

Managing Complaints and Grievances Policy



1. Rationale

When addressing concerns and complaints, the Camberwell South Primary School values that underpin our school Norms and social skills program – PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies), will form the basis of all interactions, as well as the values of:

- providing a safe and supportive learning environment
- building relationships between students, parents and staff
- providing a safe working environment for staff.

2. Purpose

To develop a policy and procedures to effectively address parent concerns and complaints and ensure that parent concerns and complaints are responded to in an effective and timely matter.

3. Guidelines

Definitions:

'Parent' – refers to 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;

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;

A **'Complaint'** is an expression of grievance or resentment where the complainant is seeking redress or justice.

This policy covers concerns about complaints:

- general issues of student behaviour that are contrary to the school's expected values and norms
- incidents of bullying or harrasment in the classroom or playground
- learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
- communication with parents
- school fees and payments
- general administrative issues
- any other school related issues not including those outlined below.

This policy does not apply to matters about which there are existing rights of (and processes for) review or appeal. If at any stage it becomes apparent that the concern or complaint relates to such matters, the relevant procedures should be implemented immediately as detailed in the Victorian Government Schools Reference Guide

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/Pages/spag.aspx>

Those matters include:

- 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
- complaints by the Department's employees related to their employment
- student critical incident matters
- other criminal matters.

This policy is not applicable where a complainant has employed another party to represent them, such as a solicitor. In these circumstances the concern or complaint should be referred to the DET Legal Services Branch for their assessment.

A complainant is entitled to an advocate who can be a friend or colleague or a person provided through an appropriate support agency who does not receive a fee for service.

4. Implementation

When addressing parent / guardian concerns or complaints, Camberwell South Primary School 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 understand each other's point of view and value differences, rather than judge and blame
- recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced. Principals should ensure that parents are aware of their right to advocacy when communicating the issues involved in their complaint and in negotiating an outcome.
- Address any concerns and complaints received from parents courteously, efficiently, fairly and promptly, or within the timeline agreed with the person who raised the concern or complaint. The length of time may vary according to the complexity of the complaint. The school will communicate to the complainant any reasons for a delay in addressing their complaint.

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
- show respect and understanding of each other's point of view and value difference rather than judge or blame
- recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced.

Raising Concerns or Complaints

The complainant should telephone, visit or write to the :

- Class teacher: if the issue or concern relates to student learning and specific student incidents in their class
- Team Leader: if an issue involves students across that level
- Principal / Assistant Principal: about issues relating to school policy, school management staff members or complex student issues.

The school contact details are: Phone: 9889 4295 or camberwell.south.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au

All parties involved in addressing a complaint may seek the services of a mediator when there is difficulty coming to an agreement.

All written complaints will be kept on file.

Verbal complaints requiring action will be recorded and kept on file.

The school will make every effort to resolve concerns and complaints before involving other levels of DET.

Should the complaint involve complex issues, the school may take advice from the Department's Regional office, which will require 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 attempt to resolve a concern or complaint within 20 school days.

DET North-Eastern Victoria Regional Office at Glen Waverley

Location: Level 3, 295 Springvale Road, Glen Waverley, Victoria 3150

Phone: (03) 8392 9300

Fax: (03) 8392 9333

If a concern or complaint is substantiated in whole or part, the school will determine an appropriate remedy. For example, at its discretion and depending on the circumstance, 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 council a debt
- A fee refund

The school will implement the remedy as soon as practicable.

The school's policy for addressing parent concerns and complaints will be published on the school's website.

The school will brief all staff about its procedures to address concerns and complaints annually and provide staff with support and / or training appropriate to their responsibilities.

References:

Parent complaints website : www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/parentcomplaint.htm

Human Resources website: www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/hrweb/workm/perform/conduct.htm

DET Schools Policy Advisory Guidelines:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/Pages/spag.aspx>

5. Evaluation

A committee of staff and the Education Subcommittee will review the Complaints and Grievances Policy on a cyclical basis according to the School Council Policy Review Schedule. The review will ensure that the school's programs and procedures are adequately reflecting Statewide curriculum developments and the changing needs of the Camberwell South community.

Ratified by:	Date	
Education Committee	16.9.15	
Staff	19.8.15	
School Council	28/10/15	Name: Will Collie Signature: 