



# Thomastown West Primary School Complaints Policy 2020 - 2024

Thomastown West Primary School motto is **Together Working on Pathways to Success**. We believe that students can reach their full potential when they are happy, healthy and safe. We know that our parents and wider school community also desire this. As a learning community we are committed to creating and maintaining a positive, safe and supportive environment. At Thomastown West, our collective values are Respect, Responsibility, Resilience, Empathy and we Striving to be our Best. As staff, students, parents, carers and community members we live by these values.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide an outline of the complaints process at Thomastown West Primary School so that parents and members of the community are informed of how they can raise complaints or concerns about issues arising at our school
- ensure that the academic, social and wellbeing needs of students are managed effectively
- ensure that all complaints regarding Thomastown West Primary School are managed in a timely, effective, fair and respectful manner.

## SCOPE

This policy relates to complaints brought by parents, carers, students or members of our school community (including members of the School Council) and applies to all matters relating to our school. In some limited instances, we may need to refer the complainant to another Department of Education and Training process where there are different mechanisms in place to review certain decisions, for example, expulsion appeals.

Thomastown West Primary School welcomes feedback, both positive and negative, and is committed to continuous improvement. We value open communication with our families and are committed to understanding complaints and addressing them appropriately. We recognise that the complaints process provides an important opportunity for reflection and learning.

We value and encourage open and positive relationships with our school community. We understand that it is in the best interests of students for there to be a trusting relationship between families and our school.

When addressing a complaint, it is expected that all parents will adhere to the Thomastown West Primary School Parent Code of Conduct (*Refer to Appendix A*) and that all parties will:

- be considerate of each other's views and respect each other's role
- be focused on resolution of the complaint, with the interests of the student involved at the centre
- act in good faith and cooperation
- behave with respect and courtesy
- respect the privacy and confidentiality of those involved, as appropriate
- refer to the Parent Code of Conduct
- operate within and seek reasonable resolutions that comply with any applicable legislation and Department policy.
- recognise that schools and the Department may be subject to legal constraints on their ability to act or disclose information in some circumstances.



## **Thomastown West Primary School Complaints Policy 2020 - 2024**

### **Preparation for raising a concern or complaint**

Thomastown West Primary School encourages parents, carers or members of the community who may wish to submit a complaint to:

- carefully consider the issues you would like to discuss
- remember you may not have all the facts relating to the issues that you want to raise
- think about how the matter could be resolved
- refer to the Parent Code of Conduct
- be informed by checking the policies and guidelines set by the Department and Thomastown West Primary School (see “Further Information and Resources” section below).

### **Complaints process**

Thomastown West Primary School is always happy to discuss with parents/carers and community members any concerns that they may have. Concerns in the first instance should be directed to your child’s teacher. Where possible, school staff will work with you to ensure that your concerns are appropriately addressed.

Where concerns cannot be resolved in this way, parents or community members may wish to make a formal complaint to either the Assistant Principal or Principal.

If you would like to make a formal complaint, in most cases, depending on the nature of the complaint raised, our school will first seek to understand the issues and will then convene a resolution meeting with the aim of resolving the complaint together. It is not appropriate for parents to publish complaints on social media platforms. The following process will apply:

- 1. Complaint received:** Please either email, telephone or arrange a meeting through the front office with either the Assistant Principal or Principal, to outline your complaint so that we can fully understand what the issues are. We can discuss your complaint in a way that is convenient for you, whether in writing, in person or over the phone.
- 2. Information gathering:** Depending on the issues raised in the complaint, the Principal, Assistant Principal or nominee may need to gather further information to properly understand the situation. This process may also involve speaking to others to obtain details about the situation or the concerns raised.
- 3. Response:** Where possible, a resolution meeting will be arranged with the Assistant Principal and/or Principal to discuss the complaint with the objective of reaching a resolution satisfactory to all parties. If after the resolution meeting we are unable to resolve the complaint together, we will work with you to produce a written summary of the complaint in the event you would like to take further action about it. In some circumstances, the Principal may determine that a resolution meeting would not be appropriate. In this situation, a response to the complaint will be provided in writing.
- 4. Timelines:** Thomastown West Primary School will acknowledge receipt of your complaint as soon as possible (usually within two school days) and will seek to resolve complaints in a timely manner. Depending on the complexity of the complaint, Thomastown West Primary School may need some time to gather enough information to fully understand the circumstances of your complaint. We will endeavour to complete any necessary information gathering and hold a resolution meeting where appropriate within 10 working days of the complaint being raised.



## Thomastown West Primary School Complaints Policy 2020 - 2024

In situations where further time is required, Thomastown West Primary School will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

### Resolution

Where appropriate, Thomastown West Primary School may seek to resolve a complaint by:

- an apology or expression of regret
- the change of a decision
- a change of policy, procedure or practice
- offering the opportunity for student counselling or other support
- other actions consistent with school values that are intended to support the student, parent and school relationship, engagement, and participation in the school community.

In some circumstances, Thomastown West Primary School may also ask you to attend a meeting with an independent third party, or participate in a mediation with an accredited mediator to assist in the resolution of the dispute.

### Escalation

If you are not satisfied that your complaint has been resolved by the school, or if your complaint is about the Principal and you do not want to raise it directly with them, then the complaint should be referred to the North Western Victoria Region by contacting 1300 338 691 or [nwvr@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:nwvr@edumail.vic.gov.au)

Thomastown West Primary School may also refer a complaint to the North Western Victoria Region if we believe that we have done all we can to address the complaint.

### FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- For more information about the Department's *Parent Complaints* policy, including the role of the Regional Office, please see: [Parent Complaints policy](#).

### EVALUATION

- This policy will be reviewed as part of the Thomastown West Primary School four year policy review cycle.

<b>Date Implemented</b>	2016; 2020
<b>Author</b>	Principal Assistant Principal
<b>Approved By</b>	School Council
<b>Date Reviewed</b>	October 2016; October 2020
<b>Responsible for Review</b>	Assistant Principal
<b>Review Date</b>	30/10/2024
<b>References</b>	Victorian Government Schools Policy Advisory Guide

## Appendix A

### Parent Code of Conduct at Thomastown West PS

A code of conduct for parents and visitors ensures that everyone who visits the school site is able to do so in a safe and harmonious manner and to ensure that students, staff, parents and other visitors are not subjected to aggressive, hostile or violent behaviours. During 2020, we have learnt and accepted that our school site and learning environment, now extends to an online environment, such as Zoom, Class Dojo and emails.

At Thomastown West Primary School we believe the following:

- ✓ We all have the right to do as much work and learning as possible.
- ✓ We all have the right to feel comfortable and safe.



We have 5 key school VALUES which we encourage everyone to *live* by our school values:

**Respect**      **Responsibility**      **Resilience**      **Empathy** and **Strive to be our best**

We teach the children that:

- ✓ *Values guide the way we think, speak and behave.*
- ✓ *Values help us to decide what is right and what is wrong.*

At Thomastown West Primary School, Parents and visitors are expected to:

- ✓ Treat all persons associated with the school with respect and courtesy.
- ✓ Ensure their child/children are punctual to class, both on-site and online.
- ✓ Make appointments in advance of expecting to obtain an interview.
- ✓ Allow staff to teach, supervise, investigate and manage students without interference.
- ✓ Discuss issues or concerns about the school, staff or students through the correct procedures.
- ✓ Follow school procedures governing entry and behaviour on school grounds and online environments such as Zoom, including any restrictions that may be imposed.

**Under no circumstance are parents to approach another student or parent regarding any incidents or issues, either on-site or online.**

Your co-operation is sought in maintaining a safe and happy school.

