Moonee Ponds Primary School
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Child Safety Standard 7: Complaints Process

Help for non-English speakers
If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact Moonee Ponds Primary School on 9375 2511.

Overview: Complaints Processes
This standard focuses on ensuring that schools have complaints processes that are child-focused, culturally safe and accessible to everyone.

Moonee Ponds Primary School (MPPS) must have policies, procedures and practices to:
- have a complaints handling process focused on students and their safety needs
- take complaints and concerns seriously
- respond promptly and thoroughly
- identify and respond to all forms of child abuse
- report child abuse to relevant authorities, whether there is a legal obligation to report it.

Benefits of child-focused complaints processes
Making a complaint can be challenging. Complaints are more likely to be raised when there are clear, well-communicated policies and procedures for concerns or allegations.

Complaints handling processes need to focus on students and their safety needs. The process should be able to handle all kinds of complaints and concerns. A complaint might reveal a bigger issue or prevent a situation from escalating.

Empowering students to raise low-level concerns improves the likelihood that they will feel comfortable making a disclosure or reporting abuse.

Staff, volunteers and families can report concerns more easily if the school has procedures that are child-friendly and accessible to students and the school community.

Actions MPPS will take
<u>To comply with this standard, at minimum, MPPS will ensure we have:</u>
- complaints handling policy which
  - is publicly available and accessible
  - child-focused
  - culturally safe and easily understood by the school community
  - has information about the process for making a complaint about the school or any person within the school
  - requires that complaints are taken seriously and responded to promptly and thoroughly.
- procedures for responding to complaints or concerns relating to child abuse that is:
  - publicly available and accessible
  - child-focused

    - culturally safe and easily understood by the school community
    - ensures complaints are taken seriously and responded to promptly and thoroughly
    - covers all forms of child abuse
    - sensitive to the characteristics of the school community
    - able to address reporting of complaints and concerns to relevant authorities, whether or not the law requires reporting, and cooperate with law enforcement
    - able to provide details of recordkeeping, reporting, privacy and employment law obligations to be met when responding to complaints and concerns

Actions for child-focused complaints processes

MPPS complaints processes will be child-centred and empowering. They will:

- Encourage students to raise concerns with a trusted adult if anything makes them feel uncomfortable or unsafe.
- Facilitate student discussions about what would help them speak up when they have concerns.
- Ask students about their experiences making complaints and act on feedback from students in your policies and the complaints process.
- Make sure it is easy for students, families, staff and volunteers can access and understand the complaints process. Host the school's Complaints Policy on a public-facing website, make physical copies available from the school and include information about how to make a complaint in the school welcome pack.
- Include information to students and their families about:
    - how to make a complaint
    - what to expect the school to do when responding to a complaint
    - how the school will support complainants.
- Support students to develop the skills to make complaints and raise concerns by using teaching and learning materials like the Resilience Rights and Respectful Relationships materials.
- Let students know that they can make a complaint about any kind of harm, perpetrated at school, outside school, by an adult or by other children, including bullying or cyberbullying and all forms of abuse.
- Advertise assistance and support services for students, families, staff and volunteers who wish to raise concerns, including the availability of translating and interpreting services.
- Receive complaints thoughtfully, taking care to validate students' experiences – what may seem small to an adult might not be to a child.
- Ensure complaint handling systems and processes are confidential, and that only authorised staff can access complaint records.
- Commit to making improvements following a complaint to address the source of the problem and follow through on the commitment.
- Provide feedback mechanisms that allow for anonymity, such as secure suggestions boxes. Regularly review and action the suggestions received.

Be transparent and open about the steps in the complaints process

- Name multiple people or positions that students and families can approach to raise concerns.
- Be transparent and open about the steps in the complaints process.
- Let students know that they can bring a support person of their choice to any interviews or meetings related to the complaint.
- Explain what happens next and check that complainants understand the proposed action.

- Ensure that students understand who will be told about their complaints.
- Report back to complainants to close the loop, where appropriate.
- Offer counselling or support services to complainants as appropriate.
- Refer to the National Office for Child Safety Complaint Handling Guide for processes.

Be transparent and open about procedures for responding to child abuse

- Set out actions when the complaint is about a staff member, volunteer, parent or another adult in line with the school's Complaints Policy, the PROTECT Four Critical Actions and Reportable Conduct obligations.
- Set out approaches for responding to harm caused to children by other children, including children displaying potentially harmful sexual behaviours and sexual offending.
- Display the PROTECT Four Critical Actions poster in the staff room.
- Specify the steps that need to be taken to make sure the process is fair for all people involved in a complaint.
- Name the types of behaviour that must be reported to police, child protection authorities and other government agencies or regulatory bodies in line with PROTECT Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse.

Support staff and volunteers to participate in building a child-focused environment

- Outline the responsibilities school leaders have to act on complaints and concerns related to child safety and wellbeing, including the responsibilities of the child safety champions. Nominated staff should have:
    - a detailed understanding of the complaints process
    - investigative or interviewing skills, or authorisation to engage people with these skills
    - high levels of rapport and engagement with students
    - ability to respond to students with diverse needs
    - willingness to work with police and child protection authorities
    - information on support services for people affected by complaints.
- Ensure that child safe supervision and people management practices are implemented during and following a complaint or concern relating to the conduct of a staff member (refer to Standard 6).
- Train staff and volunteers to recognise the different ways students express concerns or distress, such as changing their behaviours or demeanour.
- Encourage staff to maintain an approachable, professional standard to help students feel confident and supported to raise issues at any time.
- Ensure staff and volunteers understand the complaints policy, the Four Critical Actions, failure to report and failure to protect offences, grooming, child abuse and family violence, mandatory reporting and their roles in the process.
- Empower all staff and volunteers to act on concerns about behaviour and report their concerns, complaints or breaches of the Child Safety Code of Conduct to school leadership or the regional office.
- Make sure that the school meets all recordkeeping, information sharing, privacy and employment law obligations.
- Encourage staff and volunteers to contribute to the development and review of complaints policies and processes.

Further information is available at the Commission for Children and Young People website at: https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards/the-11-child-safe-standards/standard-7/

Resources

- Government Schools Complaints Policy
- Information Sharing and Family Violence Reforms Contextualised Guidance and Toolkit
- Privacy and Information Sharing Policy
- PROTECT: Four Critical Actions
- PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending (PDF, 7.5MB)
- PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools (PDF, 2.9MB)
- Reporting and Managing School Incidents (including emergencies): Policy | education.vic.gov.au
- Responding to Student Sexual Offending: Principal Checklist (PDF, 135KB)
- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- Student Sexual Offending and Problem Sexual Behaviour

Approval and review

Approved by/on	Matthew Bott (Principal) on 22 May 2026
Next review date	May 2028