



Small School Big Learning

Complaints and Grievances policy

Rationale

Yering Primary School acknowledges that parents and caregivers have a right to raise concerns and air complaints they may have and to have them addressed, managed and resolved fairly, promptly and in accordance with relevant legislation. Our approach to handling complaints and concerns is based on our commitment to:

- Provide a safe and supportive learning environment for all members of the school community
- Provide a safe and supportive working environment for staff
- Build positive relationships between all members of our school community whether it be our students, staff, visitors or the wider community.

Aim

Our aim is to ensure that any concern or complaint is handled fairly and promptly, and to ensure a satisfactory outcome is reached for all parties involved.

Yering Primary School will make every effort to resolve concerns or complaints before involving other levels of the Department, if required.

Implementation

We recognise the difference between a concern & a complaint: a **concern** is an issue of interest (because of its importance and effect) which is raised informally in order to improve or change a situation; a **complaint** is an expression of grievance or resentment where the complainant is seeking redress or justice.

This policy does not cover matters for which there are existing rights of review or appeal. These matters include: -

- Student discipline matters.
- Complaints about employee conduct or performance and complaints that should be dealt with by performance management, grievance resolution or disciplinary action.
- Complaints by Departmental employees related to their employment.
- Student critical incident matters.
- Other criminal matters.

When addressing concerns and complaints Yering Primary School will:

- Maintain the confidentiality of all parties, in line with Departmental policy & legislative requirements.

- Acknowledge that the 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.

Raising a Concern or a Complaint

A parent may raise concerns or complaints about any aspect of the school's operations.

What is the Concern?	Who To Contact	How To Make Contact
Classroom activities, class curriculum, friendship issues	Class Teacher or appropriate Specialist Teacher	Telephone, note, email or arrange an appointment
Complex student issues, student welfare, school curriculum, staff members	Principal	Telephone, note, email or arrange an appointment
School policy, school management	Principal	Telephone, note, email or arrange an appointment
School fees & payments, general inquiries	Business manager	Telephone, in person

Yering Primary School encourages parents to:

- Raise concerns as soon as they can after the issue occurs.
- Put it in writing, providing detailed factual information.
- Maintain and respect everyone's privacy and confidentiality.
- Be calm, courteous, honest and sincere.

In addition we ask that parents:

- Recognise everyone has rights and responsibilities that must be balanced.
- Respect and understand each other's point of view; value difference rather than judge and blame.
- Realise we need to achieve an outcome acceptable to everyone involved.

Yering Primary School will address complaints in a prompt, courteous, efficient and fair manner. In doing so the process outlined below will be followed: -

- Acknowledge your complaint by telephone, email or mail and let you know how long it will take to investigate.
- Give you a copy of the Complaints and Grievances Policy.
- Investigate and provide a response as soon as possible.
- Make every effort to resolve the complaint within twenty (20) school days.

Where a complaint is justified, Yering Primary School will work with you to find an appropriate remedy. Remedies may include:

- An explanation or further information.
- Mediation, counselling or support.
- An apology, expression of regret or admission of fault.
- Change of decision.
- Change of policies, procedures or practices.
- Cancellation of a debt (such as school payments).
- Refund of fees.

The remedy will be implemented as soon as possible and we shall keep you updated with its progress.

Where a complainant has employed another party to represent them, such as a solicitor, then the concern or complaint will be referred to the Department's Legal Services Branch for assessment. However the principal or other nominated staff member will ensure that parents are aware of their right to advocacy when communicating the issues involved in their complaint and in negotiating an outcome. 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.

The Principal or other nominated staff member may choose to respond to a complaint through an informal process in cases where the complaint is minor, the complainant wishes to be dealt with informally or the complaint has arisen from lack of, or unclear communication.

Formal processes will be used when informal processes have been unsuccessful in reaching an agreed satisfactory outcome or if the Principal believes that the complaint warrants formal investigation.

All cases of serious misconduct, for example sexual offences, criminal charges or other serious incidents, will immediately be referred to the DET Conduct & Ethics Unit.

All complaints will be noted and acted upon promptly by the staff member who receives the complaint. If a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome determined by the school, they may contact the Department's appropriate regional office: North-Eastern Victoria Region. An 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.