parent concerns and complaints.

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.

Terms used in this document

Complainant- the person or persons making the complaint

Ratified at School Council on 3rd June 2014

Reviewed and ratified in July 2017

