

# Complaints and Grievances Resolution Procedure Policy

St Albans East Primary School



Date: August 2015

Rationale	Positive, clear and effective processes for resolving grievances between the school and community members assists in the building of strong relationships, dispels anxiety, and ultimately provides students with an enhanced learning environment.
Aim	To provide clear, positive and fair processes that allow grievances to be aired and resolved in a timely and effectively manner.
Implementation	<p><b><u>Concerns and complaints covered by the procedures</u></b></p> <p>These procedures cover concerns and complaints about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• General issues of student behaviour that are contrary to St Albans East Primary School's code of conduct.</li><li>• Incidents of bullying or harassment in the classroom or the school yard</li><li>• Learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning</li><li>• Communication with parents</li><li>• School fees and payments</li><li>• General administrative issues</li><li>• Any other school-related matters except as detailed below.</li></ul> <p>These procedures do not cover matters for which there are existing rights of review or appeal, as detailed in the <i>Victorian Government Schools Reference Guide</i>. Those matters include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Student discipline matters involving expulsions.</li><li>• Complaints about employee conduct or performance and complaints that should be dealt with by performance management, grievance resolution or disciplinary action</li><li>• Complaints by the Department's employees related to their employment</li><li>• Student critical incident matters</li><li>• Other criminal matters.</li></ul> <p><b><u>Expectations of the person making the concern or complaint and of the school:</u></b></p> <p>St Albans East Primary School expects a person raising a concern or complaint to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do so promptly, as soon as possible after the issue.</li><li>• Provide complete and factual information about the concern or complaint.</li><li>• Maintain and respect the privacy and confidentiality of all parties.</li><li>• Acknowledge that a common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties.</li><li>• Act in good faith, and in a calm and courteous manner.</li><li>• Show respect and understanding of each other's point of view and value difference, rather than judge and blame.</li><li>• Recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced.</li></ul>

St Albans East Primary 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.

#### **How to raise a concern or complaint**

In the first instance, a complaint should be made to the school.

The person making the complaint should telephone, visit, write or email:

- The student's teacher about learning issues and incidents that happened in their class or group.
- The Principal/Assistant Principal about issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members or very complex student issues.
- Contact the school on 9366 2071 if you are unsure of who to contact about your concern or complaint.

#### **Help with raising concerns or complaints**

A person making a complaint 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.

A person raising a concern or complaint will be provided with access to an interpreter if needed.

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

The school will record the following details of all complaints received, even if the complaint appears to be minor:

- 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.
- 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 or complaints**

The school will use the following process to address 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 processes or through other complaints processes of the Department.

- 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 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 a complaint involves many students and a range of issues the school may need more time to investigate and resolve it.

Should the concern or 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 the 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 remedy. For example, 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 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, in clear and easy-to-understand language and, where appropriate, in a range of community languages and formats that are accessible to everyone so that no-one is disadvantaged.

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 a leaflet given to a parent when their child enrolls.
- Printed in the school newsletter.

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.
- 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.

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.

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed as part of the three-year review cycle

Review Year

2018