



**Strathmore**  
PRIMARY SCHOOL No.4612

*Strive to Achieve*

## PARENT CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

### RATIONALE

Strathmore Primary School's Key Values are aligned with its Positive Behaviour Support framework in the following manner:

<p><i>Our Positive Behaviours and Values help us achieve a sense of community and belonging at Strathmore Primary School.</i></p>		
 <p><b>SAFETY</b></p> <p><i>I act safely and carefully.</i></p>	 <p><b>RESPECT</b></p> <p><i>I respect people and property.</i></p>	 <p><b>LEARNING</b></p> <p><i>I am open to new learning and take responsibility for my effort.</i></p>
<p><b><u>Key Value:</u></b></p> <p><b>RESPONSIBILITY</b></p>	<p><b><u>Key Values:</u></b></p> <p><b>RESILIENCE, HONESTY and INCLUSIVENESS</b></p>	<p><b><u>Key Values:</u></b></p> <p><b>INSPIRE, EXPLORE, and CHALLENGE</b></p>

These school values provide the framework to ensure high standards of conduct are maintained between staff, parents and students. The school acknowledges its responsibility to manage and resolve parent complaints fairly and efficiently, and in accordance with relative state-wide legislation.

The school is committed to implementing procedures that cover concerns and complaints about:

- general issues of student behaviour that are contrary to the school's student engagement policy
- incidents of bullying or harassment
- learning programs, and assessment and reporting of student learning
- communication with parents
- school levies and payments
- general administrative issues
- any other school related matter.

## AIMS

The school aims to:

- ensure all students learn to their best ability
- provide a harmonious, positive and productive school environment
- resolve complaints fairly, efficiently, promptly and in accordance with relative legislation
- provide a supportive school culture
- build positive relationships between students, parents and staff
- provide a safe working environment for staff
- promote home-school partnerships.

## IMPLEMENTATION

### 1. Processes

#### a. Expectations of person raising the concern or complaint

As soon as possible after an issue occurs, a person raising a concern or complaint should:

- speak to the person concerned
- provide complete and factual information about the concern or complaint
- maintain and respect the privacy and confidentiality of all parties
- acknowledge a common goal 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 the difference, avoiding blaming or making judgement
- recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced.

#### b. Raising concerns or complaints

The complainant should initially visit, telephone, write or email:

- the student's teacher about an issue that happened in their class
- the Principal about issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members, or very complex student issues.

If unsure who to contact, parents should contact the school on 9379 3991.

### **c. The Process For Following Parent Concerns**

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#### **INFORMAL PROCEDURES**

- talking to the parent and collect information
- investigating
- seeking resolution
- providing feedback to parent.

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#### **FORMAL PROCEDURES**

- investigating the complaint through formal interviews, written statements, conveying the details of the complaint to the respondent in writing and providing the opportunity for a written response
- dismissing or accepting the complaint. Acceptance may involve a range of appropriate remedies offered at the schools discretion, as listed further in this document
- preparing a detailed confidential report
- monitoring of the situation.

### **d. Parent Advocates/Support**

In special circumstances, 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, a member of School Council or someone who is available through an appropriate support organisation and who does not receive a fee for service. In more serious issues, all parties involved may seek the services of a mediator, if there is a difficulty coming to an agreement. The school will ensure that the complainant is aware of these supports.

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.

### **e. Managing and recording parent concerns and complaints**

It is important that all complaints adhere to the following procedures and that outcomes are fully documented when of a more serious nature. Documentation will include:

- name and contact details (with permission) of the person with a concern or complaint
  - the date the concern was expressed or complaint made
  - a brief description of the concern or complaint
  - details of the school person responding to 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/practices.

A parents' complaint register will be held in the Principal's Office for parent concerns or complaints of a more serious nature.

### **f. Addressing concerns or complaints**

The school will make every effort to resolve concerns and complaints before involving other levels of the department.

- The school will acknowledge all complaints made and provide the complainant with a timeline for investigating the complaint.
- In all cases, the school will try to resolve the concern or the school complaint promptly. If the complaint involves many students and a range of issues the school will need more time to investigate and resolve it.
- Where possible the school will seek to find 'win-win' solutions where all parties are satisfied.
- All complaints will be acted on promptly by the staff member who receives the complaint.
- For complaints of a serious nature, the Principal (or delegate) will be informed and the complaint will be formally recorded.
- However, should the complaint involve complex issues, the school might need to take advice from the Department's Regional Office. This may take more time.
- Therefore the school will tell the complainant the new timeline for addressing the complaint and the reason for any delays.
- Concerns or complaints about general classroom matters should be referred to the relevant classroom teacher or relevant staff member. Concerns and complaints about general school matters, including policies, facilities, staffing etc and unresolved matters previously dealt with at a classroom level should be referred to the Principal.
- The Principal will determine whether a concern or complaint should be managed through the school's concerns and complaints procedures or through other complaint processes of the Department.
- Where a complaint is referred to the Principal, the Principal may choose to respond to the complaint through an informal process. This applies particularly to 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.
- 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.
- Full details regarding formal complaint resolution procedures are contained within the Department of Education's 'Local Complaints Resolution Procedures' handbook, and contain the following steps.

#### **g. Resolution**

If a concern or complaint is substantiated in whole or part, the school will offer an appropriate remedy. At its discretion and depending on the circumstances, the school might offer:

- an explanation or further information about the issue
- mediation, counselling or other support
- an apology, expression of regret or admission of fault
- to change its decision
- to change its policies, procedures or practices
- to cancel a debt or refund (such as for school payments).

The school will implement the remedy as soon as practicable.

#### **h. Referral of concerns or complaints**

If a person with a concern or complaint is not satisfied with the outcome determined by the school, they should contact the Department's appropriate Regional Office on PH: 92916500

The regional community liaison officer 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.

(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. They 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.)

### **2. Communication and Training**

The school will make information for addressing concerns and complaints readily available to parents and the school community in clear and easy-to-understand language.

The information will include:

- how a person can make a complaint
- the person's responsibilities
- the information required when making a complaint
- who the person should contact and their contact details
- the process and time frames for managing complaints.

### **3. Obtaining Information on How To Share a Concern or Complaint**

Information on the school's procedures for addressing concerns and complaints will be:

- published on the school's website
- printed in the parent's handbook
- printed in the school newsletter
- publicised on a poster displayed in public areas of the school.

### **4. Training and support**

The school will:

- provide staff with (or provide access to) training and support appropriate to their responsibilities e.g. how to listen and communicate with parents
- ensure that staff who manage complaints, demonstrate the personal attributes outlined in the Good Practise Guide: (Ombudsman Victoria's Guide to Complaint Handling for Victorian Public Sector Agencies).

## COMMON QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WHEN MAKING A COMPLAINT

### **When making a complaint**

- your child's school should always be your first point of contact
- concerns are best resolved at the school
- the Department expects that most complaints will be resolved by the school.

### **How do I raise an issue or make a complaint?**

#### **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
- be informed; check the Department's policies or guidelines, where relevant DEECD website <http://www.education.vic.gov.au>
- ask the school for a copy of their complaints policy, if they have one.

#### **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:

- make an appointment to speak on the phone or in person with your child's class teacher about the issue you wish to discuss
- write a note to your child's teacher outlining your concerns
- consider speaking with the school's student welfare coordinator, if you feel that this would be appropriate
- arrange any meeting times or phone calls through the school office (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).

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.

#### **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 Principal or Assistant Principal.

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

Please note:

- 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, the meeting is more likely to occur outside of classroom hours.

If your concern is related to issues of school policy, it should be raised more formally (in writing) with the Principal or the School Council.

## RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### 1. Rights for Parents

- For their children to be safe from harm at all times
- For all parents and children to be treated equally
- To be involved in their child's school and the development of school policies, etc.
- That parents have a right to provide input into child's school and procedures
- To be kept informed by their class teacher/school
- That all concerns and complaints will be investigated and will be treated seriously
- That the school will respond to all concerns and complaints
- That all serious concerns will be forwarded to the principal
- For any concern to be treated confidentially and records treated with privacy
- That teachers will communicate with parents directly and promptly
- To be listened to and spoken to privately and politely
- When possible, that an appropriate time and place will be selected to express any concerns
- That teachers will support parents' understandings of any concerns, by providing all the information needed.

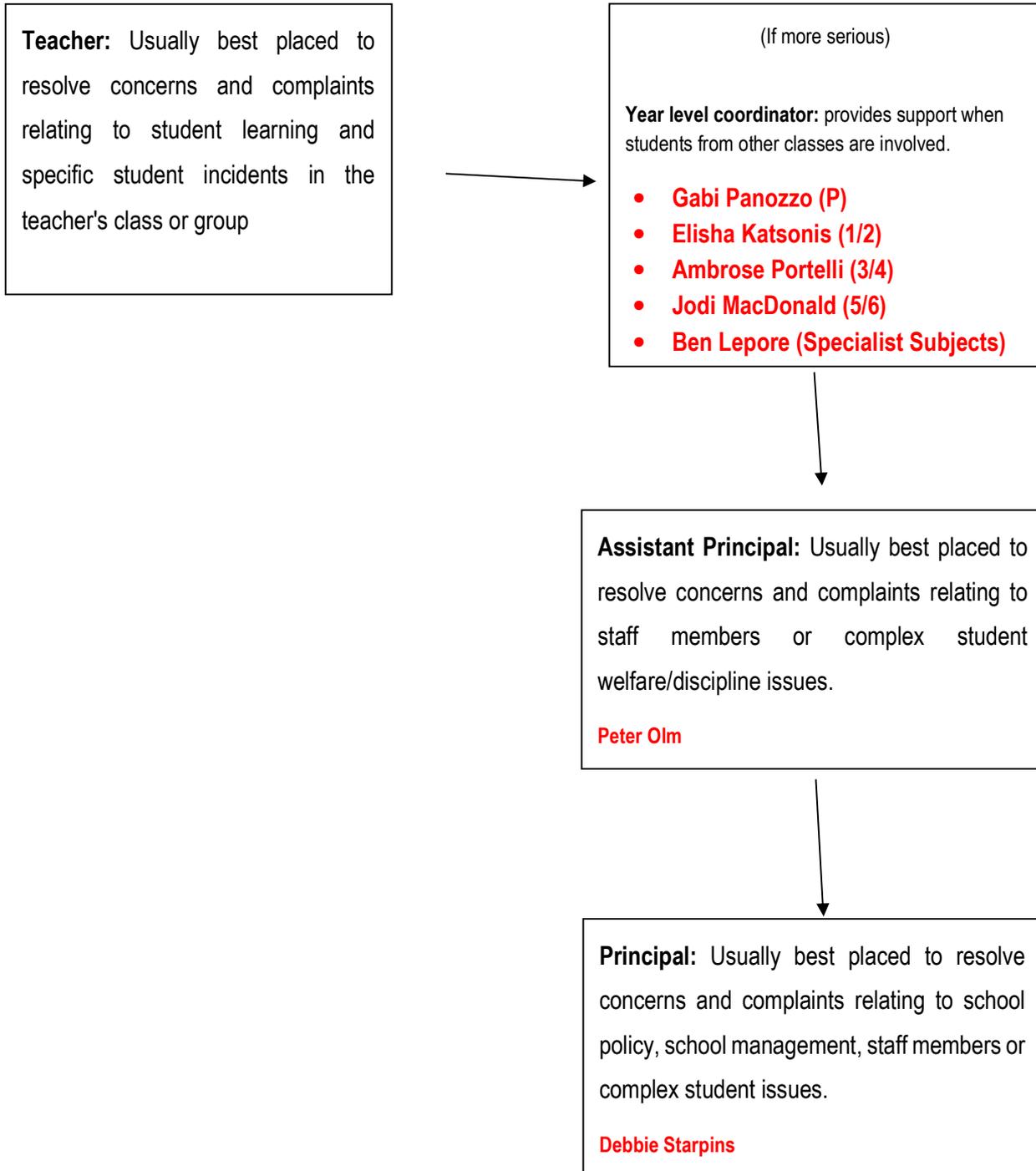
### 2. Rights for Staff

- That all staff will be treated with respect and spoken to politely and/or listened to.
- That, where possible, parents will make an appropriate time and place to express any concerns
- That all parents will initially speak to the appropriate teacher
- That, where possible, parents will speak to the teacher in person rather than write a note
- That parents will maintain confidentiality whilst their concerns are being investigated
- That parents will respect the school code of conduct or discipline policy.

### 3. School Responsibilities

- Ensure all reasonable steps have been undertaken to resolve parent concerns and complaints
- Contact the Regional Office for support with any complex complaints
- Ensure all new staff members are aware of the school and Department's policies and procedures in relation to addressing parent concerns and complaints
- Annually brief all staff members (including volunteers) on the policy and procedures
- Provide staff with (or provide access to) training and support appropriate to their responsibilities under the procedures
- Establish and maintain administrative processes to manage concerns and complaints raised at the school.

CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS FLOW CHART OR POINT OF CONTACT



FLOW CHART FOR MORE SERIOUS CONCERNS

FIGURE 1

