



Raising concerns or complaints at ...

MOUNT CLEAR COLLEGE/GPlace

Introduction

The advice and support for parents is aimed at achieving the Education Department's and school's objective of strengthening the quality of its service delivery and responsiveness to the community. It is viewed as an opportunity for continuous improvement of its services and performance.

The Parents Concerns and Complaints policy is set and must be interpreted within the Department of Education and Early Childhood's "Dignity and Respect Statement. This states:

The Department of Education is committed to providing safe and supportive work environments where diversity is valued and everyone is treated with respect, fairness and dignity.

The Department (which includes schools) and school councils, will act to ensure that the safety, security, health and wellbeing of all employees, students, parents and visitors in schools and other DoE workplaces are protected.

Policy Aims

The policy and procedures:

- Acknowledge the rights and define the responsibilities when a complaint or concern is raised in the school
- Provide guidelines for the processes and procedures to be used in dealing with complaints and concerns.
- Ensure that complaints and concerns are addressed promptly, consistently and fairly.
- Provide a confidence for staff and parents that complaints and concerns will be dealt with in an environment of dignity and respect.

The Parent Concerns and Complaints policy and procedures for the school have several distinct but interlinked statements and processes. These include:

- a. The Policy- set by school council and reviewed annually
- b. The School Procedures- set by the Principal from the policy and reviewed annually
- c. Parent Advice- set by the Education Department and available on their website policy
- d. The School Pamphlet- sent home annually
- e. A Complaints and Concerns Presentation for staff and community information

These documents detail the processes and procedures that will be utilised by the school to deal with and address parent concerns and complaints. They provide information for the key stakeholders involved in these procedures and processes.

It is important that all stakeholders identify and understand the steps to be taken so that complaints or concerns can be dealt with in the most efficient, effective and respectful manner.

Parents should familiarise themselves with the advice provided for parents and also have some understanding of the school's and Educational Department's role and steps. These notes provide that information

The school's Values for Complaints and Concerns can be stated as:

- providing a safe and supportive learning environment
- building relationships between students, parents and staff
- providing a safe working environment for staff.
- acknowledging our diversity while providing respect, fairness and dignity for all

They are used to determine the approach when handling a concern or complaint

The information contained within these notes has been provided by the Department of Education and Early Childhood (DEECD) and can be located at:

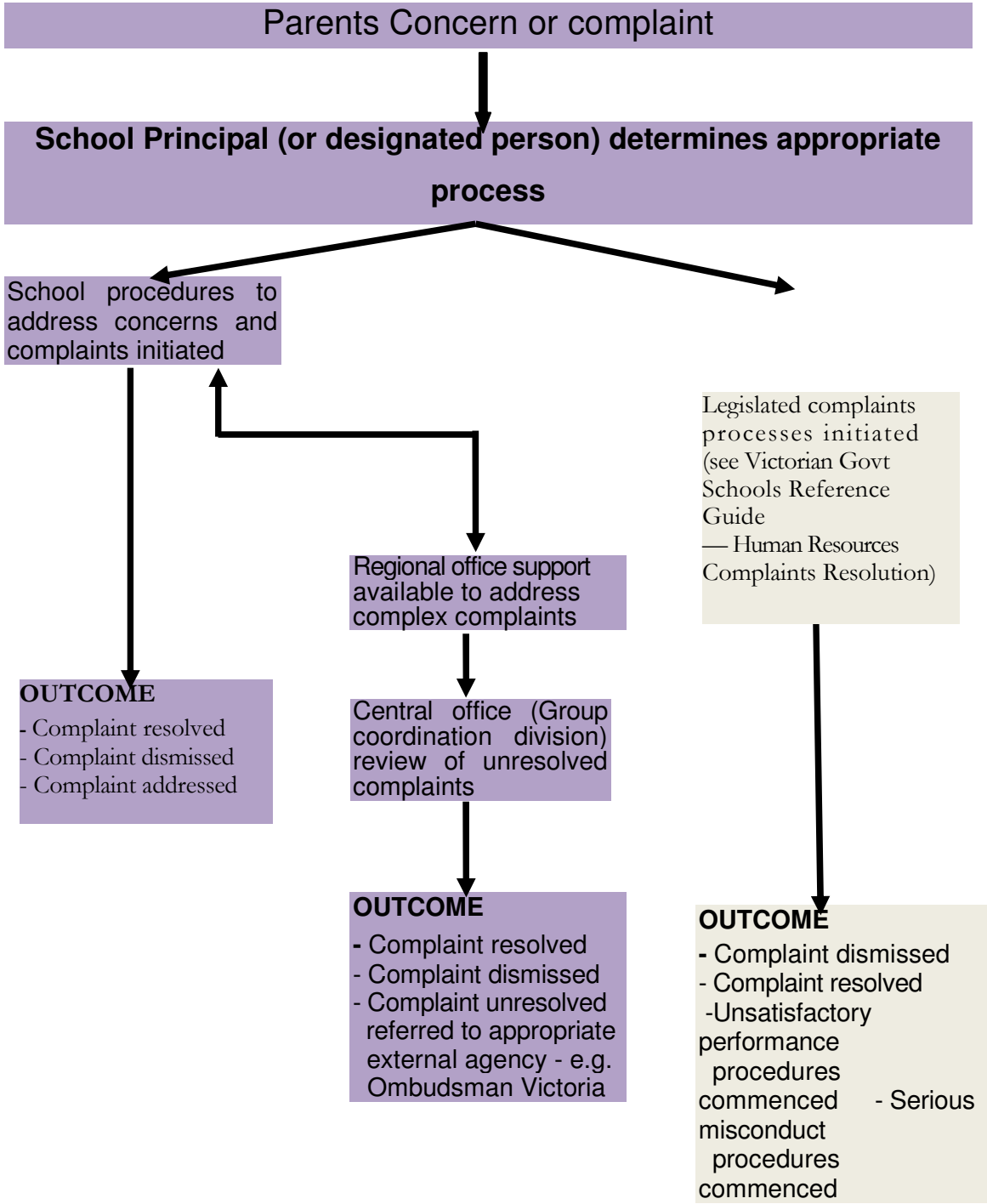
www.education.vic.gov.au/parentcomplaints

and the Office for Government School Education booklet:

Addressing Parents' concerns and complaints effectively. Policy and Guides

Overview of Parent Concerns or Complaints Procedures

Figure 1 provides an OVERVIEW of the process by which a concern or complaint made to a school by a parent about any aspect of their child's education will be addressed



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How do I raise an issue or make a complaint?

1. Clarify the issue (what is the problem?)

Before you approach the school or your child's teacher:

- be clear about the topic or issue you want to discuss
- focus on the things that genuinely affect your child
- always remain calm and remember you may not have all the facts relating to the circumstances of the topic or issue you wish to discuss
- think about what an acceptable outcome would be for you and your child
- be informed; check the school or department policies or guidelines, where relevant – <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/parentcomplaint.htm>

2. Contact the school

There are a number of ways you can raise any concerns you have about your child. You can:

- write a note to your child's teacher outlining your concerns
- make an appointment to speak on the phone or in person with the class teacher, Mini-school Leader or LINKS teacher; ensuring that you inform the school about the issue you wish to discuss
- consider speaking with the school's Student Welfare Coordinator (Fionna Wooller) if you feel that is appropriate
- arrange any meeting times by ringing the school to request an appointment (this is more convenient for both you and your child's teacher and does not interrupt teachers during the time they need to be with their students).

The class teacher or Mini-school Leader, together with others who may be involved, should be given a reasonable amount of time to take the steps required to resolve or address your concerns. Remember, it may not always be possible to resolve an issue to your complete satisfaction.

3. Contact the principal or assistant principal

Most concerns are resolved by following the first two steps above. However, if the issue remains unresolved after you have approached your child's teacher or other school staff you can then ask to see the Assistant Principal or Principal.

To do this, you will need to request an appointment through the school office – **Tel (03) 5330 1500**. Be aware that:

- the Principal may ask another senior staff member to speak with you on their behalf
 - if a teacher is going to be present at the meeting it is more likely to occur outside of classroom hours. If your concern is related to issues of school policy, these should be raised more formally (in writing) with the principal or the school council.
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4. Contact the regional office

If you still feel that your complaint has not been addressed satisfactorily after speaking to the teacher and the principal, you can then contact the Grampians Regional Office:

Postal address and location: 109 Armstrong Street North, Ballarat, Victoria

Phone: (03) 5337 8444
Fax: (03) 5333 2135
Email: c0988311@edumail.vic.gov.au
Website: <http://www.grampians.vic.edu.au>

A regional Community Liaison Officer will be able to provide you with advice and assistance and, if required, direct your complaint to other regional staff to respond.

The Regional Director will ensure any formal written complaint is reviewed.

It is the regional office's responsibility to:

- ensure that complaints, wherever possible, are resolved at the school.
- ensure that procedures at the school are in accordance with the Department's regulatory framework.

The regional office may refer your complaint to other areas or branches within the Department. You will be notified of this and of any major delays in addressing your complaint.

5. Contact the Department's central office

Contact with the Department's central office should only take place if all other steps have not led to a satisfactory resolution. Where possible, all contact should be in writing.

If it is clear that you have not followed the above steps your letter (and your complaint) will be sent to the relevant regional office. We will let you know if this happens.

6. How to lodge a complaint in writing

You can use the Department's "Complaints Lodgement Form" at:

http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/commrel/contacts/Complaint_Form_print_version.pdf

or a hard copy is available at the end of this document to help you to put together all the information you need to submit a complaint in writing. If you are having difficulties filling out the form, ask a relative or friend to help you. You can also contact the regional office for assistance.

You can send your complaint by mail, email or fax. The Department's central office will try to respond within 20 school days. However, the more complex and sensitive the issues you raise, the more time will be needed to investigate or follow up with the relevant parties. We will let you know if there may be major delays.

MAIL:
Deputy Secretary
Office for Government School Education
C/- General Manager, Group Coordination Division GPO Box 4379
Melbourne Victoria 3001

EMAIL: community.stakeholders@edumail.vic.gov.au **FAX:** (03) 9637 2180

Support Materials

Referral of concerns or complaints

The DEECD Referral Policy

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 contact for the Grampians Regional Office is:

109 Armstrong Street North

Ballarat 3350

Phone: 53 378 444

Fax: 53 332 135

Email:

The Contact Officer is: **The Manager Community Relations**

Referral Actions

- The officer from the region 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 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 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.

Complaint Lodgment Form

This form should be used only when all avenues to have your complaint resolved at your child's school have been exhausted and you feel the issue/s are of such significance that you wish to register your complaint in writing with the school's Regional Office or with the Office for Government School Education.

If you have not already been informed about the parent complaints process please go to: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/parentcomplaint.htm> for further information or contact your Regional Office for a copy of the Parent Complaints brochure.

PERSONAL DETAILS:

Title:	First Name:	Family Name:
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Street Address:	Suburb:	P/C
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Telephone: B/H	A/H	Email:
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School Name:

STUDENT DETAILS:

First Name:	Family Name:
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Year Level:	Gender: Male: (√ if yes)	Female: (√ if yes)
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Who have you contacted about your complaint? (please indicate)

LINKS Teacher: <input type="checkbox"/>	Classroom Teacher: <input type="checkbox"/>	MiniSchool Leader <input type="checkbox"/>
Assistant Principal: <input type="checkbox"/>	Principal: <input type="checkbox"/>	

Region:	Other: (please specify)
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COMPLAINT DETAILS:

Please provide the following - a description of the incident or problem / relevant dates, places and times / details of any phone conversations or meetings / any explanations that you think are important. Add extra sheets if required and attach copies of relevant documents (if appropriate).

Attach additional information as required

How do you think this issue could be resolved?

Date:

(complainant's signature) _____(for post, fax or scanned email complaints)

The Department will endeavour to provide a full response to written inquiries within 20 working days.

Disclosure and Privacy Statement

The Department has an information privacy policy and handles personal information in accordance with the Victorian Privacy laws: the Information Privacy Act 2000 and Health Records Act 2001.

This policy is available at

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/deptpolicies/informationprivacy.htm>

Send form to

Grampians Region

PO Box 712, Ballarat 3350

Fax: (03) 5333 2135

Website: <http://www.grampians.vic.edu.au>

Email: c0988311@edumail.vic.gov.au

Date Implemented	September 2012
Author	Alan Archbold
Approved By	School Council
Approval Authority (Signature & Date)	
Date Reviewed	1 September 2012
Responsible for Review	Assistant Principal
Review Date	August 2013
References	Victorian Government Schools Policy & Advisory Guide