

# DEDERANG PRIMARY SCHOOL

*"Where each child is challenged to be curious, creative and caring."*



## COMPLAINTS RESOLUTION POLICY

### POLICY STATEMENT:

Our school has both a desire and a responsibility to ensure that high standards of conduct are maintained by staff and students at all times. The school's approach to handling concerns and complaints is based on our values of: RESPECT, LEARNING AND SAFETY. We seek to ensure that we:

1. Provide safe and supportive environments for students, and staff.
2. Build relationships between students, staff, parents and the local community.

### Aims:

1. To resolve complaints fairly, efficiently and promptly and in accordance with relevant legislation.
2. To provide a harmonious, positive and productive school environment.

### PROCEDURES:

1. The school will make information about procedures for addressing concerns and complaints readily available to parents and the school community.
2. The Principal will update and brief staff members on procedures to address concerns and complaints at least once per calendar year.
3. Procedures **cover** concerns and complaints about general issues of student and school community members' behaviour that are contrary to the school's Code of Conduct as articulated through the school values of RESPECT, LEARNING AND SAFETY, including:
  - Incidents of bullying or harassment in the classroom or the school yard
  - Learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
  - Communication with parents
  - School levies and payments
  - General administrative issues
  - Any other school-related matters **except as detailed below**.

4. Procedures **do not cover** matters for which there are existing rights of review or appeal, as detailed in the '**Victorian Government Schools Reference Guide**'. Those matters include:
  - a. student discipline matters involving expulsion
  - b. complaints about employee conduct or performance and complaints that should be dealt with by performance management, grievance resolution or disciplinary action
  - c. complaints by the Department's employees related to their employment
  - d. student critical incident matters
  - e. criminal matters.
  
5. It is the Principal's responsibility to provide a healthy and positive school environment that is free from discrimination and harassment. In doing so, Principals must ensure that all staff are aware of their rights and responsibilities.
  
6. The Principal is required to use local complaints resolution procedures, which may include but are not limited to;
  - talking with people
  - recording conversations
  - cross referencing with policy
  - research about best practice
  - DEECD specialists to inform action and approaches taken,

These actions will be used as 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 the '**Department of Education Conduct and Ethics Branch**'.

7. It is incumbent upon the Principal to act where unacceptable conduct is observed or brought to his or her attention.
  
8. A complainant may at any stage choose to take their complaint directly to an external agency such as the Merit Protection Boards, Victorian Equal Opportunity Commission, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, a union of which they are a member, or the Ombudsman.
  
9. It is important that all complaints, ensuing procedures and outcomes are fully documented.
  
10. The Principal may choose to respond to a complaint through an informal process in cases where the complaint is minor, the complainant wishes the matter to be dealt with informally or the complaint has arisen from lack of, or unclear communication.
  
11. 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.

12. Full details regarding formal complaint resolution procedures are contained within the Department of Education 'Parent Complaints Policy (Interim)' handbook, and contain the following steps.

The **formal process** involves: -

1. The Principal (or designated officer) investigating the complaint, including formal interviews, written statements, conveying the details of the complaint to the respondent in writing providing the opportunity for a written response.
2. Dismissing or accepting the complaint. Acceptance may involve the Conduct & Ethics Branch, verbal or written warnings, conciliation, counselling or consequences etc.
3. Preparation of a detailed confidential report,

13. Monitoring of the situation.

- a. Parties dissatisfied with the process can appeal to the previously mentioned external agencies.
- b. All matters must be treated with the utmost confidentiality, and professional respect at all times.

14. **The school expects the person raising a concern or complaint to:**

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

15. **The school will address any concerns and complaints received from parents:**

- a. Courteously, efficiently and fairly
- b. Promptly, or within the timeline agreed with the person with the concern or complaint and in accordance with due process, principles of natural justice and the Department's regulatory framework.

- c. **Raising concerns or complaints**

In the first instance, the complainant should telephone; visit or write a brief note to the school Principal or the student's Teacher recording the issue. Complaints will be noted and acted on promptly by the staff member who receives the complaint. As a guide complaints should be forwarded to a student's teacher if they concern learning issues or incidents that happened in their class. Issues relating to school policy, school management, very complex student issues, staff members or if you are not sure who to

contact, should be directed to the Principal.

In cases of more serious complaints, the complainant should telephone, visit or write to the Principal.

The following information will be documented:

- Name and contact details (with permission) 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
- A brief description of the concern or complaint
- Action taken on the concern or complaint
- The outcome of action taken on the concern or complaint
- Any recommendations for future improvement in the school's policy or procedures.

16. The school recognises that the complainant and others involved may require personal or emotional support.
17. Complainants can seek the services of an advocate when they feel they are unable to express their concerns 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.  
All parties involved in addressing a complaint may seek the services of a mediator.

**18. Referral of concerns or complaints**

Should the complaint involve complex issues, the school might need to take advice from the Department's regional office. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome determined by the school, they should contact the Department's appropriate regional office. 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.

19. 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. The Division 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 of 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.

**LEGISLATION:**

*Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*

**RELATED POLICIES AND INFORMATION:**

DPS Anti-Bullying Policy

DPS Discipline Policy

DPS eSmart Policy

DPS Behaviour Support Flowcharts

Victorian DET Bullying Prevention Policy

Victorian DET Parent Complaints Policy (Interim)

Presented to School Council 24<sup>th</sup> May 2017 and ratified.

**Policy review (annually):** 2018.