

MANAGING CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

Change History

Version	Issued	Key Changes	Review
2.0	2018	No Changes	2021

1. Rationale

The Department requires all schools to develop a policy, and develop and implement procedures, to effectively address parents' concerns and complaints.

The school's approach to handling concerns and complaints is based on our values of:

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

2. Policy statement

Types of concerns and complaints

These procedures cover concerns and complaints about:

- general issues of student behaviour that are contrary to the school's Values and Behaviours & Anti-Bullying Policy
- 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
- 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 Reference 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

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- other criminal matters

3. Implementation

The school will develop its procedures to address concerns and complaints in collaboration with parents and the school community.

See flow chart (Appendices 1 & 2)

These procedures take effect from 1 January 2018.

Expectations

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
- recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced

The school will address any concerns and complaints received from parents:

- courteously and efficiently
- 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 or complaints

In the first instance, a complaint should be made to the school. The complainant should telephone, visit or write to:

- the student's teacher about learning issues and incidents that happened in their class
- The assistant principal about issues relating to staff members or complex student issues
- the principal about issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members or very complex student issues

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For contact details for any staff member, call the office on 9429 2950. If you are not sure who to contact, the Principal will provide you with guidance.

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.

Managing concerns and complaints

The school should consider recording the following details of all complaints received, even if the complaint appears to be minor:

- name and contact details 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
- 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
- any recommendations for future improvement in the school's policy or procedures

However, 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.

Addressing concerns and complaints

- The school will make every effort to resolve concerns and complaints before involving other levels of the Department
- The school will give a complainant a copy of its complaints procedures
- The 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 on promptly by the staff

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member who receives the Complaint

- The school will acknowledge all complaints made in writing. It will provide the complainant with a timeline for investigating the complaint.
- The school will investigate all complaints and will provide a response to the complainant
- 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
- 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 might need to take advice from the Department's regional office which may take 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 try to resolve a concern or complaint within 20 school days

Remedies

If a concern or complaint is substantiated in whole or part, the school will offer an appropriate solution. At its discretion and depending on the circumstances, 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 cancel a debt (such as for school payments)
- a fee refund.

The school will implement the remedy as soon as practicable.

Referral of concerns and complaints

- If a person with a concern or complaint is not satisfied with the outcome determined by the school, they should contact the Department's appropriate regional office.
- If the complaint cannot be resolved by the complainant, school and regional

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office working together, the regional office may refer it to the Department's Group Coordination Division.

Communication to parents and the school community

The school will make information about procedures for addressing concerns and complaints readily available to parents and the school community.

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 timeframes for managing complaints

The school's procedures for addressing concerns and complaints will be:

- published on the school's website
- Printed in the school newsletter
- Publicised in public areas of the school

The school will:

- brief all members of staff about its procedures to address concerns and complaints annually
- provide staff with (or provide access to) training and support appropriate to their responsibilities under the procedures
- ensure staff who manage complaints demonstrate the personal attributes outlined in the *Good Practice Guide: Ombudsman Victoria's guide to complaint handling for Victorian public sector agencies*

4. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

- The 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, when undertaking a review of the school's policies, procedures and operations

The 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

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views of parents.

5. Further Information and Resources

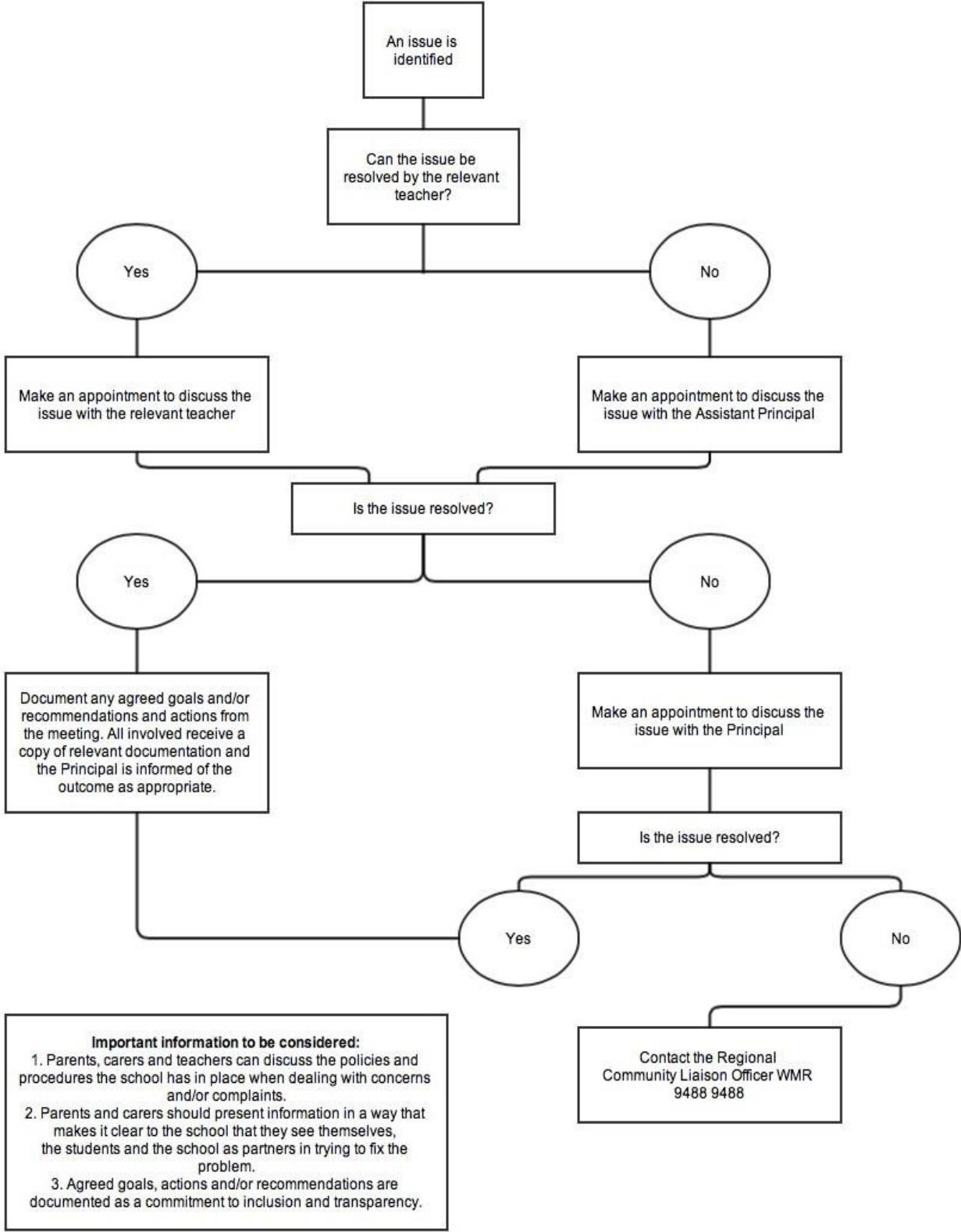
Parents' Guide - See Appendix 1

Staff Guide – See Appendix 2

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Appendix 1

A parents and carers guide to managing concerns and complaints at Yarra Primary School



Important information to be considered:

1. Parents, carers and teachers can discuss the policies and procedures the school has in place when dealing with concerns and/or complaints.
2. Parents and carers should present information in a way that makes it clear to the school that they see themselves, the students and the school as partners in trying to fix the problem.
3. Agreed goals, actions and/or recommendations are documented as a commitment to inclusion and transparency.

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Appendix 2

A staff guide to managing concerns and complaints at Yarra Primary School

