

Lalor North Primary School Parent Complaints Policy

Rationale

Lalor North Primary School's values are:

- Respect
- Honesty
- Unity
- Success

These provide the framework within which high standards of conduct are maintained between staff, parents and students at all times. Within this framework it is the school's responsibility to manage and resolve parent complaints fairly, efficiently and properly and in accordance with the relative legislation.

Aim

Our values are demonstrated by the school in relation to addressing parent concerns and complaints by:

- Providing a safe and supportive school culture and learning environment
- Building positive relationships between students, parents and staff
- Providing a safe working environment for staff
- Promoting a partnership between home and school

Implementation

Concerns and complaints covered by the procedures

These procedures 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, assessment and reporting of student learning
- Communication with parents
- School fees and payments
- General administrative issues
- Any other school related matters except as detailed below

These procedures do not cover matters for which there are existing rights of review or appeal as detailed in the Victorian School Policy and Advisory Guide.

Those matters include:

- 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

The school will develop its procedures to address concerns and complaints in collaboration with parents and the school community.

Expectations

Lalor North Primary 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 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

Lalor North Primary School will address any concerns and complaints received from parents:

- Courteously
- 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

Raising Concerns or Complaints

Under no circumstances should parents directly approach a student/students about a concern or a complaint.

In the first instance, a complaint should be made to the school.

The complainant should telephone, visit and/or write to:

- The student's teacher about learning issues and incidents that happened in their class or group
- The PLT leader if students from several classes are involved
- The Assistant Principal for more complex student issues
- The Principal about issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members or very complex student issues.

If you are not sure who to contact, contact the school on 9465 4922 and ask to speak to the Assistant Principal.

At no time should parents raise concerns with students of the school directly.

Help with Raising Concerns and Complaints

- Personal support is most appropriate in situations where the complainant and others involved in the complaint process have emotional issues related to the complaint.
- 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
- The school will ensure that the complainant is aware of these supports. A complainant who wishes to use these support services should ensure that the person addressing the concern or complaint is aware of their intention and is in agreement.

Managing parent concerns and complaints information

In the first instance, when the complaint is easily resolved in a telephone call, a brief note in the principal's/ assistant principal's / teacher's diary recording the issue and the resolution may be all that is required.

However, with more serious/complex complaints, the following details will be recorded:

- Name and contact details (with permission) 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 (such as face-to – face, by telephone, in writing, by email).
- 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

Addressing concerns or complaints

All concerns or complaints will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and professional respect at all times.

- Lalor North Primary School will make every effort to resolve concerns and complaints before involving other levels of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

- Lalor North Primary School will give a complainant a copy of its complaint procedures
- Lalor North Primary 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 of Education and Early Childhood Development
- All complaints will be noted and acted upon promptly by the staff member who receives the complaint
- The Principal, Assistant Principal or delegate will investigate all complaints and will provide a response to the complainant
- The school will acknowledge all complaints made and provide the complainant with a timeline for investigating a complaint
- In all cases the school will try to resolve the concern or complaint promptly. If the 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.
- Concerns or complaints about general classroom matters should be referred to the relevant teacher or 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
- Where a complaint is referred to the Principal, the Principal may choose to respond to a complaint through an informal process in 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

Remedies

If a concern or a complaint is substantiated in whole or in 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 (such as for school payments)
- A fee refund

The school will 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 office of the Department of Education, North Western Metropolitan Region on 9488 9488.

The Community Liaison Officer from the regional office 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 Central Office of the Department of Education'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.

Communication

The school will make information about procedures for addressing concerns and complaints readily available to parents and the school community in clear and easy to understand language, including some of our key community languages.

This information includes:

- How a person can make a complaint
- The persons 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 a leaflet given to a parent when their child enrolls
- Printed in the school newsletter

Training and Support

Lalor North Primary School will:

- Brief all members of staff (including volunteers) 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*.

Monitoring the Parent Complaints Policy

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.

The School Council will regularly review its policy and procedures to effectively address parents 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 views of parents

Date ratified by School Council: 18.8.14

Review date: August 2016