



## Complaints and Grievances Policy

### **Purpose of this policy**

To ensure all schools respond to parent concerns and complaints in an effective and timely manner.

### **Policy**

Schools must develop local policy and procedures in accordance with Departmental policy, *Addressing parent concerns and complaints effectively: policy and guides*: see Department resources below.

The underlying premise of the complaints management policy is that parent concerns and complaints are best and most effectively managed at the school level.

**Note:** This policy does not apply to matters about which there are existing rights (and processes for) review and appeal, such as matters relating to serious employee misconduct, student critical incidents and criminal activities.

When addressing parent/guardian concerns or complaints, the Department and its schools must:

- abide by relevant regulatory and legislative frameworks
- maintain confidentiality
- balance the rights and responsibilities of all parties
- ensure all parties are aware of their right to advocacy
- act in a manner that seeks to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties.

### **Rationale:**

Positive, clear and effective processes for resolving grievances between the school and community members assists in the building of strong relationships, dispels anxiety, and ultimately provides students with an enhanced learning environment.

**Aims:**

To provide clear, positive and fair processes that allow grievances to be aired and resolved in a timely and effectively manner.

**Expectations:**

At Rowellyn Park Primary School, we believe that we are all members of a wider community and as such, we value a close and co-operative partnership between students, staff, parents and other community members. This partnership requires that all members act in a collaborative and responsible manner.

It is therefore expected that:

- Parents, visitors and members of the community will treat the students, staff and school facilities with respect.
- Staff of the school will support a culture of cooperation, treating all members of the school community and visitors with respect and courtesy.

**Implementation:**

Our school prides itself on clear, consultative and open communication.

While we accept our responsibility to consult, and to communicate both clearly and effectively with the community, community members also have an obligation to read notices and newsletters, to attend briefings, and to seek clarification when required.

There may, however, still be times when members of the community disagree or are confused about the things that we are doing.

It is essential that the established process as outlined below is followed to resolve grievances:

**Procedures:**

- Try to establish the facts as clearly as you can, be wary of third hand information or gossip.
- If the matter involves your child or an issue of everyday class operation, make an appointment to see their classroom teacher, detailing the reasons for the appointment.
- An appointment should be made with the Student Wellbeing teacher to discuss issues involving school policy, operations beyond your child's classroom, and concerns about staff, or grievances that are probably not easily resolved.
- While 'in principle' support may be sought from the Parents & Friends Association or School Council, both groups are in agreeance that they will not simply become a conduit for community complaints, will not become involved in confidential or personal issues, and will generally refer specific grievances about individuals to the principal or the School Council president.

- All grievances are to be kept as confidential as possible.
- Community members may be accompanied by another person, in a support role, at appointments to resolve grievances.
- All formal discussions and processes involving grievances will be documented.
- The wellbeing staff, Principal and or School Council president will exercise his/her judgement as to whether or not they will act upon anonymous complaints.
- The principal or delegate (i.e. a person who is deemed the most appropriate ) will provide community members with departmental contact names and numbers if grievances are not resolved *i.e. information will be given at or before the meeting so that parents have information and contact details if they wish to appeal or escalate the complaint.*

### **Dealing with a Complainant:**

Complaints are an important way for the community to provide information and feedback to a school.

Complaints —as well as praise — provide valuable feedback about how well you and the school are meeting parents’ needs. The complainant is inviting the school to enter into a problem-solving process to find a solution. Often, if the complainant’s emotional investment is high, the complaint can come across as a demand.

The complainant’s first contact with the school can be the most important. They will be more satisfied if their concerns are dealt with by the first person they talk to, without having to re-explain their situation over and over.

On the first contact

### **The School will:**

- listen to the complainant carefully and with an open mind
- treat the complainant with respect and courtesy, take them seriously and let them have their say
- make it clear that the complaint will be taken seriously
- explain the procedures for resolving complaints
- state what we can do, not what we cannot do
- find out the nature of the complaint
- take notes
- (if the complaint involves complex issues which are difficult for you to understand on first hearing), ask the complainant to put the complaint in writing
- work through a problem-solving process to arrive at mutually acceptable solutions based on meeting the needs of all parties.

- be clear about what solutions we can actually offer. NB: Sometimes an outcome might be non-negotiable.
- Explain what will happen next and what steps and support are available.

### **Follow-up**

The complainant with a particularly complex complaint should be followed up. It is important to keep lines of communication open after the initial discussion. Discuss how actions that have been mutually agreed will be followed up by both parties, and how any changes will be maintained. Discussion needs to focus on learning rather than attributing blame.

### **Students and the Courts:**

The following Acts of Parliament commonly affect parental care and responsibility of Children:

The Family Law Act 1975

The Crimes (Family Violence) Act 1987

The Children and Young Persons Act 1989

The duties, powers, responsibilities or authority of parents in respect of children will depend on:

- The law under the relevant Act
- The terms of any Court Order

Considering the emotive nature of parent/guardian disputes, the principal and the staff of Rowellyn Park Primary will deal with any situation sensitively, but will not become involved in disputes. In all cases, the Principal or delegate will comply with the law, as far as possible, on the information provided to them and if brought into a dispute between those who are responsible for the child, they will focus solely on the child's educational welfare and not with matrimonial or like disagreements. Where disputes cause difficulties at the school, the principal will maintain the status quo until legal advice is received or the dispute is resolved by the parents/guardians. If difficult situations arise, or a situation arises involving complex issues, the principal will contact the Legal Services Branch of the Department of Education. If a potentially dangerous situation arises and the protagonist refuses to leave the premises at the principal's or delegate's request, the police will be called immediately.

### **International Students:**

Additionally, schools enrolling international students are required to maintain an international student's enrolment (to comply with student visa conditions) and appropriate student welfare support arrangements until the relevant complaints or appeals process is resolved - *International Student Program Quality Standards for Schools*, Quality Standard 8 - Complaints and appeals

## **Related legislation**

- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
- *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*
- Education and Training Reform Regulations 2007
- *Information Privacy Act 2000*
- *Wrongs Act 1958*

## **Department Policy and guides for use by the school:**

*Addressing parent concerns and complaints effectively: policy and guides* can be viewed and downloaded as one document, or in separate parts.

Download the:

- [Policy and guides \(PDF - 525Kb\)](#)
  - [Guides only \(PDF - 215Kb\)](#)
  - individual guides (1-14) – select below
1. [Building positive relationships \(PDF - 70Kb\) \(pdf - 70.29kb\)](#)
  2. [Dealing with a complainant \(PDF - 73Kb\) \(pdf - 72.82kb\)](#)
  3. [Improving your listening skills \(PDF - 69Kb\) \(pdf - 68.74kb\)](#)
  4. [Saying 'yes' and 'no' with confidence \(PDF - 79Kb\) \(pdf - 78.91kb\)](#)
  5. [Understanding the blame cycle \(PDF - 72Kb\) \(pdf - 72kb\)](#)
  6. [Managing a request for an apology \(PDF - 71Kb\) \(pdf - 71.15kb\)](#)
  7. [Moving beyond a stalemate \(PDF - 82Kb\) \(pdf - 81.73kb\)](#)
  8. [Encouraging fair play in negotiations \(PDF - 82Kb\) \(pdf - 81.73kb\)](#)
  9. [Managing aggressive reactions \(PDF - 75Kb\) \(pdf - 74.97kb\)](#)
  10. [Managing unreasonable complainant conduct \(PDF - 89Kb\) \(pdf - 88.53kb\)](#)
  11. [Responding to strong emotion \(PDF - 65Kb\) \(pdf - 65.23kb\)](#)
  12. [Managing confrontation \(PDF - 84Kb\) \(pdf - 84.1kb\)](#)
  13. [Managing your anger \(PDF - 78Kb\) \(pdf - 77.78kb\)](#)
  14. [Being calm in a high-stress situation \(PDF - 75Kb\) \(pdf - 75.3kb\)](#)