

MANAGING CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY



PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide an outline of the complaints process at Richmond West Primary School so that parents and members of the community are informed of how they can raise complaints or concerns about issues arising at our school
- ensure that all complaints regarding Richmond West Primary School are managed in a timely, effective, fair and respectful manner.

The school's approach to handling concerns and complaints is based on our values of:

- providing a safe and supportive learning environment
- building relationships between students, parents and staff
- providing a safe working environment for staff.

SCOPE

This policy relates to complaints brought by parents, carers, students or members of our school community and applies to all matters relating to our school. In some limited instances, we may need to refer the complainant to another Department of Education and Training process where there are different mechanisms in place to review certain decisions, for example, expulsion appeals.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Richmond West Primary School welcomes feedback, both positive and negative, and is committed to continuous improvement. We value open communication with our families and are committed to understanding complaints and addressing them appropriately. We recognise that the complaints process provides an important opportunity for reflection and learning.

We value and encourage open and positive relationships with our school community. We understand that it is in the best interests of students for there to be a trusting relationship between families and our school.

When addressing a complaint, it is expected that all parties will:

- be considerate of each other's views and respect each other's role
- be focused on resolution of the complaint, with the interests of the student involved at the centre
- act in good faith and cooperation
- behave with respect and courtesy
- respect the privacy and confidentiality of those involved, as appropriate
- operate within and seek reasonable resolutions that comply with any applicable legislation and Department policy.
- recognise that schools and the Department may be subject to legal constraints on their ability to act or disclose information in some circumstances.

The school will develop its procedures to address concerns and complaints in collaboration with parents and the school community. See flow chart (Appendices 1 & 2)

These procedures take effect from 1 January 2018.

Expectations

The school expects a person raising a concern or complaint to:

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

Preparation for raising a concern or complaint

Richmond West Primary School encourages parents, carers or members of the community who may wish to submit a complaint to:

- carefully consider the issues you would like to discuss
- remember you may not have all the facts relating to the issues that you want to raise
- think about how the matter could be resolved
- be informed by checking the policies and guidelines set by the Department and Richmond West Primary School (see "Further Information and Resources" section below).

Complaints process

Richmond West Primary School is always happy to discuss with parents/carers and community members any concerns that they may have. Concerns in the first instance should be directed to your child's teacher, Assistant Principal or Principal. Where possible, school staff will work with you to ensure that your concerns are appropriately addressed. For contact details for any staff member, call the office on 9429 2950. If you are not sure who to contact, the Assistant Principal will provide you with guidance.

Where concerns cannot be resolved in this way, parents or community members may wish to make a formal complaint to the Principal or Assistant Principal.

If you would like to make a formal complaint, in most cases, depending on the nature of the complaint raised, our school will first seek to understand the issues and will then convene a resolution meeting with the aim of resolving the complaint together.

The following process will apply:

1. Complaint received:

Please either email, telephone or arrange a meeting through the front office with the [Assistant Principal or Principal, to outline your complaint so that we can fully understand what the issues are.

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We can discuss your complaint in a way that is convenient for you, whether in writing, in person or over the phone.

2. Information gathering:

Depending on the issues raised in the complaint, the Principal, Assistant Principal or nominee may need to gather further information to properly understand the situation. This process may also involve speaking to others to obtain details about the situation or the concerns raised.

3. Response:

Where possible, a resolution meeting will be arranged with the Assistant Principal/Principal to discuss the complaint with the objective of reaching a resolution satisfactory to all parties. If after the resolution meeting we are unable to resolve the complaint together, we will work with you to produce a written summary of the complaint in the event you would like to take further action about it. In some circumstances, the Principal may determine that a resolution meeting would not be appropriate. In this situation, a response to the complaint will be provided in writing.

4. Timelines:

Richmond West Primary School will acknowledge receipt of your complaint as soon as possible (usually within two school days) and will seek to resolve complaints in a timely manner. Depending on the complexity of the complaint, the school may need some time to gather enough information to fully understand the circumstances of your complaint. We will endeavour to complete any necessary information gathering and hold a resolution meeting where appropriate within 10 working days of the complaint being raised. In situations where further time is required, Richmond West Primary School will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

Resolution

Where appropriate, Richmond West Primary School may seek to resolve a complaint by:

- an apology or expression of regret
- a change of decision
- a change of policy, procedure or practice
- offering the opportunity for student counselling or other support
- other actions consistent with school values that are intended to support the student, parent and school relationship, engagement, and participation in the school community.

In some circumstances, Richmond West Primary School may also ask you to attend a meeting with an independent third party or participate in a mediation with an accredited mediator to assist in the resolution of the dispute. 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.

Managing concerns and complaints

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

- name and contact details 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
- details 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

However, 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 may be all that is required.

Escalation

If you are not satisfied that your complaint has been resolved by the school, or if your complaint is about the Principal and you do not want to raise it directly with them, then the complaint should be referred to the North Western Victoria region by contacting 1300 338 691 or

nwvr@edumail.vic.gov.au

Richmond West Primary School may also refer a complaint North Western Victoria if we believe that we have done all we can to address the complaint.

For more information about the Department's *Parent Complaints* policy, including the role of the Regional Office, please see: [Parent complaints policy](#).

Addressing concerns and 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 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 school will investigate all 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 a relevant staff member

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- The school will make every attempt to resolve a concern or complaint as quickly as possible. If the complaint involves many students and a range of issues, the school will need more time to investigate and resolve it
- 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

Communication to parents and the school community

The school will make information about procedures for addressing concerns and complaints readily available to parents and the school community.

The information will include:

- how a person can make a complaint
- the person's responsibilities
- information to be provided by the person
- who the person should contact and their contact details
- the process and timeframes for managing complaints

The school's procedures for addressing concerns and complaints will be:

- published on the school's website
- Printed in the school newsletter
- Publicised in public areas of the school

The school will:

- brief all members of staff about its procedures to address concerns and complaints annually
- provide 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 Victorian public sector agencies*

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Parents' Guide - See Appendix 1

Staff Guide – See Appendix 2

EVALUATION

- The school will monitor parent concerns and complaints and consider issues raised through the parent complaints process, and any other relevant information from the parent opinion survey, when undertaking a review of the school's policies, procedures and operations

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The school will review its information about complaints made over time to:

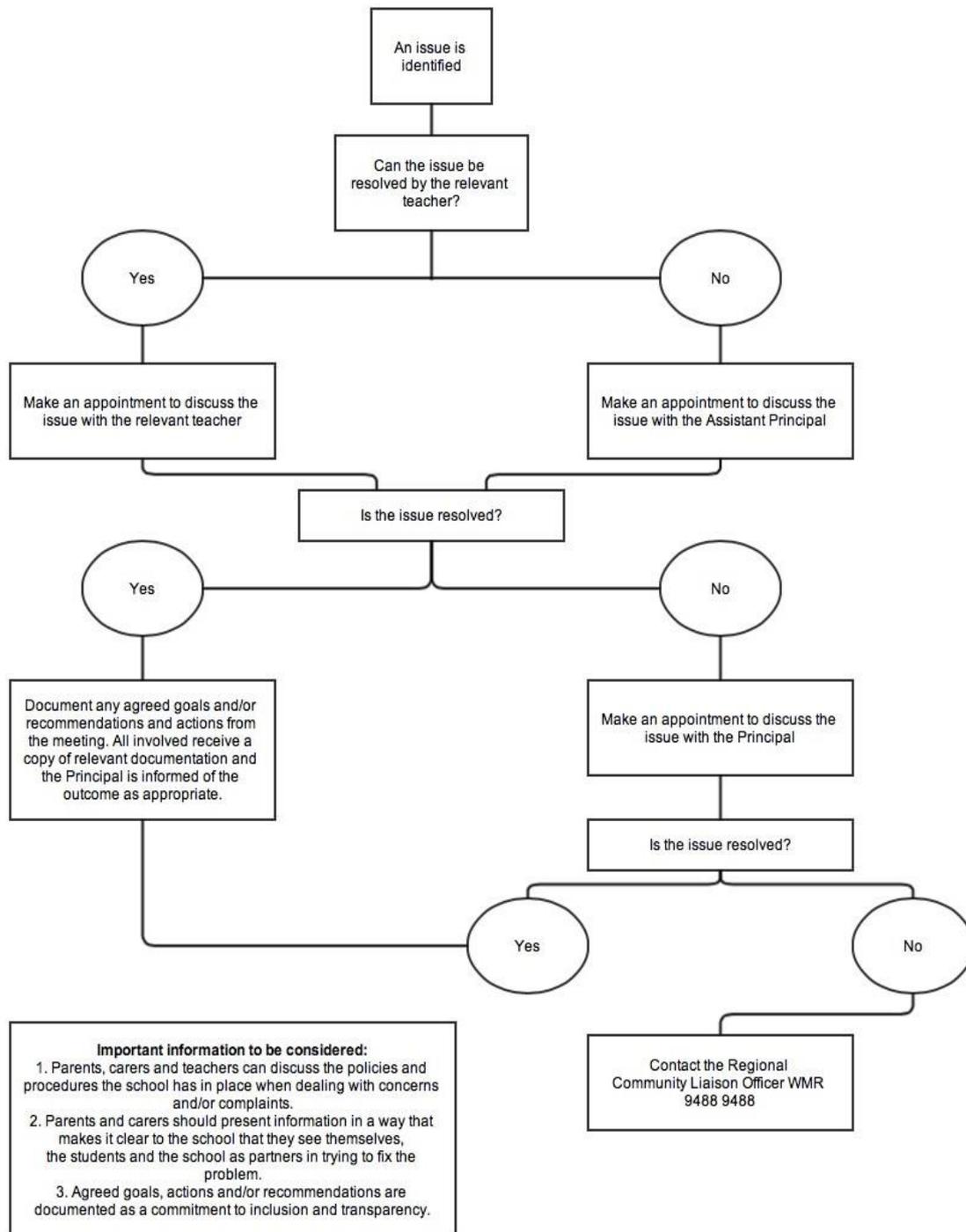
- identify common or recurring issues that may need addressing
- assess the effectiveness of these and other procedures and whether they are being followed
- use information provided to the school through the parent opinion survey on the views of parents.

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Appendix 1

A parents and carers guide to managing concerns and complaints at Richmond West Primary School



Appendix 2

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A staff guide to managing concerns and complaints at Richmond West Primary School

