

# PARENT COMPLAINTS POLICY

## GEORGE STREET PRIMARY SCHOOL

### **Rationale:**

- Our school has both a desire and a responsibility to ensure that high standards of conduct are maintained by staff and students at all times, and that complaints are managed and resolved fairly, efficiently, promptly and in accordance with relative legislation.
- 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.

### **Aims:**

- To provide a harmonious, positive and productive school environment.
- To resolve complaints fairly, efficiently, promptly and in accordance with relative legislation and, in accordance with DEECD policies and procedures.
- The underlying premise of the complaints management policy is that parent concerns and complaints are best and most effectively managed at the school level.
- Note: This policy does not apply to matters about which there are existing rights (and processes for) review and appeal, such as matters relating to serious employee misconduct, student critical incidents and criminal activities.
- When addressing parent/guardian concerns or complaints, the Department and its schools 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.

### **Implementation:**

- Our school seeks to provide a positive, harmonious and productive environment.
- It is the principal's responsibility to provide a healthy and positive school environment that is free from discrimination and harassment. In doing so, Principal's must ensure that all staff are aware of their rights and responsibilities.
- The principal is required to use local complaints resolution procedures, where appropriate, for resolving complaints in relation to issues that fall within the school's area of responsibility. All cases of serious misconduct – sexual offences, criminal charges, or other serious incidents – must instead be referred to the Department of Education Conduct and Ethics Branch.

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

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/spag/community/policyparentsconcerns.pdf>



- It is incumbent upon the principal to act where unacceptable conduct is observed or brought to his or her attention.
- A complainant may at any stage choose to take their complaint directly to an external agency such as the Merit Protection Boards, Australian Education Union, Victorian Equal Opportunity Commission, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission or the Ombudsman.
- It is important that all complaints, ensuing procedures and outcomes are fully documented.
- The principal may choose to respond to a complaint through an informal process in cases where the complaint is minor, the complainant wishes the matter to be dealt with informally or the complaint has arisen from lack of or unclear communication.
- Formal processes will be used when informal processes haven't been successful, a complainant seeks a formal process, or the principal believes the complaint warrants formal investigation.
- Full details regarding formal complaint resolution procedures are contained within the Department of Education 'Local Complaints Resolution Procedures' handbook, and contain the following steps.
- The formal process involves: -
  1. Investigating the complaint including formal interviews, written statements, conveying the details of the complaint to the respondent in writing providing the opportunity for a written response.
  2. Dismissing or accepting the complaint. Acceptance may involve the Conduct & Ethics Branch, verbal or written warnings, conciliation, counselling or consequences etc.
  3. Preparation of a detailed confidential report.
  4. Monitoring of the situation.
- Parties dissatisfied with the process can appeal to the previously mentioned external agencies.
- All matters must be treated with utmost confidentiality, and professional respect at all times.

This policy was last ratified by School Council in...	JULY 2014	
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