



Addressing Parents' Concerns and Complaints

Statement:

The partnership between the home and school plays an important part in a child's education. Positive communication and confidence are critical factors in supporting this relationship. Teaching and learning works best when parents and teachers communicate well and work together to solve any problems as quickly as possible.

Purpose:

At Maldon primary School, we want to ensure that we respond to parent concerns and complaints in an effective and timely manner. If parents have a concern or complaint, we want to encourage them to make contact with the school to discuss the matter. The school should always be the first point of contact for any concerns about a child's education.

Guidelines (Department of Education and Training):

1. When parents/caregivers have a concern about their child in the classroom, they should make an appointment to discuss the issue with the class teacher. If they are not satisfied with the outcome, contact should be made with the Principal in whatever way the parent/caregiver feels comfortable.
2. The Department expects that all parties will –
 - maintain the confidentiality of all parties, in line with Departmental policy and legislative requirements
 - acknowledge that their 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.
3. When addressing parent/care concerns or complaints, the school 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
4. Concerns and complaints must be addressed in line with the Department's *2006 Dignity and Respect Statement*, which states –
 - The Department is committed to providing safe and supportive work environments where diversity is valued and everyone is treated with respect, fairness and dignity.
 - Discrimination, sexual (and other forms of) harassment, bullying, violence and threatening behaviour are unacceptable.
 - All employees, students, parents and visitors in schools and other Departmental workplaces are expected to act accordingly.
 - The Department (which includes schools) and school councils, will act to ensure that the safety, security, health and wellbeing of all employees, students, parents and visitors in schools and other Departmental workplaces are protected.
5. All staff must observe the code of conduct for the Victorian Teaching Profession.
6. Principals should ensure that parents are aware of their right to advocacy when communicating the issues involved in their complaint/concern, and negotiating an outcome.

Implementation at Maldon Primary School:

1. Parents with a concern regarding their child are advised to first contact your child's teacher by making an appointment for a mutually acceptable time
2. If parents/caregivers still have a concern after talking to the class teacher or if the concern is about the conduct of a member of staff or another aspect of the school that is impacting on your child, make an appointment to talk to the Principal.

3. If resolution cannot be reached at the school level, and you require assistance in resolving the issue, contact the Community Liaison Officer at [Regional Office](#).

Roles and Responsibilities:

The School has the responsibility to:

- develop, publicise and implement the policy and procedures which will effectively address parent concerns and complaints to the school community
- ensure all reasonable steps have been undertaken in resolving parent concerns and complaints
- maintain the confidentiality of all parties
- observe the principles of natural justice
- contact the regional office for support with any complex complaints
- communicate the outcomes of concerns and complaints, where possible, to all relevant parties
- ensure all new staff members are aware of the policies of Maldon Primary School and the Department of Education and Training, and procedures in relation to addressing parent concerns and complaints.
- brief all staff members (including volunteers) on the policy and procedures annually
- provide staff with (or provides access to) training and support appropriate to their responsibilities
- establish and maintain administrative processes to manage concerns and complaints raised at the school
- ensure that its policy and procedures are consistent with the Department's policy
- regularly review its record of complaints to identify common or recurring issues that may need to be addressed
- modify other school policies and procedures as required as a result of addressing concerns and complaints
- ensure that all parties in a disputed complaint are aware of their entitlement to support through an advocate who can be a friend or colleague or an unpaid support person provided through an appropriate agency
- reflect on the personal attributes necessary for staff who manage concerns and complaints (see *Good Practice Guide: Ombudsman Victoria's guide to complaint handling for Victorian public sector agencies*).

Teachers have the responsibility to:

- resolve concerns and complaints relating to student learning and specific student incidents in their class

The Principal has the responsibility to:

- provide support when students from other classes are involved
- resolve concerns and complaints relating to staff members or complex student issues
- resolve concerns and complaints relating to school policy, school management or staff members

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:

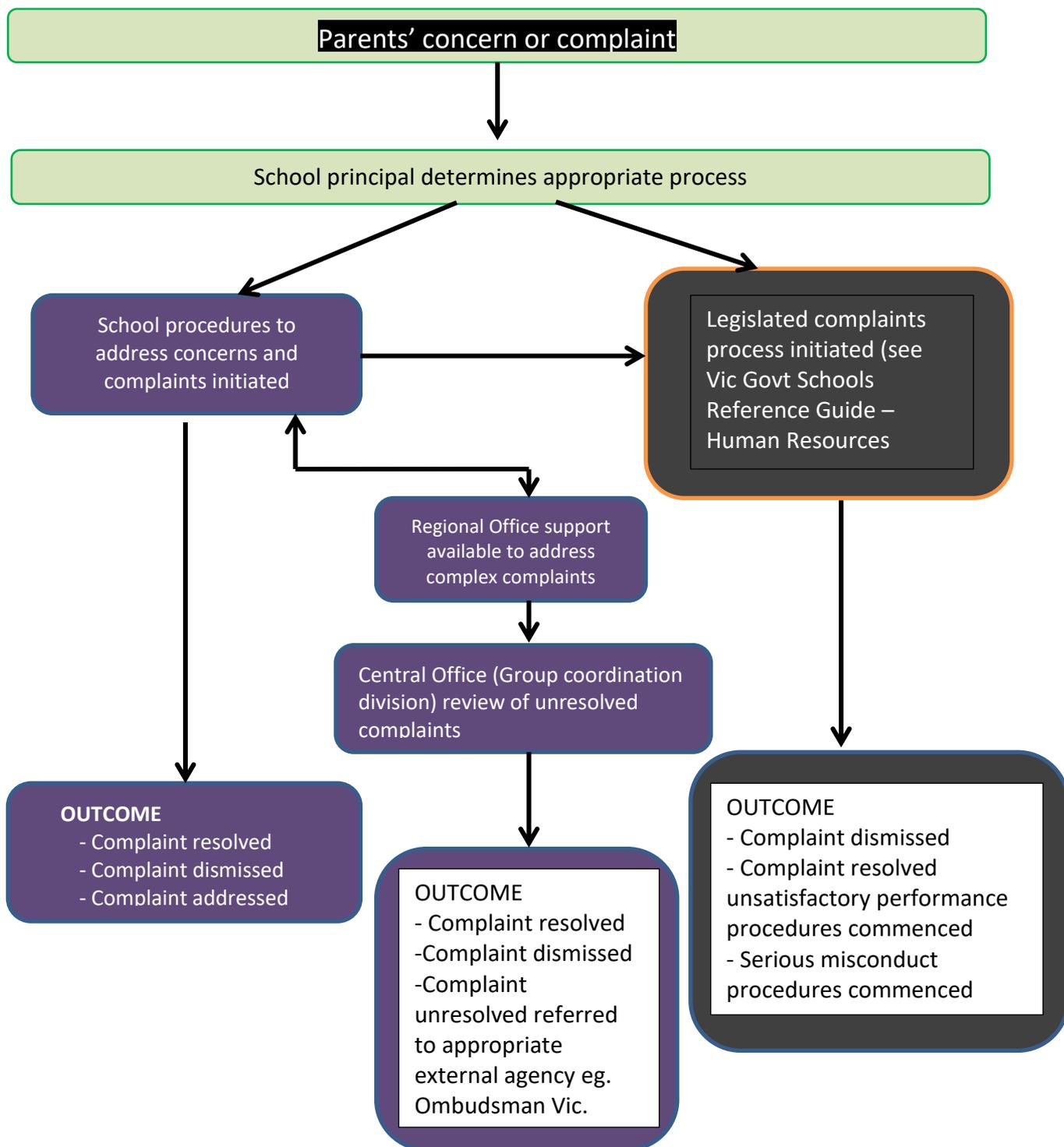
- courteously
- efficiently
- fairly
- promptly, or within the timeline agreed with the person with the concern or complaint
- in accordance with due process, principles of natural justice and the Department's regulatory framework.

Related Links and Policies:

Parent Complaints Policy (DET)

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/spag/community/policyparentsconcerns.docx>

Appendix 1: Concern or complaint management process



This 'Addressing Concerns and Complaints' Policy was endorsed by School Council in December 2017