

Written by	Principal
Date Approved by School Council	December 2019
Date of Review	December 2022

1. Purpose:

Dingley Primary School's approach to handling concerns and complaints is based on our values of:

- 1.1. Providing a safe and supportive learning environment
- 1.2. Building relationships between students, parents and staff
- 1.3. Providing a safe working environment for staff.

2. Concerns and Complaints Covered by the Procedures:

These procedures cover concerns and complaints about:

- 2.1. General issues of student behaviour that are contrary to the school's *Student Engagement and Wellbeing and Bullying Prevention policies*
- 2.2. Incidents of bullying or harassment in the classroom or the school yard
- 2.3. Learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
- 2.4. Communication with parents
- 2.5. Parent contributions and payments
- 2.6. General administrative issues
- 2.7. Any other school-related matters except as detailed below.

3. Exemptions:

- 3.1. These procedures do not cover matters for which there are existing rights of review or appeal, as detailed in the *Victorian Government Schools Reference Guide*.

These matters include:

- 3.1.1. Student discipline matters involving expulsions
- 3.1.2. Complaints about employee conduct or performance and complaints that should be dealt with by performance management, grievance resolution or disciplinary action
- 3.1.3. Complaints by the Department's employees related to their employment
- 3.1.4. Student critical incident matters
- 3.1.5. Other criminal matters

The Principal will use local complaints resolution procedures, where appropriate, for resolving complaints in relation to issues that fall within the school's area of responsibility. All cases of serious misconduct – sexual offences, criminal charges, or other serious incidents – must instead be referred to DET Complaints and Investigations Unit.

4. Implementation:

4.1. Expectations

Dingley Primary School expects a person raising a concern or complain to:

- 4.1.1. Do so promptly, after the issue occurs
- 4.1.2. Provide complete and factual information about the concern or complaint
- 4.1.3. Maintain and respect the privacy and confidentiality of all parties
- 4.1.4. Acknowledge that a common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
- 4.1.5. Act in good faith, and in a calm and courteous manner
- 4.1.6. Show respect and understanding of each other's point of view and value difference, rather than judge and blame
- 4.1.7. Recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities, which must be balanced

Dingley Primary School will address any concerns and complaints received from parents: courtesy, 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.

4.2. Raising Concerns or Complaints

In the first instance, a complaint should be made to the school in person, by telephone, or in writing to:

- 4.2.1. The student's home group teacher or specialist teacher about learning issues and incidents that happened in their class or group
- 4.2.2. The Assistant Principal about issues relating to staff members or complex student issues



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4.2.3. The Principal about issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members or very complex student issues.

4.3. Help with Raising Concerns or Complaints

4.3.1. 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

4.3.2. All parties involved in addressing a complaint may seek the services of a mediator when there is difficulty coming to an agreement

4.3.3. Dingley Primary School will ensure that the complainant is aware of these supports

4.3.4. 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.

4.4. Managing Parent Concerns and Complaints Information

4.4.1. Name and contact details (with permission) of the person with a concern or complaint

4.4.2. The date the concern was expressed or complaint made

4.4.3. The form in which the concern or complaint was received (such as face-to-face, by telephone, in writing, by email)

4.4.4. A brief description of the concern or complaint

4.4.5. Any recommendations for future improvement in the school's policy or procedures

4.4.6. Dingley Primary School will give a complainant a copy of its complaints procedures

4.4.7. Dingley Primary 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

4.4.8. All complaints will be noted and acted on promptly by the staff member who receives the complaint

4.4.9. The school (Principal) will acknowledge all complaints made in writing. It will provide the complainant with a timeline for investigating the complaint.

4.4.10. Concerns and complaints about the general school matters (such as the timing of events, school policies and facilities) will be addressed by the principal or a relevant staff member

4.4.11. Dingley Primary School will make every attempt to resolve a concern or complaint as quickly as possible. If the complaint involves many students and a range of issues, the school will need more time to investigate and resolve it

4.4.12. 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.

4.5. Resolutions

If a concern or complaint is substantiated in whole or part, the school will offer an appropriate resolution. For example, at its discretion and depending on the circumstances, Dingley Primary School might offer:

4.5.1. An explanation or further information about the issue

4.5.2. Mediation, counselling or other support

4.5.3. An apology, expression of regret or admission of fault

4.5.4. To change its decision

4.5.5. To change its policies, procedures or practices

4.5.6. To cancel a debt (such as for school payments)

4.5.7. A fee refund

4.5.8. The school will implement such resolutions strategies as soon as practicable.

4.6. Referral of Concerns or Complaints

4.6.1. If a person with a concern or complaint is not satisfied with the outcome determined by Dingley Primary School, they should contact the Regional Services Group (RSG) of the Central Office.

4.6.2. 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

4.6.3. If the complaint cannot be resolved by the complainant, school and regional office working together, the regional office may refer it to the Central Complaints Team for a process review



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- 4.6.4. The Central Complaints Team 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.
- 4.6.5. If further referral or advice is required from an external agency the parent may contact the Victorian Ombudsman.
- 4.6.6. Where a parent has real and substantial concerns that, as a result of raising a complaint refer to Protected Disclosures Act 2012 – Making and Handling Protected Disclosures.
- 4.7. Unreasonable Complaint Conduct**
- 4.7.1. All complaints in accordance with the school's complaint-handling procedures including when parent behaviour is thought to be unreasonable. Refer to Victorian Ombudsman Unreasonable Complaint Conduct Manual.
- 4.8. Anonymous Complaints**
- 4.8.1. The Department requires all complaints to be considered. However, it recognises that its staff might not be able to fully consider a complaint if they cannot effectively liaise with parents.
- 4.9. Complaint Escalations**
- 4.9.1. Parents should be made aware that they are able to take their complaint to the Victorian Ombudsman if they are dissatisfied with the outcome or response from the Department.
- 4.10. Communication**
- 4.10.1. Dingley Primary School will make the policy outlining procedures for addressing concerns and complaints readily available to parents and the school community.
This information will include:
- 4.10.1.1. How a person can make a complaint
 - 4.10.1.2. The person's responsibilities
 - 4.10.1.3. Information to be provided by the person
 - 4.10.1.4. Who the person should contact and their contact details
 - 4.10.1.5. The process and timeframes for managing complaints
 - 4.10.1.6. How the school will communicate its complaints procedures to parents and the school community
- 4.11. Monitoring the Parents Complaints Policy**
- 4.11.1. Dingley Primary 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.
 - 4.11.2. 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.
 - 4.11.3. Dingley Primary School will review its information about complaints made over time to: identify common or recurring issues that may need addressing.
 - 4.11.4. 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 on the views of parents.

For more information about this policy, please refer to:

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

5. Evaluation:

- 5.1. This policy is required to be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle.



COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT FLOWCHART

