

## Complaints Policy

### RATIONALE

Camberwell Primary School upholds the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) policy in that it is committed to good communication and treating everyone with dignity and respect. It is important that all members of a school community work together in a spirit of cooperation and understanding whilst conducting themselves in a respectful, courteous and calm manner.

### DIGNITY AND RESPECT STATEMENT – Department of Education

Concerns and complaints must be addressed in line with the Department's 2006 Dignity and Respect Statement. The statement says that:

The Department is committed to providing safe and supportive work environments where diversity is valued and everyone is treated with respect, fairness and dignity. Discrimination, sexual and other forms of harassment, bullying, violence and threatening behaviour are unacceptable. All employees, students, parents and visitors in schools and other Departmental workplaces are expected to act accordingly. The Department (which includes schools) and school councils, will act to ensure that the safety, security, health and wellbeing of all employees, students, parents and visitors in schools and other Departmental workplaces are protected.

### GOALS

- To provide policy and guidelines to enable the school community to work together with dignity and respect.
- To provide an avenue for resolution of matters not solved by processes at a local level.

### GUIDELINES

#### 1. **Clarify the issue** (what is your concern?)

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

- be clear about the topic or issue you want to discuss
- 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
- ask the school for a copy of their complaints policy
- be informed; check the departments policies or guidelines, use the Department's web site, to find information on school operational matters, policies and guidelines. These may be useful in any discussions you have with school staff.
- For further helpful hints, see: [Parent Complaints - Further Resources and Information](#)

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

## **2. Contact the school**

There are a number of ways you can raise any concerns you have about your child and their education. You can:

- I. write to your child's teacher outlining your concerns
- II. make an appointment to speak on the phone or in person with their class teacher ensuring that you inform them about the issue you wish to discuss (this is more convenient for both you and your child's teacher and does not interrupt teachers during the time they need to be with their students).
- III. consider speaking with the school's student welfare coordinator (Isobel McLennan) if you feel that this would be appropriate
- IV. The class teacher, 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.

Matters of personal concern that should be raised confidentially and directly with the relevant teacher in the first instance include:

- individual student needs
- academic progress
- behaviour and student discipline issues
- non-attendance or truancy
- challenging or changing family circumstances.

## **3. Contact the Principal or Assistant Principal**

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

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

- the Principal may ask another senior 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 or the school council.

Matters of general concern best raised with the school Principal include:

- school facilities
- sports days
- excursions
- school fees and charges
- student assessment and reporting
- timing of special events
- student free days
- before and after school care
- homework policy

- student dress codes

#### **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 your relevant regional office. If you are unsure about what region your child's school is in, please ask the school.

A regional community liaison officer 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 will ensure any formal written complaint is reviewed.

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 Department's regulatory framework.

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

#### **North Eastern Victorian Region**

Postal address and location: Level 3, 295 Springvale Road, Glen Waverley, Victoria 3150

Phone: (03) 8392 9300

Fax: (03) 8392 9502

Email: [nevr@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:nevr@edumail.vic.gov.au)

Website:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/departments/structure/Pages/northeastern.aspx>

#### **5. Contact the Department's 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 contacted if this happens.

#### **6. How to make or lodge a complaint**

##### **Raising your complaint - by phone or in person**

- You should make some notes as a guide prior to approaching the school as this helps to set out all the facts in a logical order. You can then use this information when you are speaking with the person dealing with your problem.
- Make a note of the people you speak to about your complaint and the date you spoke with them.
- Stay calm. Remember the person you are speaking with is genuinely trying to help you. If you are unable to stay calm have someone else speak on your behalf.
- Outline the steps you have already taken to resolve the issue.
- Explain what action you think should be taken to resolve the issue. Be reasonable and realistic about your expectations.

- If the complaint you are raising involves another student at the school it is very important that you do not approach them or their parent/s directly as this could make matters worse.
- Understand you could be referred to a more appropriate person within the department, or to another agency.

### **How to lodge a complaint in writing**

You can use the Department's Complaint Lodgement Form to help you to put together all the information you need to submit a complaint in writing, see: [Complaint Lodgment Form \(PDF - 83Kb\)](#)

[https://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/commrel/contacts/Complaint\\_Form\\_print\\_version.pdf](https://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/commrel/contacts/Complaint_Form_print_version.pdf)

If you are having difficulties using these guidelines you can contact your regional office for assistance.

If you are not using the Complaint Lodgement Form, remember to sign and date any correspondence and provide your full name and address. Provide as much relevant information as possible including:

- relevant dates, places and times
- a description of the incident or problem
- details of any phone conversation or meetings
- details of who you have contacted previously
- any explanations that you think are important
- copies of relevant documents (if appropriate).

The Department may not fully investigate a complaint if it is an anonymous or unreasonable complaint or if the complaint is not within our jurisdiction.

You can send your complaint by mail, email or fax. The Department's central office will try to respond within 20 school days. However, the more complex and sensitive the issues you raise, the more time will be needed to investigate or follow up with the relevant parties. We will let you know if there may be major delays.

Please send your complaint to:

Deputy Secretary

Office for Government School Education

C/- General Manager, Coordination and Strategy Division

GPO Box 4379

Melbourne Victoria 3001

Or email: [community.stakeholders@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:community.stakeholders@edumail.vic.gov.au)

Or fax: (03) 9637 2180

### **Anonymous complaint**

Anonymous complaints will be accepted, however, it may not be possible to investigate the matters thoroughly without sufficient detail or the ability to maintain effective liaison.

### **Unreasonable complaint**

An unreasonable complaint is one that is vexatious, trivial or frivolous in nature, such as a complaint that is:

- an abuse of the complaint process

- not made in good faith
- an attempt to reopen an issue that has already been resolved by raising the same, or similar, issues again
- the result of unreasonable complainant behaviour.

### Further review

You may submit your complaint to an external agency if you feel that your issue has not been dealt with appropriately by the Department. Other agencies may include:

- [Victorian Ombudsman](https://www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au/)  
https://www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au/
- [Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission](http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/)  
http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/

You can also seek advice and/or mediation services from an organisation such as:

- [Dispute Settlement Centre Victoria](http://www.disputes.vic.gov.au/)  
http://www.disputes.vic.gov.au/
- [Parents Victoria](http://www.parentsvictoria.asn.au/)  
http://www.parentsvictoria.asn.au/

There are also a number of community organisations that may assist with advocacy.

### Parent information sheets

The Parent Complaints Information Sheet provides summary information of how parents can make a complaint to the Department, see: [Parent Complaints Information Sheet \(PDF - 278Kb\)](#)

This information has also been translated into the following languages:

<a href="#">Albanian (PDF - 30Kb)</a>	<a href="#">Macedonian (PDF - 119Kb)</a>
<a href="#">Arabic (PDF - 176Kb)</a>	<a href="#">Nuer (PDF - 342Kb)</a>
<a href="#">Burmese (PDF - 111Kb)</a>	<a href="#">Punjabi (PDF - 60Kb)</a>
<a href="#">Chinese (Simplified) (PDF - 80Kb)</a>	<a href="#">Russian (PDF - 189Kb)</a>
<a href="#">Chinese (Traditional) (PDF - 88Kb)</a>	<a href="#">Samoan (PDF - 101Kb)</a>
<a href="#">Dari (PDF - 116Kb)</a>	<a href="#">Serbian (PDF - 41Kb)</a>
<a href="#">Dinka (PDF - 295Kb)</a>	<a href="#">Sinhalese (PDF - 52Kb)</a>
<a href="#">Hindi (PDF - 129Kb)</a>	<a href="#">Somali (PDF - 33Kb)</a>
<a href="#">Karen (PDF - 111Kb)</a>	<a href="#">Tagalog (PDF - 33Kb)</a>
<a href="#">Khmer (PDF - 66Kb)</a>	<a href="#">Tamil (PDF - 61Kb)</a>
<a href="#">Korean (PDF - 129Kb)</a>	<a href="#">Turkish (PDF - 126Kb)</a>
	<a href="#">Vietnamese (PDF - 113Kb)</a>

### RELATED POLICIES

2010.06 - Code of conduct - Community

2013.10 - Code of Conduct - Staff

2015.03 - Code of conduct - Students