

# Murrayville Community College Grievance Policy

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## **Purpose**

Our school seeks to provide a positive, harmonious and productive environment. 'The P.R.I.D.E.' values provide the framework within which high standards of conduct are maintained between staff, and parents and students at all times. Within this framework it is the school's desire and responsibility to manage and resolve parent complaints fairly, efficiently and properly and in accordance with relative legislation.

## **Guidelines**

### ***Concerns and complaints***

These procedures cover concerns and complaints about:

- General issues of student behaviour that are contrary to the school's Student Welfare policy
- Incidents of bullying or harassment
- Learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
- Communication with parents
- School fees and payments
- General administrative issues
- Any other school related matter.

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

### ***Expectations of a person raising the concern or 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
- Act in good faith, and in a calm and courteous manner
- Show respect and understanding of each other's point of view and value the difference, rather than judge and 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 student's teacher - about learning issues and incidents that happened in their class or group
- The student's form teacher – if incident or issue is/has occurring/occurred across classes or involved other students from that year level
- The Principal – about issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members or complex student issues.

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## ***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 might be a member of School Council, 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 a difficulty coming to an agreement.

The 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.

## ***Managing parent concerns and complaints information***

It is important that all complaints, ensuing procedures and outcomes are fully documented as below:

- Name and contact details (with permission) of the person with a concern or complaint
- The date the concern was expressed or complaint made
- 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.

A parents' complaint register will be held in the Principal's office for parent concerns or complaints made at that level.

## ***Addressing concerns or complaints***

All the concerns or complaints will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and professional respect at all times.

The school will make every effort to resolve concerns and complaints before involving other levels of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. However, should the complaint involve complex issues, the school might need to take advice from the Department's Regional Office. This may take more time. Therefore the school will tell the complainant the new timeline for addressing the complaint and the reason for any delays.

- In all cases the school will try to resolve the concern or complaint promptly. If the complaint involves many students and a range of issues the school will need more time to investigate and resolve it.
- Concerns or complaints about general classroom matters should be referred to the relevant classroom teacher or relevant staff member. Concerns and complaints about general school matters, including policies, facilities, staffing, etc, and unresolved matters previously dealt with at a classroom level, should be referred to the Principal.
- The Principal will determine whether a concern or complaint should be managed through the school's concerns and complaints procedure or through other complaint processes of the Department.
- All complaints will be acted on promptly by the staff member who receives the complaint.
- The school will acknowledge all complaints made and provide the complainant with a timeline for investigating the complaint.

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- Where a complaint is referred to the Principal, 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 a lack of, or unclear, communication.
- Formal processes will be used when informal processes have not 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 in the Department's 'Local Complaints Resolution Procedures' handbook, and contain the following steps.

## ***The Formal process involves***

1. Investigating the complaint through formal interviews, written statements, conveying the details of the complaint to the respondent in writing and providing the opportunity for a written response.
2. Dismissing or accepting the complaint. Acceptance may involve a range of appropriate remedies offered at the school's discretion as listed further in this document.
3. Preparation of a detailed confidential report.
4. Monitoring of the situation.

## ***Remedies***

If a concern or complaint is substantiated in whole or part, the school will offer an appropriate remedy. 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.

The school will implement the remedy as soon as practicable.

## ***Referral of concerns or complaints***

If a person with a concern or complaint is not satisfied with the outcome determined by the school:

- They should contact the Regional Office.
- The regional community liaison 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 Department's Group Coordination Division. The Division 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.

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## ***Communication and training***

The 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 timeframes for managing complaints.

## ***Procedures for addressing concerns and complaints***

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

- Published on the school's website
- Included in the parent handbook that is given to a parent when a child enrolls.

## ***Training and support***

The school will:

- 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.

## ***Monitoring the parent complaints policy***

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 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.

## ***Information about reviewing complaints***

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 views of parents.

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