



POLICY: CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

1. Introduction

The purpose of the Concerns and Complaints Policy is to outline the processes by which Chilwell Primary School responds to concerns and complaints by parents. This policy covers concerns and complaints about, but not limited to:

- General issues of student behaviour that are contrary to Chilwell Primary School's student engagement guidelines;
- Incidents of bullying or harassment in the classroom or school yard;
- Learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning;
- Communication with parents;
- General administrative issues; and
- School fees and payments.

This policy does not cover matters for which there are existing rights of review or appeal, as detailed in the Victorian Government Schools Reference Guide, such as:

- 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 Departments' employees related to their employment;
- Student critical incident matters; or
- Other criminal matters.

2. Definitions

- 'Parent' includes a guardian and any person who has parental responsibility for a child and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides.
- 'concern' is an issue of interest (because of its importance and effect) which is raised informally in order to improve or change a situation.
- 'complaint' is an expression of grievance or resentment where the complainant is seeking redress or justice.

3. Aim

The aim of the Concerns and Complaints Policy is to provide parents with an accessible and responsive complaint resolution process.

4. Principles:

Chilwell Primary School's approach to handling concerns and complaints is based on the principles of:

Fairness

The complaint handling process must follow due process and be fair to all parties to the complaint.

Responsiveness

All complaints shall be dealt with promptly and complainants shall be treated courteously.

Privacy

Chilwell Primary School staff shall respect the privacy of complainants and handle all complaint documentation in accordance with departmental policies and legislative requirements, particularly the Privacy Principles set out in the *Information Privacy Act*. Refer to School Privacy Policy.

Accessibility

The complaint handling process shall be readily accessible and information about it shall be written in plain, understandable English and, where appropriate, in a range of community languages and in formats that are accessible to everyone so that no-one is disadvantaged.

Assistance Provided

Chilwell Primary School will assist complainants, where necessary, with the formulation and lodgement of complaints.

5. Procedures:

5.1 Raising a concern or complaint

In the first instance, a complaint or concern should be raised directly to the school. The complainant should telephone, visit, or write to:

- the student's teacher about learning issues and incidents that occurred in their class or group;
- the unit leader if students from several classes are involved;
- the assistant principal about issues relating to staff members or complex student issues; or
- the principal about issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members or very complex student issues.

5.2 Assistance with raising concerns or complaints

- Complainants may seek the services of a support person or advocate if they feel they are unable to express their concern or complaint 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. A complainant who wishes to access support services should ensure the person addressing the concern or complaint is aware of their intention and is in agreement.
- All parties involved in addressing a complaint may seek the services of a mediator if there is difficulty reaching an agreement.

5.3 Managing concerns or complaints information

Chilwell Primary School will record the following details of all complaints received (even if the complaint appears to be minor):

- 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 (eg face-to-face, by telephone, in writing, by email);
- A brief description of the concern or complaint; and
- Any recommendations for future improvement in the school's policies or procedures as appropriate.

The school will periodically review concerns and complaint data for trends.

5.4 Addressing concerns or complaints

- Chilwell Primary School will determine whether a concern or complaint should be managed through the school's concerns and complaints process, or through other complaint processes available through DET;
- Chilwell Primary School will make every effort to resolve concerns and complaints in the first instance before involving other levels of DET;
- All complaints will be noted and acted on promptly;
- The principal, assistant principal or delegate will investigate all complaints and will provide a response to the complainant;
- every effort will be made to resolve a concern or complaint as quickly as possible. If a complaint involves multiple students and/or a range of issues, the school may need more time to investigate and resolve it;
- 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;
- Should the complaint involve complex issues, Chilwell Primary School may seek advice from the DET regional office.

5.5 Remedies

If a concern or complaint is substantiated, in whole or part, the school will offer an appropriate remedy. For example, 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); or
- a fee refund.

The school will implement the remedy as soon as practicable.

5.6 Referral of concerns or complaints

If a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome determined by the school, s/he can contact the DET regional office. 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.

6. Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed annually.

This policy was ratified by School Council – November 2016

Review: Biennially