

OBERON PRIMARY SCHOOL

CONCERN AND COMPLAINTS POLICY (for parents and guardians)



RATIONALE

The purpose of this policy and procedures document is to ensure there are clear guidelines to enable parents and guardians to raise concerns and complaints with the school.

POLICY STATEMENT

Parents or guardians who wish to raise a concerns or make a complaint should follow the school's procedures, as outlined in this policy document.

IMPLEMENTATION

What is covered in this policy

This policy covers concerns and complaints about:

- General issues of student behaviour that are contrary to the school's code of conduct;
- Incidents of bullying or harassment in the classroom or the school yard;
- Learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning;
- Communication with parents;
- School fees and payments;
- General administrative issues; and
- Any other school-related matters except as detailed below.

Some matters, once raised, must be handled by specific procedures detailed in the Victorian Government Schools Reference Guide. For example:

- 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; and
- Criminal matters.

Expectations of the complainant (e.g. the parent or guardian)

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; and
- Recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced.

Expectations of the school

All complaints will be recorded, investigated and responded to. The 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.

Raising Concerns and Complaints

In the first instance, a complaint should be made to the school. Every effort will be made to resolve the complaint at the school level. The complainant (e.g. the parent or guardian) should telephone, visit or write to:

- The student's teacher about learning issues and incidents that happened in their class or group.
- The Principal about issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members or complex student issues.
- School Council members about general concerns. Complaints can be made to Council members in person or via email oberon.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au

For contact details for any staff member, call the office on 5243 1613. If you are not sure who to contact, contact the Principal on 5243 1613 and you will be directed to the appropriate person.

Guidance on raising an issue of concern

To ensure your concerns can be handled effectively, before you approach the school or your child's teacher:

- Be clear about the topic or issue you want to discuss;
- Focus on the things that are genuinely affecting your child;
- Always remain calm and remember you may not have all the facts relating to the circumstances of the topic or issue you wish to discuss;
- Think about what would be an acceptable outcome for you and your child; and
- Be informed; check the Department of Education and Training's (DET'S) policies or guidelines.
(e.g. <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/Pages/azindex.aspx>)

Help with Raising Concerns or Complaints

Personal support is most appropriate in situations where the complainant and others involved in the complaint process have emotional issues related to the complaint.

Complainants can seek the services of a support person when they feel they are unable to express their concern clearly. A support person can be a friend or someone who is available through an appropriate support organisation who does not receive a fee for service. Appropriate support organisations include the Dispute Settlement Centre Victoria <http://www.disputes.vic.gov.au>. Services provided by this organisation are free and confidential.

Managing Concern and Complaint Information

In the first instance, when the complaint is easily resolved in a telephone call, a brief note in the school's/principal's/teacher's diary recording the issue and the resolution may be all that is required.

For more complex concerns, the following details of all complaints received will be recorded:

- 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 officer responding to the concern or complaint;
- Action taken on the concern or complaint;
- The outcome of action taken on the concern or complaint; and
- Any recommendations for future improvement in the school's policy or procedures.

Mediation

Mediation is encouraged if a situation presents where resolution proves difficult. The Department of Education and Training (DET) supports resolution of complaints at school level. Department of Education and Training information for parents on raising concerns and complaints can be found at <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/community/Pages/parentcomplaints.aspx>

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

Referral of Concerns or Complaints

If all avenues to resolve the concern or complaint have been exhausted and the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome determined by the school, they should contact DET's Regional Community Liaison Officer – South Barwon Region

The officer 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 complaint cannot be resolved by the complainant, school and regional office working together, the regional office may refer it to the Deputy Secretary, Regional Services Group, C/O Manager, School Operations and Governance Unit. GPO Box 4367, Melbourne 3001 or by email community.stakeholders@edumail.vic.gov.au

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle.

This policy was ratified by the School Council Policy Committee on: 23/08/2019

NEXT REVIEW DATE: August 2022

Policy prepared by Genefor Walker-Smith — August 2016