

# Parent, Carer Complaints Policy

BRUNSWICK EAST PRIMARY SCHOOL

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## Rationale

Brunswick East Primary School strives to foster trust and cooperation amongst the students, parents/carers, teachers and other staff within the school community, in order to create a positive learning environment for all students. Our school prides itself on clear, consultative and open communication. We also recognise that at times parents/carers might disagree or be dissatisfied by occurrences at the School.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with an action taken, a decision made or a service provided. Parents/carers have a right to make a complaint. Complaints are an important way for the school community to provide information and feedback to the school; they provide a valuable opportunity for reflection and learning.

Clear and effective processes for resolving complaints between the school and community members help to dispel anxiety and are essential for building strong relationships.

It is important that parents/carers are provided with a fair opportunity to raise a complaint, that the School responds to a complaint in a timely and effective manner, and that all parties aim to resolve the complaint in a respectful manner.

When addressing parent/carers concerns or complaints, the Department and the School must:

- abide by relevant regulatory and legislative frameworks
- maintain confidentiality
- balance the rights and responsibilities of all parties
- ensure all parties are aware of their right to advocacy
- act in a manner that seeks to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties

## Purpose

To clearly describe the processes that the School will follow in the event, that a parent/carers raises a complaint.

This policy does not apply to matters where rights and processes for appeal already exist, including:

- student expulsions
- complaints about staff misconduct
- student critical incident matters
- criminal matters

## Guiding principles

- The School's values guide its policy, operations and practice.
- We recognise that Brunswick East Primary School has a diverse community and that within our community there will be a range of beliefs and opinions held. All members of the school community, including students, parents/carers and staff, have a role in creating a respectful and positive learning environment for students and workplace for staff.
- The School's policies and procedures will be accessible to all members of the school community via the School's web site.
- The School will publicise the Complaints processes outlined in this policy to the school community, including via the web site, in the school newsletter and by other appropriate channels.
- When raising or addressing a complaint, all parties involved will:
  - be respectful and acknowledge the other's point of view
  - operate within applicable legislation
  - acknowledge that the common goal is to achieve an outcome that is acceptable to all parties
  - act in good faith, and in a calm and courteous manner
  - recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced
  - ensure the complaint is based in fact (third hand information and gossip are not usually sufficient grounds for making a complaint)

A parent/carers may choose to have an advocate, translator or support person accompany them at appointments to resolve complaints.

Anonymous complaints can be made however it may not be possible to fully consider a complaint if the Principal cannot liaise with the parent/carer who raised the complaint. The Principal may consult with the Department to determine the extent to which an anonymous complaint should be investigated.

### **Complaint Resolution and Outcomes**

Where a complaint is *justified*, it can be resolved by:

- an apology or expression of regret
- a change of decision
- a change of policy, procedure or practice
- a refund of parent payments
- offering the opportunity for student counselling or other support

Where a complaint is *not justified*, the school may provide an explanation to the parent/carer of how the decision is:

- consistent with school policy
- realistic and is supported by an external agency with appropriate specialist expertise relevant to the complaint
- supported by Department policy and guidelines

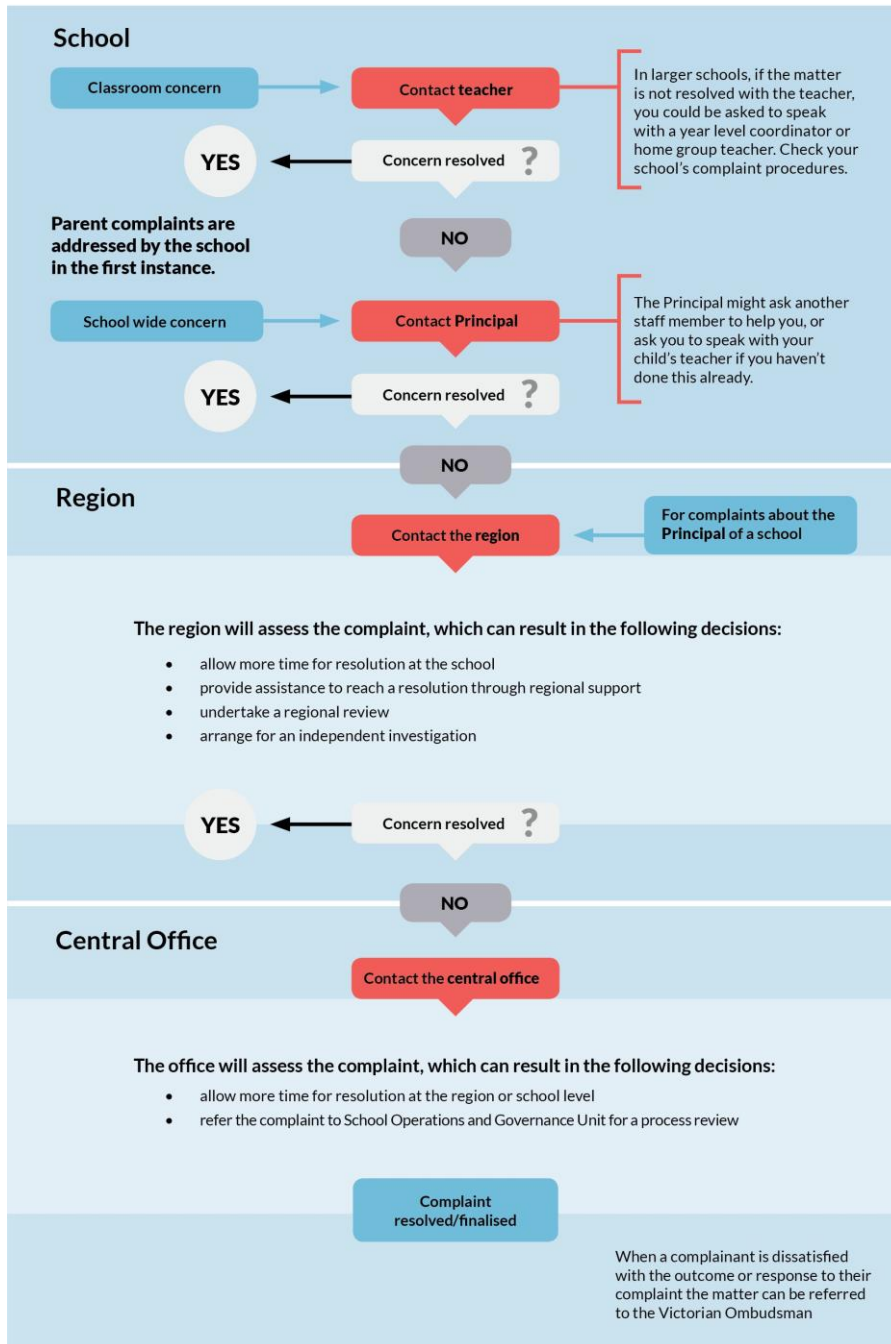
When the School responds to a complaint, possible outcomes include:

- *Resolved* - all parties agree on the response or remedy
- *Finalised* - the complaint has been escalated to the Department of Education and Training (DET), and the Department has made a final determination on the matter after exhausting all processes at the school and Department level
- *Unresolved* - agreement cannot be reached on a course of action or remedy, or the remedy cannot be implemented

### **Implementation**

1. The Principal is responsible for the School's complaint-handling processes. The Principal will ensure that any complaints that are raised are handled in accordance with the Department's [Parent complaints policy](#), including that:
  - complaints are recorded and any actions taken are well-documented
  - a record of all complaints, verbal and written, are maintained by the School
  - staff are aware of the school's complaint handling processes and that staff have an opportunity to attend training / professional development for complaint-management
2. If a parent/carer wishes to make a complaint, the complaint needs to be directed to the appropriate staff member - refer to the *Parent Complaint Flowchart* (below). This flowchart provides guidance on who to approach in the first instance and how the complaint will be escalated if required.
  - Complaints about 'everyday' operations with a child's learning community are made to the child's administration teacher in the first instance, and/or the learning community's lead teacher.
  - Complaints about School policy, the School's operations or concerns about staff are made to the Principal in the first instance.In either case, the parent/carer is advised to make an appointment with the relevant staff member (ie. the Learning Community teacher or the Principal). Details for each Learning Community's teaching team is available on the School's web site: <http://beps.vic.edu.au/learning/learning-communities/>
3. Parents/carers of a student with a disability can make a complaint in accordance with this policy. In addition, the student has rights under the *Disability Discrimination Act*, *Equal Opportunity Act* and the *Disability Standards for Education*. These Acts enable parents/carers to raise complaints with the Australian Human Rights Commission, the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission and to the DET's Wellbeing, Health and Engagement Division.
4. Where Parents/Carers are not fluent in English (eg parent of and international student) they may have an advocate or support person. The school may also employ an interpreter to help understanding, by both parties, at the meeting/s.

# PARENT COMPLAINT FLOWCHART



## Actions taken on receipt of a complaint

If the School receives a complaint the following actions will be taken:

1. Acknowledge receipt of a written/email complaint as soon as possible, and no later than one week after receiving the complaint. In the case of a verbal complaint, the school's representative may request the complainant clarifies the details of the complaint in writing.
2. Advise the complainant that the school will keep a record of the complaint.
3. Provide the complainant with an expected timeframe for resolving the complaint and how the complaint will be addressed.
4. Explain the types of outcomes that the complainant could expect.
5. Meet with the complainant to establish the facts as clearly as possible.

6. Document all formal discussions.
7. Keep the complaint confidential.
8. Keep the complainant informed of any delays to resolving the complaint.
9. Provide information on what will happen if the School cannot resolve the complaint, including that complaint can be escalated to the Region or central office of the Department, or for international students, DET International Education Division.
10. Provide the complainant with a copy of this *Complaints Policy* (unless the matter is easily and satisfactorily resolved).


**Resources and References**

- Code of conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees
- DET: Parent complaints - Government Schools - <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/complaints/Pages/default.aspx>
- DET: Dealing with a complaint [http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/commrel/contacts/Guide\\_2\\_DEALING\\_WITH\\_A\\_COMPLAIN\\_T.pdf](http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/commrel/contacts/Guide_2_DEALING_WITH_A_COMPLAIN_T.pdf)

**Review**

This policy will be reviewed:

- by School Council as part of the school’s three-year review cycle, in consultation with the wider school community
- following any significant complaint (once the matter is concluded), where the Principal deems it appropriate to review the School's policy and processes in light of how they were applied to the complaint

Updated by	Janet Di Pilla & Jill Howells	Version Final
Principal signature		March 2019
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