

# HEANY PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

## PARENT CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

### **PURPOSE**

To guide procedures over concerns and complaints. The school's approach for handling concerns and complaints is based on our values of:

- Acceptance – Acknowledging differences and change with an open mind
- Life-long learning – Our commitment to ongoing learning to develop skills and knowledge
- Integrity – being ethical, honest and fair in our dealings with others
- Respect – being tolerant and caring, supporting and valuing ourselves and each other

### **OBJECTIVES**

To provide procedures to address the following concerns and complaints:

- General issues of student behaviour that are contrary to the school's code of conduct
- Incidents of bullying or harassment in the classroom or the school yard
- Learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
- Communication with parents
- School fees and payments
- General administrative issues
- Other school related matters

Procedures to address the following matters, for which there are existing rights of review or appeal, can be found in the Victorian Government Schools Reference Guide:

- Student discipline matters involving expulsions
- Complaints about employee conduct or performance and complaints that should be dealt with by performance management, grievance resolution or disciplinary action
- Complaints by the Department's employees related to their employment
- Student critical incident matters
- Other criminal matters

### **GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

#### **Expectations**

- The school expects a person raising a concern or complaint to:
  - do so promptly, as soon as possible after the issue occurs
  - provide complete and factual information about the concern or complaint
  - maintain and respect the privacy and confidentiality of all parties
  - acknowledge that the common goal is 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 difference, rather than judge or blame
  - recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced
- The school will address any concerns and complaints received from parents:
  - courteously
  - efficiently
  - fairly
  - promptly, or within the timeline agreed with the person who has the concern or complaint
  - in accordance with due process, principles or natural justice and the Department's regulatory framework.

### **Raising concerns or complaints**

- In the first instance a complaint should be made to the school. The complainant should telephone, visit or write to:
  - the student's teacher about learning issues and incidents that happened in their class or group
  - the Assistant Principal if students from several classes are involved
  - the Assistant Principal about issues relating to staff members or complex student issues
  - the Principal about issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members or very complex student issues
- Contact for any staff member is through the office on 9764 5533  
If you are not sure who to contact, contact the Assistant Principal on 9764 5533

### **Help with raising concerns and complaints**

- 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 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 when there is difficulty coming to an agreement.

### **Managing parent concerns and complaints information**

The school will record the following details of all complaints received, even if the complaint appears to be minor:

- In the first instance when the complaint is easily resolved in a telephone call, a brief note in the school's/Principal's/teacher's diary recording the issue and the resolution is all that is necessary. Anything over this will be recorded, including:
  - the name and contact details of the person with a concern or complaint
  - the date the concern was expressed or the complaint made
  - the form in which the concern or complaint was received such as face to face, by telephone, in writing, by email
  - a brief description of the concern or complaint
  - the name of the school officer 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

### **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 give a complainant a copy of its complaints procedures.
- The school will determine whether a concern or complaint should be managed through the school's concerns and complaints process as outlined in this policy or through other complaints processes of the Department.
- All complaints will be noted and acted on promptly by the staff member who receives the complaint. The school will acknowledge all complaints made in writing. It will provide the complainant with a timeline for investigating the complaint.
- The Assistant Principal/Principal will investigate all major complaints and will provide a response to the complainant.
- Concerns and complaints about general school matters (such as the timing of events, school policies and facilities) will be addressed by the Principal or relevant staff member.

- The school will make every attempt to resolve a concern or complaint as quickly as possible. If your complaint involves many students and a range of issues, the school will need more time to investigate and resolve it.
- Should the complaint involve complex issues, the school might need to take advice from the Department's Regional Office which may take more time. The school will tell the complainant the new timeline for addressing the complaint and the reasons for any delays. In all cases, the school will try to resolve a concern or complaint within 20 school days.

## Remedies

- If a concern or complaint is substantiated in whole or part, the school will offer an appropriate remedy. For example and at its discretion 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 (such as school payments)
  - a fee refund
  - to implement the remedy as soon as practicable
  - 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.
- The officer from the region will ask the complainant for a complete and factual account in writing of the concern or complaint and 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 complainant's opinion about why the School and Regional Office did not resolve it to their satisfaction. The Division 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 the Group Division should act on the information provided.

## Communication and Training

- The school will make this policy readily available to parents and the school community. It will be:-
  - published on the school's website
  - available in hard copy from the office
  - referred to in the school's Parent handbook
  - given to each family on enrolment
- Parents can also refer to the *Addressing parents' Concerns and Complaints Effectively: Policy and Guide* for more detailed information  
[https://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/commrel/contacts/policy\\_and\\_guides\\_addressing\\_parents\\_concerns.pdf](https://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/commrel/contacts/policy_and_guides_addressing_parents_concerns.pdf)

## Training and support

- The school will:
  - brief all members of staff (including volunteers) about its procedures to address concerns and complaints annually
  - provide all staff with (or provide access to) training and support appropriate to their responsibilities under the procedures

- ensure staff who manage complaints, demonstrate the personal attributes outlined in the *GOOD Practice Guide: Ombudsman Victoria's Guide* to complaint handling for Victoria's public sector agencies

## **EVALUATION**

- The School Council will regularly review its policy and procedures to effectively address parent concerns and complaints as part of its cyclic policy and procedures review schedule.
- The school will review its information about complaints made over time to:
  - Identify common or recurring issues that may need addressing
  - Assess the effectiveness of these and other procedures and whether they are being followed
  - Use information provided to the school through the parent opinion survey on the view of parents

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**Signed:**

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*(Principal)*

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