



MPPS FEEDBACK (CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS) POLICY

Rationale

Moonee Ponds Primary School (MPPS) recognises the importance of fostering positive relationships with parents and families and developing strong school community partnerships. These partnerships are critical to supporting our children's development and learning, and are essential for building a collaborative learning community. In all partnerships there are times when disagreements and issues of concern need to be resolved. At MPPS, our approach to handling concerns and complaints is within the context of our school values: Respect, Optimism, Care and Collaboration:

- **Respect**
Treat yourself and others with consideration and regard. Be thoughtful and tolerant of one another's point of view and differences. Abide by our school expectations.
- **Optimism**
Be positive. Persist when experiencing difficulty. Set goals and believe that you can accomplish them. Have confidence and look for the positive, even in difficult situations.
- **Care**
Show kindness for yourself and others. Look after your belongings, your classroom and the environment. Take pride in what you do. Show understanding and be considerate of each other's situation, feelings and motives.
- **Collaboration**
Work together towards achieving common goals through demonstrating effective cooperation, communication and problem solving skills.

Aims

1. To manage and resolve parent complaints fairly and efficiently, and in accordance with the relative state-wide legislation.
2. To outline the procedures for addressing concerns and complaints, specifically concerns and complaints about:
 - General issues of student behaviour that are contrary to the school's code of conduct
 - Incidents of bullying or harassment in the classroom or the school yard
 - Learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
 - Communication with parents
 - School levies and payments
 - General administrative issues
 - Any other school-related matters except as detailed below

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*. Those matters include:

- Student discipline matters involving expulsion
- 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 employees related to their employment
- Student critical incident matters
- Other criminal matters

Definitions:

- **‘Parent’** in the policy has the same meaning as in the Education and Training Reform Act 2006, which is: ‘parent’, in relation to a child, includes a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for the child including parental responsibility under the Family Law Act 1975 of the Commonwealth and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides. For the purposes of the policy:
- A **‘concern’** is an issue of interest (because of its importance and effect) which is raised informally in order to improve or change a situation. For example: I believe that the school’s physical education policy and program is inadequate. I don’t think that it caters for students who have well-developed skills and who need to be involved in competitive sport. I think the school should review its policy in this area.
- A **‘complaint’** is an expression of grievance or resentment where the complainant is seeking redress or justice. For example: My daughter has been left out of the school’s netball team for the third time in a row. She is an accomplished netballer and deserves to be part of the team. It is not fair that she is left out and I want you to do something about it!

Implementation

The implementation of this policy is structured within the following sections:

1. **Expectations**
2. **Raising concerns or complaints**
3. **Help with raising concerns or complaints**
4. **Managing parent concerns and complaints information**
5. **Addressing concerns or complaints**
6. **Remedies**
7. **Referral of concerns or complaints**
8. **Communication and training**

Expectations

The 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.

The 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

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

The complainant should telephone, visit or write to:

- The Student's Teacher or home group teacher about learning issues and incidents that happened in their class or group
- The Year Level Team Leader if students from several classes are involved
- The Assistant Principal about issues relating to staff members or complex student issues
- The Principal about issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members or very complex student issues.

For contact details of any staff member, call the office on 9375 2511. If you are not sure who to contact, contact the Assistant Principal or Principal on 9375 2511.

Further information regarding the procedures for addressing concerns and complaints can be found in the appendices. This includes common questions and answers when making a complaint (appendix 1), rights and responsibilities (appendix 2) and concerns and complaints flow chart or point of contact (appendix 3).

Help with raising concerns or complaints

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.

Managing parent concerns and complaints information

The school may 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 (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.

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.

Addressing concerns or 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 (see appendix 3). 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 assistant principal or principal 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.

The school will make every attempt to resolve a concern or complaint as quickly as possible. If your 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.

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)
- 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 Department's appropriate regional office.

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.

Communication and training

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.

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 a leaflet given to a parent when their child enrolls
- printed in the parent's handbook
- printed in the school newsletter
- publicised on a poster displayed in public areas of the school.

The 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 parent 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.

References:

Department of Education (DET):

- **Parent Complaints – Government Schools**
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/complainschool.aspx>
- **Addressing parents' concerns and complaints effectively: policy and guides (2009)**
https://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/commrel/contacts/POLICY_AND_GUIDES_Addressings_parents_concerns.pdf
- **Ombudsman Victoria's guide to complaint handling for Victorian public sector agencies**
<https://www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au/Complaints/Complaint-Handling-Guide>

Appendix:

1. Procedures For Addressing Concerns And Complaints:
Common Questions And Answers When Making A Complaint
2. Procedures For Addressing Concerns And Complaints:
Rights And Responsibilities
3. Procedures For Addressing Concerns And Complaints:
Concerns And Complaints Flow Chart Or Point Of Contact

Evaluation:

This policy will be evaluated on a 4 year review cycle.

Key Person responsible this Policy is: Principal

This policy was last ratified by School Council in....

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Procedures For Addressing Concerns And Complaints

COMMON QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WHEN MAKING A COMPLAINT

When making a complaint:

- Your child's school should always be your first point of contact
- Concerns are best resolved at the school
- The Department expects that most complaints will be resolved by the school

How do I raise an issue or make a complaint?

1. Clarify the issue (what is your concern?)

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 are genuinely affecting 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 would be an acceptable outcome for you and your child
- Be informed; check the Department's policies or guidelines, where relevant
- Ask the school for a copy of the MPPS Feedback (Concerns and Complaints) Policy.

2. Contact the school

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

- Make an appointment to speak on the phone or in person with your child's class teacher, the year level coordinator or home group teacher; ensuring that you inform the school about the issue you wish to discuss
- Write a note to your child's teacher outlining your concerns
- Consider speaking with the school's student welfare coordinator, if you feel that this would be appropriate
- Arrange any meeting times or phone calls through the school office (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 year level coordinator, together with any 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 Principal or Assistant Principal. To do this, you will need to request an appointment through the school office. Please note:

- 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, the meeting is more likely to occur outside of classroom hours.

If your concern is related to issues of school policy, it should be raised more formally (in writing) with the Principal or the School Council.



Appendix 2

Procedures For Addressing Concerns And Complaints

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Rights for Parents/Guardians

- For their children to be safe from harm at all times
- For all parents and children to be treated equally
- To be involved in their child's school.
- That parents/guardians have a right to provide input into child's school and procedures through their School Council.
- To be kept informed by their class teacher/school
- That all concerns and complaints will be investigated and will be treated seriously
- That the school will respond to all concerns and complaints
- That all serious concerns will be forwarded to the principal
- For any concern to be treated confidentially and records treated with privacy
- That teachers will communicate with parents/guardians directly.
- To be listened to and spoken to privately and politely
- When possible, that an appropriate time and place will be selected to express any concerns
- That teachers will support parents' understandings of any concerns, by providing all the information needed.

2. Rights for Staff:

- That all staff will be treated with respect and spoken to politely and/or listened to.
- Parents/guardians will make an appropriate time and place to express any concerns
- That all parents/guardians will initially speak to the appropriate teacher
- Parents and guardians will contact the teacher in person or via email.
- That parents/guardians will maintain confidentiality whilst their concerns are being investigated
- That parents/guardians will respect the school code of conduct or discipline policy.

3. School Responsibilities:

- Ensure all reasonable steps have been undertaken to resolve parent/guardian concerns and complaints
- Contact the Regional Office for support with any complex complaints
- Ensure all new staff members are aware of the school and Department's policies and procedures in relation to addressing parent concerns and complaints
- Annually brief all staff members (including volunteers) on the policy and procedures
- Provide staff with (or provide access to) training and support appropriate to their responsibilities under the procedures
- Establish and maintain administrative processes to manage concerns and complaints raised at the school.



Procedures For Addressing Concerns And Complaints

CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS FLOW CHART OR POINT OF CONTACT

