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## **PARENT COMPLAINTS POLICY**

### **PURPOSE:**

Essex Heights Primary School provides opportunities for interactions between, and amongst, students, parents and staff. At times, situations may occur that may cause concern from parents (parents/guardians). This policy is developed to assist in addressing those concerns and investigate complaints in a manner that reflects the school's values and DET Guidelines. The school's approach for handling concerns and complaints is based on parent, staff and student rights & responsibilities (as outlined in our Student Engagement Policy), as well as our values of:

**Respect      Friendliness      Inclusiveness      Honesty      Persistence**

### **GUIDELINES:**

1.0 Our school has a strong commitment to addressing complaints formally raised by parents in the following areas:

- 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 between parents, staff and students
- School costs and parent payments
- General administrative issues
- Any other school related matters except as detailed below

2.0 These procedures do not cover the following matters for which there are 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 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

3.0 Essex Heights Primary School expects a parent raising a concern or complaint to:

- Do so promptly, as soon as possible after the issue occurs
- Provide complete and factual information about the concern or complaint, either in person, via telephone or in writing
- 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.
- 4.0 Essex Heights is committed to addressing any parental complaint – courteously, fairly, efficiently and within agreed timelines.
- 5.0 When first raising a complaint, the complainant should telephone, visit and / or write to:
- The student's teacher about learning issues, general classroom matters and incidents that happened in their class or group
  - The Principal/Assistant Principals, if students from several classes are involved
  - The Principal about issues relating to school policy, facilities, school management, staff members or very complex student issues
  - Unresolved matters previously dealt with at a classroom level should be referred to the Principal/Assistant Principals.
- 6.0 On receipt of a complaint school personnel should ensure the following details are documented:
- Name and contact details 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.
- 7.0 Formally lodged parent complaints, will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and professional respect at all times.
- 7.1 The school will try to resolve the concern or complaint promptly. If the complaint involves many students and a range of issues the school will need more time to investigate and resolve it.
- 7.2 The Principal will determine whether a concern or complaint should be managed through the schools concerns and complaints procedure or through other complaint processes of the Department.
- 7.3 Where a complaint is referred to the Principal, the Principal may choose to respond to a complaint through an informal process. This may occur in cases where the complaint is minor, the complainant wishes the matter to be dealt with informally or the complaint has arisen from a lack of or unclear communication.

- 7.4 Formal processes will be used when informal processes haven't been successful, a complainant seeks a formal process, or the Principal believes the complaint warrants formal investigation.
- 7.5 Full details regarding formal complaint resolution procedures are contained with the Department of Education 'Local Complaints Resolution Procedures' handbook.
- 8.0 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.
- 9.0 All parties involved in addressing a complaint may seek the services of a mediator when there is difficulty coming to an agreement.
- 10.0 If a concern or complaint is substantiated in whole or part, the school will offer an appropriate remedy, which will be implemented as soon as practicable. At its discretion and depending on the circumstances the school may offer:
- An explanation or further information about the issue
  - Mediation, counselling or other support
  - To change its decision
  - To change its policies, procedures or practices
  - To cancel a debt (such as for school payments)
  - A fee refund.
- 11.0 If a person with a concern or complaint is not satisfied with the outcome determined by the school, they should contact the relevant DET Branch. 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.
- 12.0 The school will make information about the process for addressing concerns and complaints readily available to parents and the school community in clear and easy-to-understand language e.g. School Website and Newsletter.
- 13.0 The school will provide staff with guidelines appropriate to their responsibilities under this policy.
- 14.0 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 an annual review of the school's policies, procedures and operations.

## **EVALUATION**

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle.

### Relevant documents/links

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/complaints/Pages/default.aspx>

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/community/Pages/parentcomplaints.aspx>

Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006

Information Privacy Act 2000

George Perini

Kristen Steer

Principal

School Council President