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**ADDRESSING PARENTS/ GUARDIANS CONCERNS**

**STATEMENT:**

The partnership between the home and school plays an important part in your child’s education. Positive communication and confidence are critical factors in supporting this relationship. Teaching and learning works best when parents and teachers talk to each other and work together to solve any problems.

**PURPOSE:**

To ensure our school responds to parent concerns and complaints in an effective and timely manner. If you have a concern or complaint we encourage you to make contact with the school to discuss the matter. The school should always be your first point of contact if you have any concerns about your child’s education.

**GUIDELINES:**

1. When parents/caregivers have a concern about their child in the classroom, they should make an appointment to discuss the issue with the class teacher. If they are not satisfied with the outcome, an appointment should be made with the Principal.
2. When addressing parent/care concerns or complaints, the school must:
* abide by relevant regulatory and legislative frameworks
* maintain confidentiality
* balance the rights and responsibilities of all parties
* ensure all parties are aware of their right to advocacy
* act in a manner that seeks to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
1. Concerns and complaints must be addressed in line with the Department’s *2006 Dignity and Respect Statement*, which states –
* The Department is committed to providing safe and supportive work environments where diversity is valued and everyone is treated with respect, fairness and dignity.
* Discrimination, sexual and other forms of harassment, bullying, violence and threatening behaviour are unacceptable.
* All employees, students, parents and visitors in schools and other Departmental workplaces are expected to act accordingly.
* The Department (which includes schools) and school councils, will act to ensure that the safety, security, health and wellbeing of all employees, students, parents and visitors in schools and other Departmental workplaces are protected.
1. All staff must observe the code of conduct for the Victorian Teaching Profession.
2. The Department expects that all parties will –
* maintain the confidentiality of all parties, in line with Departmental policy and legislative requirements
* acknowledge that their 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.
1. The principal should ensure that parents are aware of their right to advocacy when communicating the issues involved in their complaint/concern, and negotiating an outcome.

**IMPLEMENTATION:**

1. Contact your child’s teacher. It is best to discuss your concerns with your child’s teacher first, by making an appointment by phone or in person before school.
2. If you still have a concern after talking to your child’s teacher or if your concern is about the conduct of a member of staff or another aspect of the school that is impacting on your child, ring the school to talk to the Principal.
3. If resolution cannot be reached at the school level, and you require assistance in resolving the issue, contact the Community Liaison Officer at [Regional Office](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/regions.aspx).

**ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:**

**School**

* Develops, publicises and implements its policy and procedures to effectively address parent concerns and complaints.
* Ensures all reasonable steps have been undertaken in resolving parent concerns and complaints.
* Maintains the confidentiality of all parties and observes the principles of natural justice.
* Contacts the regional office for support with any complex complaints.
* Communicates the outcomes of concerns and complaints, where possible, to all relevant parties.
* Communicates its policy and procedures clearly and regularly to parents and the school community.
* Ensures all new staff members are aware of the school and Department’s policies and procedures in relation to addressing parent concerns and complaints.
* Briefs all staff members (including volunteers) on the policy and procedures annually.
* Provides staff with (or provides access to) training and support appropriate to their responsibilities under the procedures.
* Establishes and maintains administrative processes to manage concerns and complaints raised at the school.
* Ensures that its policy and procedures are consistent with the Department’s policy.
* Regularly reviews its record of complaints to identify common or recurring issues that may need to be addressed.
* Modifies other school policies and procedures as required as a result of addressing concerns and complaints.
* Ensures that all parties in a disputed complaint are aware of their entitlement to support through an advocate. An advocate can be a friend or colleague or an unpaid support person provided through an appropriate agency.
* Reflects on the personal attributes necessary for staff selected to manage concerns and complaints (see *Good Practice Guide: Ombudsman Victoria’s guide to complaint handling* *for Victorian public sector agencies*).

**Teachers:**

* usually best placed to resolve concerns and complaints relating to student learning and specific student incidents in the teacher’s class or group.

**Principal:**

* provides support when students from other classes are involved.
* usually best placed to resolve concerns and complaints relating to staff members or complex student issues.
* usually best placed to resolve concerns and complaints relating to school policy, school management, staff members or complex student issues.

**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
* 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.

**EVALUATION:**

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school’s regular review cycle

**Adopted by School Council – March 2016**