

# COMPLAINTS POLICY

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide an outline of the complaints process at Parkhill Primary School so that parents and members of the community are informed of how they can raise complaints or concerns about issues arising at our school
- ensure that all complaints regarding Parkhill Primary School are managed in a timely, effective, fair and respectful manner.

## SCOPE

This policy relates to complaints brought by parents, carers, students or members of our school community and applies to all matters relating to our school. In some limited instances, we may need to refer the complainant to another Department of Education and Training process where there are different mechanisms in place to review certain decisions, for example, expulsion appeals.

## POLICY

Parkhill Primary School welcomes feedback, both positive and negative, and is committed to continuous improvement. We value open communication with our families and are committed to understanding complaints and addressing them appropriately. We recognise that the complaints process provides an important opportunity for reflection and learning.

We value and encourage open and positive relationships with our school community. We understand that it is in the best interests of students for there to be a trusting relationship between families and our school.

When addressing a complaint, it is expected that all parties will:

- raise and discuss issues in a courteous and respectful manner
- acknowledge that the goal is to achieve an outcome that is in the affected student's best interests and acceptable to all parties
- act in good faith and respect the privacy and confidentiality of those involved, as appropriate
- recognise that all parties, including the broader school community, have rights and responsibilities that must be balanced
- recognise that schools and the Department may be subject to legal constraints on their ability to act or disclose information in some circumstances.

### **Preparation for raising a concern or complaint**

Parkhill Primary School encourages parents, carers or members of the community who may wish to submit a complaint to:

- carefully consider the issues you would like to discuss
- remember you may not have all the facts relating to the issues that you want to raise
- think about how the matter could be resolved

- be informed by checking the policies and guidelines set by the Department and Parkhill Primary School (see “Further Information and Resources” section below).

## Complaints process

Parkhill Primary School is always happy to discuss with parents/carers and community members any concerns that they may have. Concerns in the first instance should be directed to your child’s teacher or Year Level Coordinator. Where possible, school staff will work with you to ensure that your concerns are appropriately addressed.

Where concerns cannot be resolved in this way, parents or community members may wish to make a formal complaint to the Principal or Assistant Principal.

If you would like to make a formal complaint, in most cases, depending on the nature of the complaint raised, our school will first seek to understand the issues and will then convene a resolution meeting with the aim of resolving the complaint together. The following process will apply:

1. **Complaint received:** Please either email, telephone or arrange a meeting through the front office with the Assistant Principal or Principal, to outline your complaint so that we can fully understand what the issues are. We can discuss your complaint in a way that is convenient for you, whether in writing, in person or over the phone.
2. **Information gathering:** Depending on the issues raised in the complaint, the Principal, Assistant Principal or nominee may need to gather further information to properly understand the situation. This process may also involve speaking to others to obtain details about the situation or the concerns raised.
3. **Response:** Where possible, a resolution meeting will be arranged with the Assistant Principal/Principal to discuss the complaint with the objective of reaching a resolution satisfactory to all parties. If after the resolution meeting we are unable to resolve the complaint together, we will work with you to produce a written summary of the complaint in the event you would like to take further action about it. In some circumstances, the Principal may determine that a resolution meeting would not be appropriate. In this situation, a response to the complaint will be provided in writing.
4. **Timelines:** Parkhill Primary School will acknowledge receipt of your complaint as soon as possible (usually within 48 hours) and will seek to resolve complaints in a timely manner. Depending on the complexity of the complaint, Parkhill Primary School may need some time to gather enough information to fully understand the circumstances of your complaint. We will endeavour to complete any necessary information gathering and hold a resolution meeting where appropriate within 10 working days of the complaint being raised. In situations where further time is required, Parkhill Primary School will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

## Resolution

Where appropriate, Parkhill Primary School may seek to resolve a complaint by:

- an apology or expression of regret
- a change of decision
- a change of policy, procedure or practice

- offering the opportunity for student counselling or other support
- other actions consistent with school values that are intended to support the student, parent and school relationship, engagement, and participation in the school community.

In some circumstances, Parkhill Primary School may also ask you to attend a meeting with an independent third party, or participate in a mediation with an accredited mediator to assist in the resolution of the dispute.

### **Escalation**

If a parent or community member is not satisfied that their complaint has been resolved by the school, or if their complaint is about the Principal, then the complaint should be referred to the North Eastern Victoria Regional office by contacting 1300 333 231.

Parkhill Primary School may also refer a complaint to North Eastern Victorian Regional office if we believe that we have done all we can to address the complaint.

For more information about the Department's *Parent Complaints* policy, including the role of the Regional Office, please see: [Parent complaints policy](#).

## **FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES**

Statement of Values and School Philosophy

## **REVIEW PERIOD**

This policy was last updated on 10 December 2018 and is scheduled for review on December 2022.

## **APPENDIX (see over)**

## PARKHILL P.S. – RAISING A PARENT CONCERN

### Step 1: Clarify the issue (what exactly is your concern?)

Before you approach the school or your child's teacher:

- be clear about the topic or issue you want to discuss
- ensure evidence is provided/available to support your concern and not just hearsay
- focus on the things that are genuinely affecting your child
- always remain calm and remember you may not have all the facts relating to the circumstances of the topic or issue you wish to discuss
- think about what would be an acceptable outcome for you and your child
- be informed; check the departments policies or guidelines, where relevant

**Make an appointment to speak to the following people to help resolve the concern. Generally always raise concerns with the class teacher first.**

**Your child's teacher** should generally be your first step (except where your concern is highly sensitive in nature). If the class teacher cannot resolve it, they may direct you to one of the following...

**The Year Level Coordinator**  
if your concern involves students from other classes in a playground incident

**The Assistant Principal**  
if your concern relates to staff members or complex student issues

**The Principal**  
if your concerns relates to school policy, school management, staff members or complex student issues

### Step 2: Review or investigation at the school level

- Ensures that all parties in a disputed concern/complaint are aware of their entitlement to support through an advocate. An advocate can be a friend or colleague or an unpaid support person provided through an appropriate agency.
- The class teacher or Year Level Coordinator, together with any others who may be involved, should be given a reasonable amount of time to take the steps required to resolve or address your concerns. Remember, it may not always be possible to resolve an issue to your complete satisfaction and that issues involving young children can take some time to resolve.
- Staff will communicate the outcomes of concerns, where possible to all relevant parties.
- If applicable, staff will work with you to establish an agreed plan of action and timeline.
- The principal can reject a concern or complaint that in their opinion is vexatious, or without substance, or does not warrant further action.
- Modifies other school policies and procedures as required as a result of addressing concerns and complaints.

Concern has been resolved, dismissed or addressed

Concern has not been resolved

### Step 3: Contact may be made to The Department of Education and Early Childhood Education (DEECD)

- If you still feel that your concern has not been addressed satisfactorily after speaking to the Principal, you can then contact DEECD - Eastern Region

### Step 4: 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 concern) will be sent to the relevant regional office. You will be contacted if this happens.