



Parent Concerns and Complaints Policy

Rationale:

A timely and professional response to parent complaints is an effective means of encouraging communication, building trust and resolving issues for the betterment of all concerned.

Aims:

- To develop and implement a process by which parents can confidently raise concerns and complaints in the knowledge that they will be listened to and these will be professionally managed in a timely, confidential and appropriate manner.
- For Balwyn North Primary School staff to confidently address parent concerns and complaints promptly, consistently and fairly.

Definitions:

Parents' concerns and complaints most commonly relate to:

- the management of an incident between students at school
- the educational or other progress of their child
- the development and implementation of school and general education policy.

'Parent' in the policy has the same meaning as in the Education and Training Reform Act 2006, which is:

'parent', in relation to a child, includes a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for the child including parental responsibility under the Family Law Act 1975 of the Commonwealth and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides.

For the purposes of the policy:

- a 'concern' is an issue of interest (because of its importance and effect) which is raised 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.

Implementation:

Relationships with parents are important and complaints raised by parents are taken very seriously.

- Parents making complaints should ascertain the facts as best they can, and contact the school at their earliest convenience. Parents may contact the Principal, Assistant Principal, relevant staff member or School Council.
- If concerns or complaints are raised with School Council members, they will be referred to the School Principal.
- Parents with complaints should contact the school by telephone, in person or in writing. The parent will then be contacted by the appropriate staff member to address the issue/concern.

- Parents making complaints are to be well-behaved, confidential and courteous. Parents who are unreasonable, threatening or discourteous can expect their discussions with staff to be terminated until such time as an alternative discussion time is arranged by the school.
- The school will record the details of all complaints including the name and contact details of the person/s making the complaint/s. The complaint will then be referred to the Principal or most appropriate person to investigate.
- The Principal will determine whether or not an anonymous complaint will be investigated.
- The investigating staff member may conduct a preliminary investigation or communicate with the parent to discuss the matter further, and where appropriate advise the Principal of their actions.
- If the scope of the investigation is beyond the capacity or jurisdiction of the school, the matter will be referred to the appropriate authority and the parent will be informed of the referral.
- Parents discussing complaints with staff may be accompanied by an advocate if they wish.
- Any investigation conducted by the school will be done in a timely, efficient and confidential manner, ensuring the fair principles of natural justice are applied for all. In some instances, the school may engage with external Department personnel and/or specialists to assist in resolving complaints.
- Parents will be provided with an anticipated time-frame for a resolution where appropriate or possible.
- Following the investigation, the investigating staff member will communicate with the parent to provide their findings and an appropriate course of action, if any.

If in the view of the parent the matter remains unresolved, the parent will be provided with details as to how they can refer the matter to the Department of Education's regional office.

- Similarly, the school, the parent or other involved parties may seek to involve a mediator to try to resolve any unresolved complaint.
- All records of parent complaints, subsequent investigations and outcomes will be stored confidentially at the school in line with legislative privacy requirements.
- All staff will be made aware of our school's complaints handling procedures and will be supported with training on how to minimise, respond to, and manage parent complaints.

References:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/community/pages/parentcomplaints.aspx>

Evaluation: This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle.

Date Ratified: 1/8/17