



Hamlyn Views School

# Parent Complaints Policy

## 1. PURPOSE

- a. Hamlyn Views School endeavours to treat everyone with dignity and respect, and encourages good communication between parents and the school.
- b. We recognise the importance of;
  - Providing a safe and supportive learning environment
  - Building positive relationships between students, parents and staff
  - Providing a safe working environment for staff.
- c. This policy and associated procedures ensures parent complaints and concerns are dealt with fairly, transparently and in a timely manner, with the aim of resolving the matter to the satisfaction of all parties.

### School Values Statement

The school's approach to handling complaints or concerns is based on our "Statement of Values" which clarifies the role of each community member and helps to establish a cooperative school environment with realistic expectations of what can be achieved by the school.

## 2. AIMS

To provide an effective and efficient complaint-handling process. It should be recognised that parent complaints mostly relate to one of the following areas:

- a. The management of an incident between students at the school
- b. The educational or behavioural progress of a student
- c. The development and implementation of school and general education policy.

## 3. IMPLEMENTATION

### What is covered by this policy?

This policy and associated procedures cover concerns and complaints relating to:

- a. Issues of student misbehaviour that are contrary to the school's Student Engagement and Inclusion Policy and Bus Code of Conduct
- b. Incidents of bullying or harassment in the classroom or school yard
- c. Learning programs, or the assessment and reporting of student learning
- d. Communication with parents/carers
- e. School levies and payments
- f. General administrative issues
- g. Any other school-related matters except as detailed below.

This policy does not cover matters for which there are existing rights of review or appeal, as detailed in the School Policy Advisory Guide. These 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 Department employees related to their employment
- student critical incident matters
- other criminal matters.

### **Ownership and Scope:**

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

### **Expectations:**

- a. Hamlyn Views School expects a person raising a concern or complaint to:
  - Do so promptly - within a timeline agreed upon by both parties
  - Provide complete and factual information about the concern or complaint
  - Maintain and respect the privacy and confidentiality of all parties, in line with DET policy and legislative requirements
  - Acknowledge that a common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
  - Act in good faith in a calm and courteous manner
  - Show respect and understanding of each other's point of view
  - Recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced
  - Ensure that parents/carers are aware of their right to advocacy when communicating the issues involved in their complaint and in negotiating an outcome.
- b. The school will address any concerns or complaints received by parents in the following manner:
  - Promptly
  - Courteously
  - Efficiently
  - Fairly
  - In accordance with due process, principles of natural justice and applicable legislation.
- c. Where a parent has real and substantial concerns, that as a result of raising a complaint, they may suffer a detriment and the allegations relate to corrupt conduct, they may have access to protection under the provisions of the *Protected Disclosure Act 2012*.
- d. All complaints should be considered in accordance with the school's complaint-handling processes including when parent behavior is considered unreasonable. In these circumstances, the decision maker may communicate the basis on which the conclusion was made to the parent in writing. They may also indicate an acceptable procedure for future communication with the parent about their complaint. DET considers behaviour to be unreasonable when it:
  - Is clearly and significantly outside the expectations of cooperation, courtesy and respect
  - Calls for staff resources and time unjustified by the nature or significance of the complaint
  - Is a complaint that is brought without merit, often to cause annoyance to another person
  - Is oriented towards conflict.
- e. The Department requires all complaints to be considered. However, it recognises that its staff might not be able to fully consider a complaint if they cannot liaise with the parent. Furthermore, anonymous complaints raise natural justice issues for respondents who have a right to know particulars of the allegations made against them. In this situation, regional office staff should be consulted on the extent to which an anonymous complaint should be investigated.

### **How to raise a concern or complaint:**

In the first instance, a complaint should be made directly to the school. Refer to **School Contact Flowchart for Parent Complaints (Appendix A)**.

If you are unsure of whom to contact, please contact the school Principal. The Principal will then organise for an appointment to be made with the appropriate person. Any concern or complaint raised with the regional or central office that has not been raised at a school level will be referred back to the school for resolution (unless there are special circumstances that prevent the school from managing the issue).

Parents/carers should not contact other parents or students about their concerns or complaints as the school will deal with them following due process.

### **Support available when raising a concern:**

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 organisation who does not receive a fee.

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

Students with disabilities have rights under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Commonwealth), the *Disability Standards for Education 2005* (Commonwealth) and the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Victoria) to access their education on the same basis as their peers, including the right to reasonable adjustments. As with all complaints, parents of students with disabilities should raise any concerns or complaints with the school in the first instance. The Community Liaison Officer or Regional Disabilities Coordinator can also provide advice when parents are seeking to raise a concern or make a complaint at the school.

### **Managing and addressing complaints and concerns:**

Hamlyn Views School will record the following details of all complaints received, which includes the provision for:

- the name and contact details of person making a complaint or raising a concern
- the date the matter was expressed
- the form in which the concern was received (i.e. face to face, letter, telephone, email)
- a brief description of the complaint
- the details of the school's response
- the action taken relating to the concern /complaint
- any recommendations for the future

When the complaint is easily resolved in a telephone call, less detailed notes will be kept.

- All records of complaints received will be stored securely, both electronically and hardcopy.
- The school will determine whether a concern or complaint should be managed through their own concerns and complaints process, or with the support of DET personnel.
- The school will provide a complainant with a copy of the Parent Complaints Policy and DET brochure.

### **Timeframe:**

The school will make every effort to resolve a concern or complaint as quickly as possible. If a complaint involves a number of students and/or a range of issues, the school will require additional time to fully investigate and resolve the complaint.

Should the complaint involve complex issues, the school may need to take advice from the DET Regional Office, which may take additional time. The school will then inform the complainant of the adjusted timeframe and any reasons for delay. In all cases, the school will try to resolve a concern or complaint within twenty working days.

### **Resolving Complaints:**

Where a complaint is found to be justified, the school will resolve the complaint by:

- An apology or expression of regret
- A change of decision
- A change of policy, procedure or practice
- A refund of parent payments
- Offering the opportunity for student counselling or other support.
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### **Referral of Complaints or Concerns:**

If a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome determined by the school, they should contact the Western Victoria Regional Office. The Community Liaison Officer will ask the complainant for a complete factual account in writing of their concern or complaint and their opinion about why the school did not resolve it to their satisfaction. Parents and the Principal will be provided with the results of the region's considered view of the complaint.

Parents should be advised they could take the matter to the Deputy Secretary, Regional Services Group, if they believe a fair and just process has not been followed to address the complaint by the school and/or region. Parents may also seek advice for an external agency such as the Victorian Ombudsman. Refer to **DET: Parent Complaint Flowchart (Appendix B)**.

### **Communication:**

Hamlyn Views School will make information about procedures for addressing concerns and complaints available to parents and the school community, in clear and easy to understand language and, where appropriate, in a range of languages and formats easily accessible to everyone so that no-one is disadvantaged.

This policy (including the related procedures) will be:

- included with the enrolment package handed to all new arrivals at the school
- published in the Parent Handbook, in the school newsletter and on the school website
- publicised in a DET Parent Complaint poster and brochure displayed in the school foyer

Reporting procedures to School Council will include an indication of complaints received.

### **Training and Support for Staff:**

The school will:

- Brief all staff members about its procedures to address parent complaints and concerns
- Provide staff with training and support appropriate to their responsibilities under the procedures
- Make staff aware of DET's fourteen guides that provide practical advice about issues to consider when managing parents' concerns and complaints.

### **In Summary:**

Hamlyn Views School will:

- Publicise and implement this policy and associated procedures to effectively address parents/carers concerns or complaints
- Ensure all reasonable steps have been undertaken to resolve parents/carers concerns or complaints

- Maintain the respect, privacy and confidentiality of all parties, and observe the principles of natural justice
- Communicate the outcomes of concerns and complaints to all relevant parties
- Modify any school policies or procedures as required as a result of addressing concerns and complaints
- Make every effort to resolve concerns and complaints before involving other DET personnel

#### 4. REFERENCES

- a. DET: Parent Complaints Policy (Interim)  
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/spag/community/policyparentsconcerns.pdf>
- b. DET: Parent Complaints – Government Schools  
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/complaints/Pages/default.aspx>
- c. DET: Staff Practical Advice Guides for Managing Parents' Concerns and Complaints  
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/community/Pages/parentcomplaints.aspx>
- d. All concerns and complaints must be addressed in line with DET's legislative and regulatory framework which includes:
  - Education and Training Reform Act 2006
  - Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017
  - Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
  - Protected Disclosure Act 2012
  - Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014
  - Equal Opportunity Act 2010
  - Wrongs Act 1958

#### 5. EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed annually.

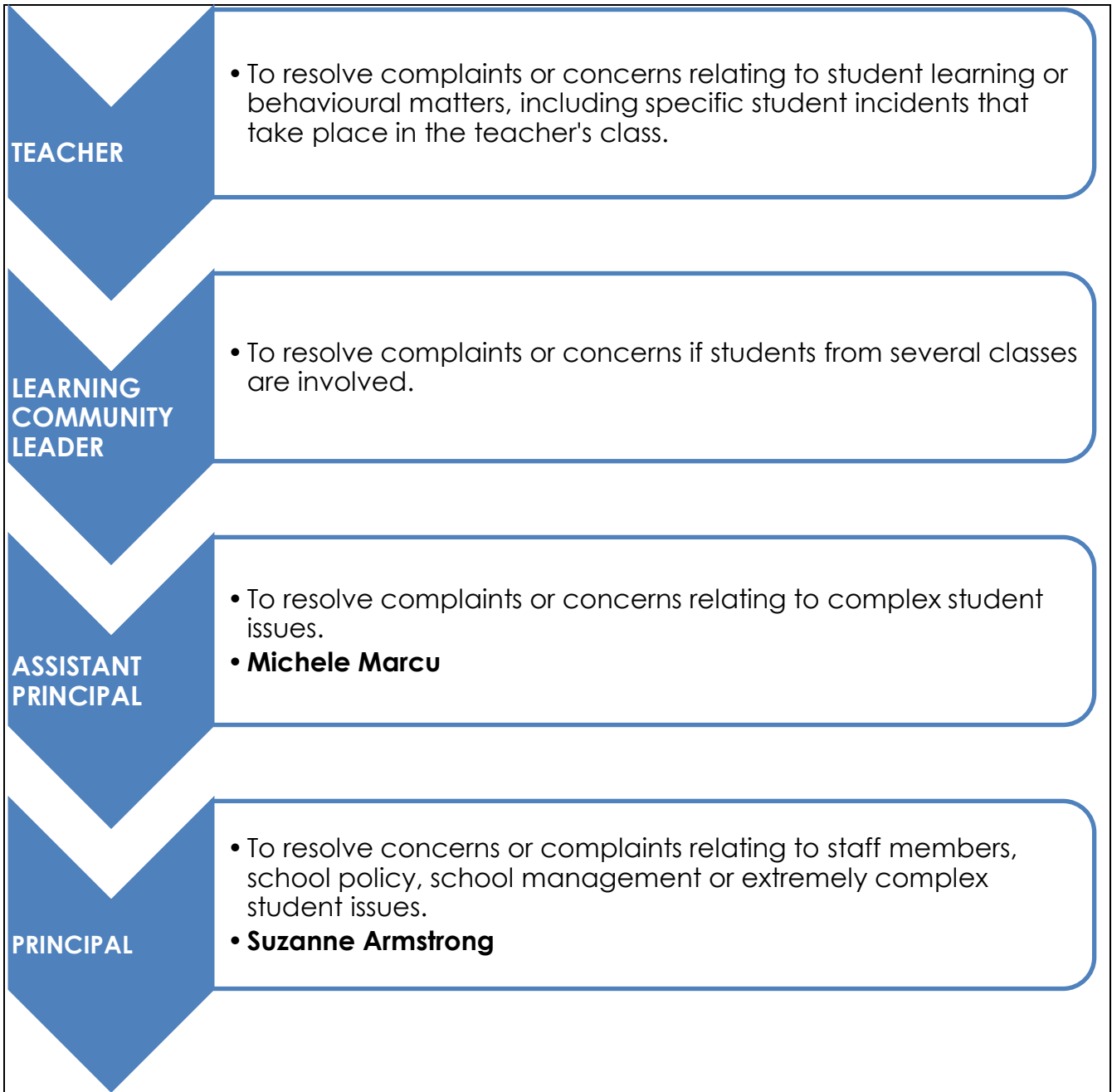
**This policy was ratified by School Council in May, 2018.**

**Date for next review: 2022**



## APPENDIX A: SCHOOL CONTACT FLOWCHART for PARENT COMPLAINTS

**In the first instance**, a complaint should be made directly to the school. The complainant should telephone, write to or visit the:



# PARENT COMPLAINT FLOWCHART

