



GLADESVILLE PRIMARY SCHOOL No 5066

RAISING CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

Rationale

The School refers and adheres to Department guidelines in the formulation and communication of the complaints policy.

Aim

The school will:

- develop a policy which clearly identifies the processes for complainants to express their concerns and complaints in collaboration with parents and the school community;
- regularly review and update the policy; and
- use a range of techniques to communicate the policy to the school community.

Procedure

Summary

- All complaints will be noted and acted on promptly by the staff 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 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.
- The school will make every attempt to resolve a concern or complaint as quickly as possible.
- If a complaint involves many students and a range of issues, the school will need more 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 which may take more time. The school will inform 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.

Concerns and complaints covered in this Policy include:

- 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
- general administrative issues
- any other school-related matters except as detailed below.

The following matters have existing rights of review or appeal, as detailed in the *Victorian Government Schools Reference Guide*:

- student discipline matters involving expulsions;
- complaints about employee conduct or performance;
- 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
- other criminal matters.

Responsibilities of Parties involved in Raising Complaints

Responsibilities of the Complainant:

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

a) the teacher - for matters relating to learning issues and incidents that happened in their class or playground,

b) the Principal – for matters relating to school policy, school management, staff members or very complex student issues.

The person raising a concern or complaint is expected to:

- communicate the matter 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.

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 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 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.

Responsibility of the School in Response to Complaint:

The school will address any concerns and complaints received:• respectfully

- efficiently
- fairly
- within the agreed timeline between school and the complainant
- in accordance with due process, principles of natural justice and the Department's regulatory framework.

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.

Responsibility of School Administration in Recording Complaints:

The School will record the following details of all complaints received.

- 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.

Outcome

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.

Steps to Resolution

If a concern or complaint is substantiated in whole or part, the school will offer an appropriate outcome. The school at its discretion and depending on the circumstances may 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 then implement the appropriate steps 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 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.
- 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.

Communication and Training:

The school will make information about procedures for addressing concerns and complaints readily available to parents and the school community. All communication will be clear and easy to understand and, where appropriate, in a range of community languages and formats that are accessible to everyone.

The information will include:

- how to make a complaint;
- responsibilities of all parties in the complaints process;
- relevant document to be provided by the complainant;
- contact details of where the complaint should be made and to whom; and
- 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 a leaflet given to a parent when their child enrolls;
- printed in the parent's handbook;
- printed in the school newsletter; and
- publicised on a poster displayed in public areas of the school.

The school will:

- brief all members of staff (including volunteers) 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; and
- 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 Parent Complaints

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; and
- use information provided to the school through the parent opinion survey on the views of parents.

Relevant/ Associated Documents:

- Gladesville Primary School – Statement of Values
- Staged response to Managing Parent Behaviour
- Parent and Principal Agreement letter
- Letter referring to Section 9 of the *Summary Offences Act 1966* outlining the Trespass Order

This Policy was last ratified by School Council in March 2016.