

Mt Evelyn SDS

RAISING CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

Mount Evelyn Special Developmental School

Aim

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

- Providing a safe and supportive learning environment.
- Building relationships between students, parents and staff.
- Providing a safe working environment for all staff.

Procedure

In implementing this policy we must be mindful that Mt Evelyn SDS caters for students with a moderate to severe intellectual disability. On a day to day basis the school manages the many complexities of the students while implementing their Individual Learning Plans.

These procedures cover 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.
- 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's 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 school's expectations of the parent with a concern or complaint, and their responsibilities are 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
- 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. Specify the form in which a concern or complaint should be made and to whom it should be made. For example:

The complainant should telephone, visit or write to:

- The student's teacher about learning issues and incidents that happened in their class.
- The Section Team Leader if students from several classes are involved.
- 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 or very complex student issues.

To contact a staff member, call the office on 9736 2499 out of class teaching time. If the matter is urgent refer to the principal/assistant principal/leading teacher.

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.

The Mt Evelyn SDS 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.

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.

The school will acknowledge all complaints made in writing. It will provide the complainant with a timeline for investigating the complaint.

The principal/assistant principal 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.

Should the complaint involve complex issues, 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.

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 Department's appropriate regional office.

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 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.

Monitoring the Parents and 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.

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.