VICTOR HARBOR R-7 SCHOOL
PARENT CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS
PROCEDURE

At Victor Harbor R-7 School we believe parents are partners in the education of children. Regular two-way communication between parents/carers and the school is essential in helping children and young people achieve their potential.

Our school is committed to a complaint procedure that ensures anyone with parental responsibilities for a young person can raise a concern, issue or complaint, with confidence that it will be heard and responded to within an appropriate and timely manner.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Safety of young children and young people is always the first priority. Our procedures are underpinned by the following principles:

- All people in the Victor harbor R-7 school community including students, parents/carers, staff and volunteers have the right to be treated with respect and courtesy in accordance with our school’s values – Respect, Responsibility, Honesty, Trust, Safety
- Parents/Carers have the right to raise concerns and make enquiries or complaints about any aspect of school life
- Information about how, where and to whom complaints can be made should be visible and accessible through school procedures
- Complaints should be acknowledged and addressed promptly within agreed timelines
- Individual complaints should be addressed objectively and without bias using principles of natural justice
- The rights and responsibilities of all parties should be considered and balanced in finding mutually acceptable outcomes to complaints
- The confidentiality of all parties should be maintained

STEP 1: TALK TO US

If your concern or complaint relates to an issue concerning your child’s teacher, you should talk to the teacher as soon as possible. Contact the front office on 8552 1166 and a message will be taken and relayed to the class teacher requesting your call be returned.

You may prefer to organise a mutually convenient time to meet the teacher rather than discuss the issue via a telephone conversation. If you prefer a face-to-face meeting you can bring a support person with you, if you wish. “All the parties involved in a DECD complaint management process can bring a support person to any of the meetings held to resolve your complaint.”
The role of the support person is to provide advice and support during the process and not to answer questions on behalf of the parties or interfere with the discussion. If at any point during the complaint management process a party engages legal representation then the process will be stopped until advice can be sought from the DECD Legislation and Legal Services Unit.

Our Staff will:

1. Following a direct complaint made about their work
- Listen to the complainant
- Consider relevant legislation, DECD policy and guidelines and school procedures and/or seek advice/support
- Apologise for any situation that may have caused distress
- Identify and discuss possible courses of action and a timeline that could resolve the complaint as soon as reasonably possible (5 working days)
- Follow up on actions and ensure complainant is notified of the strategies implemented to address the concern
- Document the complaint, process, progress and outcome
- If appropriate refer the matter to the appropriate Leadership person

2. Following a complaint made about another staff member or issue outside their responsibility
- Direct or discuss with the complainant the school’s Complaint Procedures
- Assist, if required, the complainant making a complaint
- Refer the complainant to the appropriate Leadership person

Please note: Issues that involve the amount of school fees, uniform availability, facilities or canteen can be raised with members of the Governing Council or with the school Principal to take on your behalf to the Council.

If the matter is not resolved, is school wide or you wish to have a person act as mediator, you may wish to raise the issue with the appropriate Leadership person. To do this contact the school on 8552 1166 and you will be referred to the appropriate person by the front office staff.

For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Responsible person</th>
<th>Leadership person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class issues – attendance, lateness to school, uniform procedure etc</td>
<td>Class teacher</td>
<td>Principal/Deputy Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class work issues – homework, curriculum matters, tests, assessment etc</td>
<td>Class teacher Non-Instructional Time (NIT) teacher e.g. PE, ICT, Indonesian, Music</td>
<td>Principal/Deputy Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour Issues – (in class) bullying, harassment, disruption of lessons etc</td>
<td>Class teacher</td>
<td>Principal, Deputy Principal, School Counsellor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour issues - (in general)</td>
<td>Class teacher</td>
<td>Principal, Deputy Principal, School Counsellor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious behaviour issues</td>
<td>School Counsellor</td>
<td>Principal, Deputy Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level/quality of support services e.g. gifted, disability, non-English speaking, Aboriginal, Negotiated Education Plans, Individual Education Plans (for students who are Guardian of the Minister)</td>
<td>Appropriate support teacher including: Special Needs teacher, Aboriginal Education teacher, Student review team members</td>
<td>Principal, Deputy-Principal, School Counsellor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If your concern has not been resolved following discussions with the responsible person you should contact the school and you will be referred to the appropriate leadership person.

The Leadership person will:
- Acknowledge receipt of the complaint as soon as reasonably possible (within 5 school days)
- Listen to the complainant
- Determine if support needs to be provided to complainant or staff member while the complaint is considered
- Consider relevant legislation, DECD policy and guidelines, school procedures and/or seek advice
- Investigate, consider and determine the most appropriate way to resolve the issue fairly and promptly, including negotiation between parties
- Inform all parties if there has been a delay in the process
- Ensure the complaint process and outcome is documented
- Ensure that the outcome of the process is communicated to the parties involved verbally and if appropriate, in writing including the right to refer the matter to the Fleurieu and Kangaroo Island Regional Office.

Please note:
- Interpreters and the school's Aboriginal Community Education Officer are available to assist parents in communicating with us. Please contact the school or the Fleurieu and Kangaroo Island Regional Office (Phone: 8207 3800)
- Any verbal or written complaints that contain personal abuse, inflammatory statements, and comments of a threatening nature intended to intimidate will not be addressed and the parent will be advised accordingly

STEP 2: CONTACT OUR LOCAL DECD REGIONAL OFFICE

If you don’t believe the issue has been addressed by our school, contact our local DECD Fleurieu and Kangaroo Island Regional Office

Fleurieu and Kangaroo Island Regional Office
4th Floor, Noarlunga House
Noarlunga 5068
Phone: 8207 3800

Regional Office staff will:
- Refer if appropriate, any complaint that has not been raised at the school level, to the school
- Determine the appropriate person to handle the complaint, for example, the Manager, Regional Support Services or the Assistant Regional Director
- Acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing
- Make an assessment of the complaint and if required, a negotiated/mediated solution or undertake a formal review following DECD guidelines
- If no solution or agreement is made with the delegated regional office person, contact the Regional Director who oversees the Fleurieu and Kangaroo Island Regional office
- Your Regional Director will review the complaint and make a decision in relation to the complaint according to the weight of the evidence and on the balance of probabilities
STEP 3: CONTACT THE PARENT COMPLAINT UNIT

If your complaint remains unresolved after working together with our school, regional personnel and the Regional Director, you should submit in writing, your complaint to:

Manager, Parent Complaint Unit
Level 6
31 Flinders Street
ADELAIDE SA 5000
Ph: 1800 677 435

You should include information about the complaint, including why it remains unresolved and an outline of what actions could be feasibly taken to resolve the complaint.

The Parent Complaint Unit, on behalf of the Chief Executive, will:

- Acknowledge receipt of the complaint
- Assess and make a recommendation to the school Principal that:
  - A review is not warranted and that the complainant is to be advised that no further action is considered necessary and that the complaint is now concluded; or
  - A review is necessary; or
  - The complaint should be referred to an external agency for investigation or review

The Principal will review the advice and decide that the complaint (in full or in part):

- Can be resolved (all parties agree on an appropriate response)
- Should be dismissed (complaint is either unsubstantiated, vexatious, outside of reasonable expectations in relation to confidentiality, cooperation, courtesy and respect or is orientated towards conflict)
- Remains unresolved and that an independent review by an external agency is required

In circumstances where the complaint remains unresolved contact the State Ombudsman. The Ombudsman will assess and investigate the complaint and try to resolve the problem. Further information is available at: www.ombudsman.sa.gov.au

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Scope of these procedures
These procedures apply to parent concerns and complaints in relation to Victor Harbor R-7 School. These procedures do not apply to matters where there are legislated requirements or existing policies and processes of appeal, such as:

- Concerns and allegations of misconduct by staff, volunteers and service providers (criminal matters, child protection, corruption etc.)
- Employee disputes and grievances. (Employees should refer to HR17 Complaints resolution for Employees 2000 for these types of complaints)
- Complaints and appeals relating to students’ suspensions and/or exclusions
- Duty of care or mandatory reporting responsibilities
- Occupational Health Safety and Welfare related issues
- Health support planning

Requesting your identity to remain confidential
Parents may request that their identity remain confidential when making a complaint. In this situation, every effort will be made to keep the parent’s identity confidential but this may limit options for negotiating a resolution. (For example, an apology is unlikely to be forthcoming if the identity of the complainant is unknown). These circumstances also raise issues in relation to procedural fairness for those who have a complaint made about them as they have a right to know the particulars of the complaint.
While every effort will be made to comply with a request to keep the parent’s identity confidential, Freedom of Information requirements may result in the parent’s identity becoming known. More information about confidentiality in the complaint management process is detailed in the ‘DECD Complaint Resolution for Employees Procedure’.

Anonymous complaints
Victor Harbor R-7 School will assess every complaint that is made. The extent to which an anonymous complaint can be investigated will be limited, as the school staff cannot liaise with the parent about the complaint. Anonymous complaints also raise issues in relation to natural justice for those who have a complaint made about them as they have the right to know the particulars about the complaint.

The Principal will determine upon receipt of an anonymous complaint to what extent the complaint will be investigated. Where the complaint is in relation to a Principal, the Assistant Regional Director will make the determination and for Regional Directors, the Head of Schools will make the final decision.

Possible approaches that may be used to resolve a parent complaint
The approach taken by our school to resolve a parent’s concern or complaint may include:

- An acknowledgement that the complaint is valid and worthy of investigation (overall or in part)
- Identification of areas of agreement between the parties involved
- Opportunities for all the parties involved to express their concerns, explain their point of view and clarify any misunderstandings
- Acknowledgement that the situation could have been better handled (this does not constitute an admission of negligence)
- An opportunity for an apology, where warranted, to be made by any of the parties involved for any behaviour/actions that may have caused distress to another party
- Recognition that the situation presents an opportunity for changes or alternate arrangements to be made to resolve the complaint
- Discussion with the parties about the steps that will be taken to ensure that the event complained about will not re-occur
- An understanding to review school policy, procedures or practices

These procedures will be reviewed every two years

For more information
DECD Policy for Managing Parent Concerns and Complaints
DECD Procedures for Managing Parent Concerns and Complaints
Responding to Concerns and Complaints from Parents and Caregivers