



## Parent Concerns and Complaints Management Policy and Procedures

### **RATIONALE:**

From time to time parents may have concerns that they wish to take up with the school. At Wunghnu Primary School, we welcome feedback and encourage parents to raise any concerns and complaints so that they can be dealt with in a timely and professional manner. The school aims to work with the school community to support each student's needs. We can only do this through a cooperative approach.

Our school has both a desire and a responsibility to ensure that staff and students maintain high standards of conduct at all times, and that concerns and complaints are managed courteously, fairly, efficiently, promptly and in accordance with relative DET policy.

### **AIMS:**

To develop and implement a process by which parents can confidently raise concerns in the knowledge that they will be listened to and their concerns will be professionally managed in a timely, confidential and appropriate manner.

### **SCOPE:**

The procedures in this document cover concerns and complaints about:

- General issues of student behaviour that are contrary to the school's Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy and Whole School Behaviour Guidelines
- Incidents of bullying or harassment in the classroom or in the school yard
- Learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
- Communication with parents
- Schools fees and payments
- General administrative issues
- Any other school-related matters except as detailed below

These procedures **DO 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:

- students discipline matters involving expulsion
- complaints about employee conduct or performance complaints that should be dealt with by performance management, grievance resolution or disciplinary actions
- complaints by the department's employees related to their employment
- student critical incident matters
- other criminal matters

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.

## **PROCEDURES:**

These procedures have been developed in consultation with the school community and approved by school council.

### **1. Expectations of the parent with a concern or complaint**

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.

### **2. Behaviour of parties involved with a concern or complaint**

- Wunghnu Primary School is committed to seeking a resolution to all concerns and complaints sensitively and with a commitment to listening and responding to parents concerns positively and professionally. Therefore, we ask that all parties conduct any interactions in a positive manner, in accordance with our school values, and refrain from verbal abuse and/or threatening behaviour.
- If any interaction between parents or members of the public and school based personnel involve such unacceptable behaviour, any discussion or meeting will be terminated. Discussion may only continue at an appropriate time when an agreement to continue in a professional and positive manner is given.

### **3. Raising concerns or complaints**

- Many concerns can be clarified by speaking directly with your child/ren's classroom teacher, without the need for it to be managed at a higher level. This is ***the appropriate place to begin***. Should you feel the concern or complaint is more serious than this; an appointment should be made directly with the principal.
- Contact can be made by:
  - a phone call to the general office on 5862 1701
  - an email to the school email address as follows: [wunghnu.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:wunghnu.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au)
  - a hand written letter either dropped into the general office or posted in the mail
- Please remember that the person you wish to speak with (principal or teacher) may have other commitments at the time of your initial communication.
- You should request to make an appointment to see the appropriate person, especially if the matter is of a serious nature.
- All initial contacts with the school on matters of concerns or complaints are managed in a confidential manner.

***\*\*PLEASE Outline the seriousness of your issue with the person you initially speak to if you believe an urgent response is necessary. This will be managed in a confidential manner.***

### **4. Help with raising concerns or complaints**

- Complainants can seek the services of an advocate when they feel they are unable to express their concerns 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.

### **5. Managing concerns and complaints information**

- The school will record the details of all concerns and complaints, including the name and contact details of the persons making the complaints. Attached is a form to be used by the school for this purpose.
- When the concern or 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.
- All concerns and 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 investigating staff member will record the details of the investigation.
- All records of parent complaints, subsequent investigations and outcomes will be securely stored in the office.

## **6. Addressing concerns and complaints**

- All concerns and complaints should ultimately be resolved at the school level in order to provide the best possible outcome for students before involving other levels of the Department.
- The 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.
- A copy of the school concerns and complaints policy and procedures will be offered to the complainant.
- 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.

The investigating staff member will provide the complainant with a timeline for investigating the complaint.

NOTE: Should the complaint involve complex issues, the school may need to take advice from the Department's regional office, which may take time. The school will inform the complainant of the new timeline for addressing the complaint and the reasons for any delays should this situation arise. In all cases, the school will aim to resolve a concern or complaint within 20 school days.

- Following the investigation, the investigating staff member will communicate with the appropriate parent to provide their findings and remedies, if any.

## **7. Remedies**

If a concern or complaint is substantiated in whole or part, the school will offer an appropriate remedy at its discretion and depending on the circumstances, the school may offer the following:

- 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 direct 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 is practicable.

## **8. Referral of Concerns or Complaints**

- If you feel the issue has not been resolved, an appointment should be made to see the principal. Please inform them of the nature of the issue when you make the appointment.
- Following your meeting with the principal you may need to-
  - provide further information
  - be available for further discussion with appropriate people within the school
  - consider the involvement of DET guidance officers, psychologist, social workers or personnel from community agencies
- If a person with a concern or complaint is not satisfied with the outcome determined by the school, they should contact the DET, North Eastern Regional office on 8392 9500.
- An officer from the regional office 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.

**9. Communication and training**

- The school will make information about procedures for making and addressing concerns and complaints readily available to parents within the school community, in clear and easy to understand language and in a range of formats that are accessible to everyone so that no-one is disadvantaged. This document will also be available via the school website.
- The school will promote this policy as widely as possible by including:
  - on the school website
  - through inclusion in the school parent’s handbook and staff handbook
  - newsletter
  - by publishing it widely within 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 access to) appropriate 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

**10. Monitoring the parents concerns and complaints policy and procedures**

- 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 will report to School Council meetings on concerns or complaints received where and when appropriate.

**POLICY REFERENCE MATERIAL:**

Office for Government School Education. (2009). *Addressing parents’ concerns and complaints effectively:policy and guides*. Melbourne: DET Department of Education and Training.

[www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/pcschools.htm](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/pcschools.htm)

**SUPPORTING MATERIAL:**

School website  
Concerns and Complaints Form (attached – for use by school only)  
Parent Information Regarding Concerns and Complaints flier (attached)

**EVALUATION:**

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school’s three year review cycle.

<i>Ratified by School Council</i>	<i>Date:</i>	May 2018
	<i>Principal:</i>	Catherine Palmer
	<i>School Council President:</i>	Jim Guilline
	<i>Review Date:</i>	2019



# Parent Information

## Raising Concerns or Complaints



*From time to time parents may have concerns and complaints they wish to take up with the school. At Wunghnu Primary School, we welcome feedback and encourage parents to raise any issues so that they can be dealt with in a timely and professional manner.*

*The school aims to work with the school community to support each student's needs. We can only do this through a cooperative approach.*

**Wunghnu Primary School aims to handle all concerns or complaints based on the understanding that the school:**

- Provides a safe and supportive learning environment
- Builds relationships between students, parents and staff
- Provides a safe working environment for staff

The following procedure should assist parents or others in addressing any concerns within the school community.

**1. Parents should raise the matter by *verbal or written* communication to:**

- the student's teacher about learning issues and incidents that happened in their class or group
- the Principal about issues relating to staff members or complex/serious student issues
- the Principal about issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members or very complex/serious student issues
- the Principal if you are unsure who to contact

This can be done by:

- A **phone call** to the School on 5862 1701
- An **email** to the school email address as follows: [wunghnu.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:wunghnu.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au)
- A hand written letter either dropped into the General Office or posted in the mail.

The person you wish to speak with (Principal or teacher) may have other commitments at the time of your initial communication.

Should, however, you feel the concern or complaint is more serious than this, ***an appointment should be requested to see the principal***. In such cases, please outline the seriousness of your issue with the person you initially speak to if you believe an urgent response is necessary. *All initial contact with the school on matters of concerns or complaints are managed in a **confidential** manner.*

A full copy of the School's ***Parent Concerns or Complaints Management Policy and Procedures*** can be obtained from our General Office.

Appropriate staff will be able to explain our school policy or Department of Education & Training requirements that may relate to your concerns. They may also refer you to the wide range of educational information on the school's website or the Department's website at [www.education.vic.edu.au](http://www.education.vic.edu.au).

***At Wunghnu Primary School, we are committed to seeking a resolution to all concerns and complaints sensitively and with a commitment to listening and responding positively to all concerns.***

Parents may also seek advice or assistance from the North Eastern Regional office on 8392 9500. The Region's role is to provide additional advice, support and feedback to the school in seeking a positive solution.