



“We flourish as engaged bilingual global citizens who can face challenges as critical, creative thinkers. Our exemplary holistic education promotes a lifelong love of learning.”

COMPLAINTS POLICY

RATIONALE

Camberwell Primary School upholds the Department of Education and Training (DET) policy in that it is committed to effective communication and the treatment of others 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.

It is the Department’s belief that parent complaints are best handled at the school level in an environment where parents feel able to speak up about issues concerning the education of their children. The Complaints Policy enables the school to meet its obligation to respond to parent complaints in a clear, fair, effective and efficient manner and provides parents information of how they can make a complaint at their child’s school.

This policy does not apply to matters where rights and processes for review and appeal already exist. These include:

- student expulsions, <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/participation/pages/expulsions.aspx>
- complaints about staff that if upheld would constitute misconduct, <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/workm/Pages/conduct.aspx>
- student critical incident matters, <https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/ourorg/RSG/SitePages/Student%20Critical%20Incident%20Advisory%20Unit.aspx>
- other criminal matters, <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/police.aspx>

POLICY

DIGNITY AND RESPECT STATEMENT – Department of Education

Concerns and complaints must be addressed in line with the DETs 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.”

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/workm/Pages/conduct.aspx>

Camberwell Primary School adheres to government policy and guidelines to enable the school community to work together with dignity and respect. The principal ensures there is an avenue for resolution of matters not solved by processes at a local level.

School Name: Camberwell Primary School Camberwell Road campus and Reserve Road campus	Policy name Complaints Policy	Policy Ref. Number VRQA
Approved by: CPS School Council	Date: March 2018	Next: March 2020
	Version 3.0	Page 1 of 5



“We flourish as engaged bilingual global citizens who can face challenges as critical, creative thinkers. Our exemplary holistic education promotes a lifelong love of learning.”

GUIDELINES FOR PARENT COMPLAINTS

Parent complaint flowchart p.8 Parent complaints policy (Interim)

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/spag/community/policyparentsconcerns.pdf>

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.

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 (staff member) 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.

School Name: Camberwell Primary School Camberwell Road campus and Reserve Road campus		Policy name Complaints Policy		Policy Ref. Number VRQA	
Approved by: CPS School Council	Date: March 2018	Next: March 2020	Version 3.0	Page 2 of 5	



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- 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

General Enquiries

Email: nevr@edumail.vic.gov.au

Phone: 1300 333 231

Phone: 03 8392 9300

Website: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/regions.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

School Name: Camberwell Primary School Camberwell Road campus and Reserve Road campus		Policy name Complaints Policy	Policy Ref. Number VRQA	
Approved by: CPS School Council	Date: March 2018	Next: March 2020	Version 3.0	Page 3 of 5



“We flourish as engaged bilingual global citizens who can face challenges as critical, creative thinkers. Our exemplary holistic education promotes a lifelong love of learning.”

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 Lodgement Form

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/contact/parentcomplaintform.docx>

Complaints should be lodged by email. The relevant regional office address is included on the complaint form.

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

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. 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.

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

If you are not satisfied after following school and regional processes you can refer your complaint to the Department. After assessing your complaint, the Department can undertake a number of processes including allowing more time for resolution at the region or school level or conducting a process review. If the matter is eligible the Department may also refer your complaint to the Independent Office for School Dispute Resolution.

Contact with the Department 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.

School Name: Camberwell Primary School Camberwell Road campus and Reserve Road campus		Policy name Complaints Policy		Policy Ref. Number VRQA	
Approved by: CPS School Council	Date: March 2018	Next: March 2020		Version 3.0	Page 4 of 5



“We flourish as engaged bilingual global citizens who can face challenges as critical, creative thinkers. Our exemplary holistic education promotes a lifelong love of learning.”

You can send your complaint by mail, email or fax.

Please send your complaint to:

Deputy Secretary, Regional Services Group
c/o Manager, Central Complaints Team
GPO Box 4367 Melbourne VIC 3001

Or email: school.complaints@edumail.vic.gov.au

Or fax: (03) 9637 2180

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.

Should your matter be eligible, the Department may refer your complaint to the Independent Office for School Dispute Resolution.

The Independent Office for School Dispute Resolution handles Victorian government school disputes that have not been resolved at a school or Department level. <http://www.schoolresolution.vic.gov.au/>

You are also able to take your complaint to the Victorian Ombudsman if you have concerns about how your complaint has been handled by the Department. <http://www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au/>

RELATED POLICIES

of conduct - Community
Code of Conduct - Staff
Code of conduct - Students

EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed annually or more often if necessary due to changes in regulations or circumstances.

School Name: Camberwell Primary School Camberwell Road campus and Reserve Road campus		Policy name Complaints Policy	Policy Ref. Number VRQA	
Approved by: CPS School Council	Date: March 2018	Next: March 2020	Version 3.0	Page 5 of 5