

## PARENT/CARER COMPLAINTS

### GENERAL STATEMENT

The DET expects that all parties will, when addressing concerns and complaints:

- maintain the confidentiality of all parties, in line with DET policy and 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.
- ensure that parents are aware of their right to advocacy when communicating the issues involved in their complaint and in negotiating an outcome.

Complaints will be addressed:

- courteously
- efficiently
- fairly
- promptly within timelines agreed with the person with the concern or complaint (where possible within 20 school days). If the complaint cannot be resolved within this timeframe the complainant will be contacted and reasons provided. If a complaint involves many students and a range of issues, the school may need more time to investigate and resolve issues
- in accordance with due process and where appropriate, the principles of natural justice and within the DET's regulatory framework.

### RATIONALE

The school's approach to handling concerns and complaints is based on our values of:

- providing a safe and supportive learning environment
- building relationships between students, parents and staff
- providing a safe working environment for staff.

The procedures outlined in this policy cover concerns and complaints about:

- general issues of student behaviour that are contrary to the school's code of conduct
- incidents of bullying or harassment in the classroom or the school yard
- learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
- communication with parents
- school fees and payments
- general administrative issues
- any other school-related matters except as detailed below.

Parents' concerns and complaints most commonly relate to:

- the management of an incident between students at a school
- the educational or other progress of their child
- the development and implementation of school and general education policy.

A parent can raise a concern or complaint about any aspect of a school's operations. In the first instance, they should take a concern or make a complaint to the school. Any complaint raised with the regional or central office that has not been raised at the school level will be referred to the school for resolution (unless there are special circumstances which prevent the school from managing the complaint).

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

Concerns and complaints must be addressed in line with DET's Dignity and Respect Statement. The statement says that:

- the DET is committed to providing safe and supportive work environments where diversity is valued and everyone is treated with respect, fairness and dignity

## THOMASTOWN WEST PRIMARY SCHOOL POLICY

- discrimination, sexual and other forms of harassment, bullying, violence and threatening behaviour are unacceptable
- all employees, students, parents and visitors in schools and other DET workplaces are expected to act in accordance with DET's Dignity and Respect Statement
- the DET (which includes Thomastown West Primary School) and school councils, will act to ensure the safety, security, health and wellbeing of all employees, students, parents, volunteers, contractors and visitors.

To make a complaint, parents/carers should follow the procedures laid out in the Community and Communications policy. They should contact the school office to arrange a suitable time to speak to:

- the student's teacher about learning issues and incidents that happened in their class,
- the assistant principal about issues relating to staff members or complex student issues,
- the principal about issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members or very complex student issues.

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 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.

This policy does not apply to matters where there are existing legislated rights of review or appeal. These matters must be managed in line with the procedures and processes detailed in the Victorian Government Schools Reference Guide and on the DET's Human Resources website. These matters include:

- student expulsions
- complaints about staff that if upheld would constitute misconduct
- complaints by DET employees related to their employment
- complaints about an employee's conduct or performance grievance or action under Division 9A or Division 10 of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006
- student critical incident matters
- other criminal matters.

Unreasonable complainant conduct is behaviour that:

- is clearly and significantly outside the expectations of confidentiality, cooperation, courtesy and respect
- calls for staff resources and time unjustified by the nature or significance of the complaint, is vexatious (that is, an action or complaint that is brought without merit, often to cause annoyance to another person) or is oriented towards conflict.

The school principal will determine if a complainant's conduct is unreasonable. If so determined, they will:

- develop a plan to address the complaint and the complainant's interaction with the DET
- inform the complainant of the plan
- when a complainant uses threatening or violent behaviour all DET employees should follow the Occupational Violence Policy.

### **SUMMARY**

Thomastown West Primary School will inform all members of staff (including volunteers) about its concerns and complaints procedures annually. It will also provide staff with access to training and support materials appropriate to their responsibilities under the procedures outlined within this policy.

The Principal (or Principal's delegate) will establish and maintain a system to record and monitor complaints and their resolution, as well as regularly review the record of complaints to identify common or recurring issues that may need to be addressed.

Thomastown West Primary School staff will:

- publicise and implement this policy and procedures to effectively address parent concerns and complaints
- ensure all reasonable steps have been undertaken in resolving parent concerns and complaints
- maintain the confidentiality of all parties and observes 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
- modify other school policies and procedures as required as a result of addressing concerns and complaints.

THOMASTOWN WEST PRIMARY SCHOOL  
POLICY

The school will make every effort to resolve concerns and complaints before involving the DET.  
The school will give a complainant a copy of its complaints procedures.  
The school's procedures for addressing concerns and complaints will be:

- printed in the parent's handbook
- printed in the school newsletter
- on display in the administration area.

**RESOURCES**

[Policy and Advisory Guide](#)

[Addressing Parents and Carers Complaints Effectively  
Guides](#)

**REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed as part of Thomastown West Primary School's three year policy review cycle.