



## **CONCERNS, COMPLAINTS & GRIEVANCES POLICY**

### **1. POLICY STATEMENT:**

Occasionally, there is a need for parents to raise concerns about practice or policy in schools. These concerns are generally addressed to all parties' satisfaction at the local level through informal means. Where this is not the case and a more formal structure is required, then the following procedures will be followed. In either case, these procedures aim to expeditiously resolve the complaint, while ensuring the parents, students and staff are not victimised and that the rights of teachers are not prejudiced. The objective of this policy is to resolve complaints as quickly and fairly as possible. If the complaint relates to Child Sexual Assault or other abuse, the Principal will follow the procedures for the mandatory notification to the Department of Human Services and Child Protection.

### **2. RATIONALE:**

At Dromana Primary School we are committed to providing a safe, inclusive and supportive environment for all members of the school community. This is characterised by fairness, mutual trust, respect and reconciliation. A safe, inclusive and supportive environment is developed when all members of a school community promote open communication, tolerance and positive relationships and embrace responsive, fair and transparent processes. When clear preventative policies are applied consistently and issues that can give rise to complaints are identified early, matters can be resolved before they escalate.

This policy exists to implement procedures to safeguard the rights and acknowledge the responsibilities of all parties, should an unresolved grievance arise. If a parent or student has a complaint or concern which they believe has not been satisfactorily resolved at the level at which it has arisen, a grievance may exist. A resolution may be sought through informal discussions with the Principal, Assistant Principal, School Chaplain, or delegate about the problem in order to come to a mutually acceptable and reasonable resolution, or through a formal grievance procedure.

Dromana Primary School is committed to the provision of procedural fairness and the resolution of grievances in a fair, reasonable and equitable manner within an atmosphere of mutual respect, dignity and compassion. The spirit of this policy is one of equity and justice. It is based on the belief that home and school form a partnership for the mutual benefit of children. It acknowledges that best procedures are those which involve the home, the school and the student in positive interaction.

### **3. IMPLEMENTATION:**

**3.1** If parents wish to contact a member of staff to discuss any matters relating to their child's progress or situation at school, the best procedure is to contact the teacher involved, giving a brief outline of the purpose of the contact or meeting. Contact should be made using one of the following approaches:

1. Parents may contact the school, either by phone or by coming to the office personally, and make arrangements for the teacher to make contact to organise a suitable meeting time. Teachers are not normally available to come to the phone or office during teaching time.
2. Contact the appropriate teacher in writing asking them to set up a suitable meeting time.
3. Approach the appropriate teacher at a time when they are not teaching or on duty to arrange a suitable time to meet. Note that most teaching staff are engaged in scheduled meetings immediately following school on both Mondays and Tuesdays.

If parents have a concern or wish to discuss an issue about a situation that they consider affects the whole school or relates to a school policy or procedure the best procedure is to approach the Principal, the Deputy Principal or School Chaplain using one of the three approaches outlined above.

If parents have a concern or wish to discuss an issue relating to a member of staff or of another sensitive nature, they should make direct contact with the Principal using one of the approaches above.

In all cases, if the matter is urgent and/or relates to the possible risk of harm to a child, member of staff or member of the community, the Principal should be informed immediately and the urgency of the matter conveyed. The Principal will determine the most appropriate person to deal with the issue and will ensure that contact is made as soon as possible.

### 3.2 Key elements of the complaints handling procedure

Complaints about school matters should be made to the Principal. Upon receipt of a written complaint or a transcribed oral one, the principal or other appropriate person is to:

1. Discuss the issue with the person who is the subject of the complaint
2. Provide a copy of the written complaint to the persons concerned (if appropriate)
3. Clarify the issues of complaint and allow a right of reply
4. Investigate and discuss options for resolution with all parties
5. Decide on the option deemed to be most appropriate
6. Implement a decision and provide feedback to all concerned

To be effective, Dromana Primary School will deal with complaints sensitively, promptly and confidentially. Matters will be resolved as soon as possible and in a way which treats all parties with dignity and respect. If a satisfactory outcome is not achieved, further conciliation may take place in an effort to resolve any outstanding matters. On the rare occasion where a resolution is unlikely, a decision will be made by the Principal with the best learning outcome for all students considered paramount.

Anonymous complaints are not accepted or acted upon.

Please note: Parents should not approach the children of other families with a school-related complaint nor should they approach the children of other families with a non-school related complaint on school grounds. This is often a sensitive area and in order to protect all parties it is advisable to work through the relevant teacher or Principal.

### 3.3 Informal Resolution Process

In less serious matters in which there is no risk of harm to any person, those involved will be encouraged to deal with the issue personally. Normally this would mean that the relevant people would discuss the issue of concern with a view to reaching an amicable resolution.

### 3.4 Referral of complaints

In the case of a formal complaint against the Principal, or when a matter cannot be resolved at the school level, or the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome determined by the school they should contact the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's appropriate regional office.

### 3.5 Complaints should be sent to:

Deputy Secretary  
Regional Services Group  
c/o Manager, School Operations and Governance Unit  
Regional Monitoring and Support Division

GPO Box 4367  
Melbourne VIC 3001

Or email: [community.stakeholders@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:community.stakeholders@edumail.vic.gov.au)  
Or fax: (03) 9637 2180

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.

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 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.

### 3.6 Resolution

Typically, the outcomes of successful conciliation may be that:

- The parties resolve their differences
- The complaint is withdrawn
- A reasonable compromise is agreed upon
- A verbal or written apology
- Disciplinary action

### 3.7 Review of policy or procedures

On rare occasions where resolution is unlikely, a decision will be made with the best learning outcome for all students considered paramount. This is ultimately a school decision.

If a complaint is not upheld or not substantiated (e.g. there is insufficient evidence) but some issues come out of the investigation that are required to be addressed then, possible outcomes include:

- Relevant training for employees and/or students;
- Monitoring of the behaviour of employees and/or students;
- Counselling for the aggrieved person;
- Mediation at the local level.

If the complaint is proved not to have happened at all, or if there is evidence that the complaint was made with the main purpose or intent of causing distress to the other named as the source of the grievance, the following are possible outcomes:

- Counselling for the person who made the complaint;
- A written apology from the person who made the complaint;
- An official warning;
- Referral for disciplinary action for students and staff;
- The relevant designated person will make sure that whatever outcome is decided upon actually occurs.

### 3.8 Record Keeping

Records of complaints, interviews and other documentation relating to a complaint are kept at the school (when dealt with at school level) in a separate secure complaints file. If the complaint is about a person, documents are placed in a restricted access file. If there are any serious ongoing management or care issues relating to a complaint, there will need to be a cross-reference to the restricted file on the staff member or student file.

### 3.9 Key Elements of the Complaints and Grievances Policy

- Impartiality – when a complaint is made, it will be investigated in a fair and impartial manner.
- Confidentiality – all complaints will remain confidential.
- No victimisation – the complainant or their family will not be victimised in any way.
- Anonymous complaints/criticisms will not be accepted.
- Vexations or malicious complaints – there is an underlying assumption that complaints are made in good faith and with an intention for resolution not retribution.
- Timeliness – each complaint/suggestion will be finalised within as short a period of time as possible.

### 3.10 Harassment

Staff are advised to contact the Principal to seek support and/or advice concerning an incident of harassment.

## 4. LINKS

Department of Education and Training resources and information on Parent Grievances:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/complainschool.aspx>

## 5. EVALUATION:

This policy will be reviewed biennially.

This policy was last ratified by School Council on 2015