1. **Rationale**

The school’s approach to handling concerns and complaints is based on the values of:
- providing a safe and supportive learning environment
- building relationships between students, parents and staff
- providing a safe working environment for staff.

2. **Broad Guidelines**

2.1 These procedures cover 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 fees and payments
- general administrative issues

2.2 These procedures do not cover matters for which there are existing rights of review or appeal, as detailed in the *School Policy & 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.

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

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 departments policies or guidelines, where relevant
- ask the school for a copy of their complaints policy, if they have one
- for further helpful hints, see: Parent Complaints - Further Resources and Information

2.4 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

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- 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.

2.4 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.

3. Implementation

RAISING CONCERNS OR COMPLAINTS
3.1 In the first instance, a complaint should be made to the school.

3.2 The complainant should telephone, visit or write to:
- the student’s teacher about learning issues and incidents that happened in their class, in the playground or issues relating to other students
- the principal about issues relating to staff members, complex student issues, school policy and school management.

3.3 For contact details for any staff member, call the Office on 5428 5317.
- make an appointment to speak on the phone or in person with their class teacher; ensuring that you inform the school about the issue you wish to discuss

3.4 If you are not sure who to contact, please call the Office on 5428 5317 and they will direct you to the appropriate person.
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.

HELP WITH RAISING CONCERNS OR COMPLAINTS
3.6 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.

3.7 All parties involved in addressing a complaint may seek the services of a mediator when there is difficulty coming to an agreement.

3.8 The school will ensure that the complainant is aware of the above mentioned supports. A complainant who wishes to use these support services should ensure the person addressing the concern or complaint is aware of their intention and is in agreement.

MANAGING CONCERNS OR COMPLAINTS INFORMATION
3.9 The school should record the following details of all complaints received, even if the complaint appears to be minor:

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- 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 (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 is all that is required.

ADDRESSING CONCERNS OR COMPLAINTS
3.10 The school will make every effort to resolve concerns and complaints before involving other levels of the Department. The school will ensure every effort will be made in documenting the details of the complaint using Compass.

3.11 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.

3.12 All complaints will be noted and acted on promptly by the staff member who receives the complaint.

3.13 The school will acknowledge all written complaints and will provide the complainant with a timeline for investigating the complaint.

3.14 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.

3.15 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 delay. In all cases, the school will try to resolve a concern or complaint within 20 school days.

REMEDIES
3.16 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.

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REFERRAL OF CONCERNS OR COMPLAINTS

3.17 If a person with a concern or complaint is not satisfied with the outcome determined by the school, they should contact the -

North-Western Victorian Region - Bendigo office
Postal address: PO Box 442, Bendigo, Victoria 3552
Location: 7-15 McLaren Street, Bendigo, Victoria 3550
Phone: 03 5440 3111
Fax: 03 5442 5321
Email: nwvr@edumail.vic.gov.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.

3.18 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.

COMMUNICATION AND TRAINING

3.19 The school will brief all members of staff about its procedures to address concerns and complaints annually.

3.20 The school’s procedures for addressing concerns and complaints will be published in the School Policies book, a copy kept on the school server, and a copy made available to all parents upon request.

4. Evaluation

This policy will be evaluated as a part of the school’s cyclic review process.

REFERENCE:
School Policy & Advisory Guide

Parent Complaints - Further Resources and Information
http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/complaininfo.aspx

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