

KEW EAST PRIMARY SCHOOL

PARENT CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

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PURPOSE

- To provide a process and procedure for investigating parent concerns and complaints in relation to: the management of an incident concerning students at school, the educational or other progress of their child and school policy

POLICY GUIDELINES

- When addressing concerns and complaints, the KEPS values of respect, responsibility, resilience and relationships will form the basis of all interactions and will ensure that the following points are addressed:
 - Providing a safe and supportive learning environment;
 - Building relationships between students, parents and staff; and
 - Providing a safe working environment for all staff.
- For the purposes of this policy:
 - 'Parent' – refers to 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 ;
 - 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;
 - A 'complaint' is an expression of grievance or resentment where the complainant is seeking redress or justice
 - This policy does not apply to matters about which there are existing rights of (and processes for) review or appeal. If at any stage it becomes apparent that the concern or complaint relates to such matters, the relevant procedures should be implemented immediately;
- This policy is not applicable where a complainant has employed another party to represent them, such as a solicitor. In these circumstances the concern or complaint should be referred to the Department's Legal Services Branch for their assessment; and
- A complainant is entitled to an advocate who can be a friend or colleague or a person provided through an appropriate support agency who does not receive a fee for service.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

- This policy covers 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 schoolyard;
 - Learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning;
 - Communication with parents;
 - School fees and payments;
 - General administrative issues; and
 - Any other school-related matters except as detailed below.

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- 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 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; and
 - Other criminal matters.

Expectations

- The school expects the person raising a concern or a 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
- Parents can expect the school will address any concerns and complaints received from parents:
 - Courteously, confidentiality, efficiently, fairly and promptly, within the timeline agreed with the person with the concern or complaint; and In accordance with due process, principles of natural justice and the Department's regulatory framework.

Raising Concerns or Complaints

- When the school becomes aware of a particular issue, regardless of whether or not it has been raised by a parent, the school will attempt to address the issues, should it potentially impact on the social, emotional, physical or academic outcome of any student;
- Persons who wish to raise a concern or complaint should be directed to the school in person, in writing or verbally to:
 - The student's teacher if the issue is about learning issues or an incident which occurred in their class or in the playground;
 - The level team leader if an issue involves many students across that level; and
 - The principal and/or Assistant Principal about issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members or very complex student issues;
- The school contact details are: Phone: 9859 2903 or at email: kew.east.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au
- 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;
- Any written complaints will be filed in the administration section of the school; and
- Any verbal complaints requiring action will be recorded and kept on file.

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Addressing Concerns and Complaints

- The school will make every effort to resolve concerns and complaints before involving other levels of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development;
- The school will determine whether a concern or complaint should be managed through the school's concerns and complaint process or through other complaints process of the Department;
- All complaints will be noted and acted on promptly by the staff member who receives the complaint;
- The school will make every attempt to resolve a concern or complaint as quickly as possible. If a complaint involved many students and/or a range of issues, the school will require 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 will require more time. The school will tell the complainant the new timeline for addressing the complaint and the reasons for any delays. In all cases, the school will try to resolve a concern or complaint within 20 school days;
- If a person with a concern or complaint is not satisfied with the outcome determined by the school, they should contact the Eastern Metropolitan Regional Office: and
- 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.

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; or
 - mediation, counselling or other support; or
 - an apology, expression of regret or admission of fault; or
 - to change its decision; or
 - To change its policies, procedures or practices.

Communication and Training

- The school's policy for addressing parent concerns and complaints will be published on the school's website.
- The school will brief all staff about its procedures to address concerns and complaints annually and provide staff with support and/or training appropriate to their responsibilities under the procedures.
- Where appropriate the school will act in a pro-active manner to address issues which may cause concern for parents such as explaining procedure for student class placement prior to this action occurring

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed in accordance with the School Council Policy Schedule or at the discretion of School Council.

Policy Area:
Management

Ratified School Council:
March 2012

Next Review:
2016