Aim
For the Department to confidently address parent concerns and complaints promptly, consistently and fairly.

The school’s values
Tungamah Primary school’s approach to handling concerns and complaints is based on our values of:

• providing a safe and supportive learning environment.
• providing a safe working environment for staff.
• building relationships between students, parents and staff.
• the value of positive parent - school partnerships.

Concerns and complaints covered by these procedures include:
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
• 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:

• 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.

Ownership and scope
Tungamah Primary School will develop its procedures to address concerns and complaints in collaboration with parents and the school community.
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

The Department is committed to good communication and treating everyone with dignity and respect. It is important to remember that everyone in the school community should work together in a spirit of cooperation and understanding and should conduct themselves in a respectful, courteous and calm manner.

For the Department's statement on treating everyone with equal respect, see: Dignity and Respect Statement

Matters of general concern best raised with the school principal include:
school facilities
canteen management
sports days
excursions
school fees and charges
student assessment and reporting
timing of special events
student free days
before and after school care
homework policy
student dress codes.

Matters of personal concern that should be raised confidentially and directly with the relevant teacher in the first instance include:

individual student needs
academic progress
behaviour and student discipline issues
non-attendance or truancy
challenging or changing family circumstances.

**Raising your complaint - by phone or in person**
You should make some notes as a guide prior to approaching the school as this helps to set out all the facts in a logical order. You can then use this information when you are speaking with the person dealing with your problem.
Make a note of the people you speak to about your complaint and the date you spoke with them.
Stay calm. Remember the person you are speaking with is genuinely trying to help you. If you are unable to stay calm have someone else speak on your behalf.
Outline the steps you have already taken to resolve the issue.
Explain what action you think should be taken to resolve the issue. Be reasonable and realistic about your expectations.
If the complaint you are raising involves another student at the school it is very important that you do not approach them or their parent/s directly as this could make matters worse.
Understand you could be referred to a more appropriate person within the department, or to another agency.

**Raising your complaint - in writing**
If you are not using the Complaint Lodgement Form, remember to sign and date any correspondence and provide your full name and address. Provide as much relevant information as possible including:

- relevant dates, places and times
- a description of the incident or problem
- details of any phone conversation or meetings
- details of who you have contacted previously
- any explanations that you think are important
- copies of relevant documents (if appropriate).

The Department may not fully investigate a complaint if it is an anonymous or unreasonable complaint or if the complaint is not within our jurisdiction.

To help you to put together all the information you need to submit a complaint in writing, see Complaint Lodgement Form

**Anonymous complaint**
Anonymous complaints will be accepted, however, it may not be possible to investigate the matters thoroughly without sufficient detail or the ability to maintain effective liaison.

**Unreasonable complaint**
An unreasonable complaint is one that is vexatious, trivial or frivolous in nature, such as a complaint that is:

- an abuse of the complaint process
- not made in good faith
- an attempt to reopen an issue that has already been resolved by raising the same, or similar, issues again
- the result of unreasonable complainant behaviour.
Managing parent concerns and complaints information

The school should consider recording 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

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

**Remedies**

If a concern or complaint is substantiated in whole or part, the school will offer an appropriate remedy.
- 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 and, where appropriate, in a range of community languages and
formats that are accessible to everyone so that no-one is disadvantaged.

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 enrols
• 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.

**Review**
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
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.

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