

# LOCAL COMPLAINTS RESOLUTION POLICY

## PURPOSE

To establish clear guidelines to enable Principals to manage and resolve complaints made by students, parents, other members of the school community, or staff members in relation to any action or decision which they consider unfair, unreasonable, inappropriate or a breach of any relevant Act, regulation or Ministerial Order.

To ensure all members of the school community understand they have access to procedures designed for local complaints management.

## Concerns and complaints covered by the guidelines for action

These procedures cover concerns and complaints about:

- General issues of student behaviour that are contrary to the school's Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy
- Incidents of bullying or harassment in the classroom or the school ground
- Learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
- Communication with parents
- Parent contributions and payments
- General administrative issues
- Any other school-related matters except as detailed below.

These procedures do not cover matters for which there are existing rights of review or appeal, as detailed in the Victorian Government Schools Policy and Advisory Guide.

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.

The Principal will 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 DET Complaints and Investigations Unit.

## EXPECTATIONS AND UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

Camp Hill Primary School expects a person raising a concern or complaint to:

- Do so promptly, 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 that must be balanced.

Camp Hill Primary School will address any concerns and complaints received from parents:

- Courteously, efficiently and 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.

## **GUIDELINES FOR ACTION**

### **Raising Concerns or Complaints**

In the first instance, a complaint should be made to the school in person, by telephone, or in writing to:

- The student's class teacher or specialist teacher about learning issues and incidents that happened in their class or group
- The Principal/Assistant Principal about issues relating to staff members or complex student issues
- The Principal about issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members

To make an appointment with any staff member, call the school office (8:30am-5:00pm) on 54433367.

### **Help with Raising Concerns or Complaints**

- Complainants can seek the services of an advocate when they feel they are unable to express their concern clearly. An advocate can be a friend or someone who is available through an appropriate support organisation who does not receive a fee for service.
- All parties involved in addressing a complaint may seek the services of a mediator when there is difficulty coming to an agreement.
- Camp Hill Primary School will ensure that the complainant is aware of these supports.
- A complainant who wishes to use these support services should ensure the person addressing the concern or complaint is aware of their intention and is in agreement.

### **Managing Parent Concerns and Complaints Information**

Camp Hill Primary School will consider recording the following details of all complaints received, even if the complaint appears to be minor:

- Name and contact details (with permission) of the person with a concern or complaint
- The date the concern was expressed or complaint made
- The form in which the concern or complaint was received (such as face-to-face, by telephone, in writing, by email)
- A brief description of the concern or complaint
- Details of the school personnel responding to the concern or complaint
- Action taken on the concern or complaint
- The outcome of action taken on the concern or complaint
- Any recommendations for future improvement in the school's policy or procedures.
- Camp Hill Primary School will make every effort to resolve concerns and complaints before involving other levels of the Department.
- Camp Hill Primary School will give a complainant a copy of its complaints procedures.

- Camp Hill Primary School will determine whether a concern or complaint should be managed through the school's concerns and complaints process or through other complaints processes of the Department.
- All complaints will be noted and acted in a timely manner by the staff member who receives the complaint.
- The school (Principal) will acknowledge all complaints made in writing received through the school office. It will provide the complainant with a timeline for investigating the complaint.
- Concerns and complaints about general school matters (such as the timing of events, school policies and facilities) will be addressed by the principal or a relevant staff member.

Camp Hill Primary School will make every attempt to resolve a concern or complaint in a timely manner. If a complaint involves many students and a range of issues, the school will at times require additional time to investigate and resolve it.

Should the complaint involve complex issues, the school might need to take advice from the Department's regional office. The school will tell the complainant the timeline for addressing the complaint and the reasons for any delays with information.

## **Remedies**

If a concern or complaint is substantiated in whole or part, the school will offer an appropriate remedy. For example, at its discretion and depending on the circumstances, Camp Hill Primary 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 cancel a debt (such as for school payments)

The school will implement the remedy as soon as practicable.

## **Referral of Concerns or Complaints**

*Please refer to the flowchart: Sourced from the DET Parent Complaints Policy (interim)*

- If a person with a concern or complaint is not satisfied with the outcome determined by Camp Hill Primary School, they should contact the Department of Education Regional Office:

Bendigo DET Regional office Phone: 03 5440 3111  
 Postal address: PO Box 442, Bendigo, Victoria 3552  
 Location: 7-15 McLaren Street, Bendigo, Victoria 3550

- The officer from the region will ask the complainant for a complete and factual account in writing of the concern or complaint and the complainant's opinion about why the school did not resolve it to their satisfaction.
- If the complainant, school and regional office working together cannot resolve the complaint, the regional office may refer it to the Central Complaints Team for a process review.
- The Central Complaints Team will ask the complainant for a complete and factual account in writing of the concern or complaint and the complainant's opinion about why the school and regional office did not resolve it to their satisfaction and will ask the complainant to outline their view on the course of action required to resolve the complaint. Where the complainant is unable to provide a written account the officer from Group Coordination Division should act on the information provided.
- If further referral or advice is required from an external agency the parent may contact the Victorian Ombudsman.

## **Protective Disclosures**

Where a parent has real and substantial concerns that, as a result of raising a complaint refer to the Protected Disclosures Act 2012-Making and Handling Protected Disclosures.

## **Unreasonable Complaint Conduct**

All complaints in accordance with the school's complaint-handling procedures including when parent behaviour is thought to be unreasonable. Refer to Victorians Ombudsman Unreasonable Complaint Conduct Manual

## **Anonymous Complaints**

The department supports that all complaints are to be considered. However it recognises that its staff might not be able to fully consider a complaint if they cannot effectively liaise with parents.

## **Complaint Escalation**

Parents should be made aware that they are able to take their complaint to the Victorian Ombudsman if they are dissatisfied with the outcome or response from the Department.

## **Communication and Training**

Camp Hill Primary School will make information about procedures for addressing concerns and complaints readily available to parents and the school community, in clear and easy to understand language.

The 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 their contact details
- The process and time frames for managing complaints.
- Indicate how the school will communicate its complaints procedures to parents and the school community.

## **Monitoring the Parent Complaints Policy**

Camp Hill Primary School will monitor parent concerns and complaints and consider issues raised through the parent complaints process, and any other relevant information from the parent opinion survey. The school council will regularly review its policy and procedures to effectively address parent concerns and complaints as part of its cyclic policy and procedures review schedule.

Camp Hill Primary School will review its information about complaints made over time to:

- identify common or recurring issues that may need addressing
- assess the effectiveness of these and other procedures and whether they are being followed
- use information provided to the school through the parent opinion survey on the views of parents
- The School Council president will be kept informed of all relevant complaints.

For more information about this policy, refer to the DET Parent Complaints Policy:

<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 four-year review cycle.

**This policy is scheduled for review in 2020.**

# PARENT COMPLAINT FLOWCHART

