

DEALING CONSTRUCTIVELY WITH PARENT/CAREGIVER CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

RATIONALE:

Findon Primary School recognises that parent/caregiver complaints are a part of any school environment and that as professionals, we should act on them in a proactive manner, using them to provide a platform for school improvement. Parents/caregivers need to know that their concerns are taken seriously and that a fair process has been undertaken to arrive at a resolution.

GUIDELINES:

- The support of the community and their satisfaction with the school are crucial to our interests and those of our students.
- The way in which we approach concerns or complaints made by parents/caregivers reflects our school culture and values, the professionalism of the staff, and the soundness of our procedures.
- Parents/caregivers and students are the best, and most active, 'public relations' and school promotion advocates.
- There is an increase in the expectations on schools, and in the culture of accountability and continuous improvement, we must ensure that we are positive in all issues with which we deal.
- We must be prepared to deal constructively with all situations and be aware that what may begin as a minor complaint may escalate.
- We need to acknowledge the rights of parents/caregivers and students and be positive in catering for their needs.
- School staff and other personnel need to create an environment that communicates to parents/caregivers that they are perceived as valued community members.
- Confidentiality and discretion is essential for all involved parties.

AIMS:

- To maintain and foster a positive school community
- For a mutual resolution to the concern/complaint
- To restore/consolidate/improve relationships for all parties involved
- To demonstrate personal and professional integrity
- To maintain everyone's health and wellbeing

IMPLEMENTATION:

This information will assist parents/caregivers who are raising concerns or making a complaint that is related to the school or their child's education. Guidelines include that:

- the school should always be the first point of contact. The school builds respectful and positive relationships in the community and respects the rights and responsibilities of all community members
- listening by all parties is a key factor in conflict resolution
- concerns are best resolved at the school level
- complaints may be withdrawn at any time
- it may not always be possible to resolve an issue to the satisfaction of all parties
- the school will manage aggressive reactions and confrontation, respond to strong emotions and unreasonable complaints by following Department of Education and Training (DET) guidelines and the Violence and Aggression Policy
- documentation is essential in regards to the concern or the complaint
- the DET expects that most complaints will be resolved by the school.

PROCESS

Step 1: Clarify the issue (What is the problem?)

Before approaching the school:

- be clear about the issue you want to discuss
- focus on the things that genuinely affect your child and avoid the blame cycle
- always remain calm and remember you may not have all the facts relating to the circumstances of the issue you wish to discuss

- think about what an acceptable outcome would be for you and your child
- be informed; check the policies or guidelines, where relevant.

Step 2: Contact the teacher

There are a number of ways you can raise concerns you have about your child. Please inform the school about the issue or concern. You are encouraged to:

- make an appointment to speak with the class teacher
- outline your concerns relating to your child/ren
- if a resolution is not reached, make an appointment to speak to the Instructional Leader.

Remember that the class teacher/Instructional Leader, together with others who may be involved, should be given a reasonable amount of time to take the steps required to resolve or address your concerns.

Step 3: Contact the Principal

Most concerns are resolved by following the steps above. However, if the issue remains unresolved after you have approached your child's teacher or the Instructional Leader you can then ask to see the Principal.

To do this, you will need to request an appointment through the school office. Be aware that:

- the Principal may liaise with you directly or ask a nominated staff member to speak with you on their behalf
- if a teacher is going to be present at the meeting it is more likely to occur outside of classroom hours

If your concern is related to issues of school policy, these should be raised more formally (in writing) with the Principal and/or the School Council.

Step 4: Contact the Regional Office

If you still feel that your complaint has not been addressed satisfactorily after speaking to the teacher and the Principal, you can then contact the North Western Victoria Regional (NWVR) Office.

A NWVR representative will be able to provide you with advice and assistance, and if required, direct your complaint to other regional staff to respond. The regional director may review and respond to complaints directly.

It is the Regional Office's responsibility to:

- ensure that complaints, wherever possible, are resolved at the school
- ensure that procedures at the school are in accordance with the DET Policy Framework.

The Regional Office may refer your complaint to other areas or branches within the DET. You will be notified of this and of any major delays in addressing your complaint.

Step 5: Contact the Central Office

Contact with the Department's Central Office should only take place if all other steps have not led to a satisfactory resolution. Where possible, all contact should be in writing.

If it is clear that you have not followed the above steps, your letter (and your complaint) will be sent to the relevant regional office. You will be notified if this happens.

COMMUNICATION AND REVIEW CYCLE: This policy shall be communicated to the community via the school website, will be available through the school office, communicated at staff briefing and at relevant times within the year via parent/caregiver meetings and newsletter snippets. It will be reviewed as part of the school's three year policy and process review.

REFERENCES:

DET Policy Advisory Library

<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/complaints/policy>

Violence and Aggression Policy