



Addressing Parent Concerns and Complaints

Policy

Policy review team members:
Consultative Team; Education Committee

This policy was last ratified by
School Council on: 27/7/2015

Rationale:

From time to time, parents will make contact with the school to address a concern or complaint. Dealing with parent concerns and complaints in a respectful and professional manner is essential in building a respectful and functioning community.

- All parent concerns and complaints are to be handled in line with the school policy.
- **All staff** are to be made aware each year about the correct process for dealing with parent complaints/concerns.

Definitions

a **'concern'** is an issue of interest (because of its importance and effect) which is raised informally in order to improve or change a situation. For example: *"I believe that the school's physical education policy and program is inadequate. I don't think that it caters for students who have well-developed skills and who need to be involved in competitive sport. I think the school should review its policy in this area."*

a **'complaint'** is an expression of grievance or resentment where the complainant is seeking redress or justice. For example: *"My daughter has been left out of the school's netball team for the third time in a row. She is an accomplished netballer and deserves to be part of the team. It is not fair that she is left out and I want you to do something about it!"*

These procedures and policy cover concerns and complaints about:

- General issues of student behavior that are contrary to the school's code of conduct
- Incidents of bullying or harassment in the classroom or the schoolyard (as outlined in the 'anti-bullying policy').
- Learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning.
- Communication with parents.
- School levies and payments.
- General administrative issues.
- Any other school-related matters except as detailed as below.

These procedures and policy do not cover concerns and complaints 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 and complaints that should be dealt with by performance management, grievance resolution or disciplinary action.
- Complaint by the Department's employees related to their employment.
- Student critical incidents matters.
- Other criminal matters.



Aims:

To ensure all parent concerns and complaints are handled professionally and with a suitable level of respect so that Mt Eliza Primary School is a:

- safe and supportive learning environment
- is continually building the relationships between students, parents and staff, and
- provides a safe and supportive work environment for staff.

Implementation:

EXPECTATIONS

The School expects the parent 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, and
- recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced.

The Department of Education and Training (DET) expects that schools will address any concerns or complaints 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.

GUIDELINES

- The school will develop a clear procedure and associated resources for addressing parent concerns and complaints
- This procedure will be communicated annually with staff
- This procedure will be reviewed biennially
- Concerns and complaints can be made in person, in writing or by telephone
- Concerns and complaints can be addressed to any staff member, however some issues may be referred to a more appropriate person at any stage in the process
- Communication to parents of the procedure and expectations when directing a concern or complaint will occur annually through an information leaflet and through the school newsletter. This 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 appropriate ways of doing this
 - the process for managing complaints
- Parents are welcome to seek the services of an advocate when expressing their concern or complaint
- All staff will be asked to record parent concerns and complaints and communicate these to the Principal. These concerns/complaints will be re-visited periodically and common issues addressed in the appropriate area – Consultative Committee, Staff meeting, School Council, etc

- The school will make every effort to resolve concerns and complaints before involving other areas of the Department
- All complaints will be noted and acted on in a timely manner by the staff member who receives the complaint
- 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
- The school may contact the Regional Office for advice on any complaints. The timeline taken to achieve this will be communicated with the complainant. In all cases, the school will try to resolve a concern or complaint within 20 school days
- The school will implement the remedy (see section below) 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 Regional Office.

REMEDIES

If possible, suggested outcomes will be discussed and could include:

- an explanation or further information about the issue
- an acknowledgement of each other's perspective and agreement on ways to manage differences
- mediation, referral to counselling or other support
- an apology, expression of regret or admission of fault
- the school may change a decision
- the school may change its policies, procedures or practices
- agreement on what constitutes acceptable behaviour
- an undertaking that unacceptable behaviour will change
- the school may cancel a debt, and
- a fee refund may be made.

Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed as part of MEPS 2 year review cycle in October 2017