

Park Ridge Primary School Concerns and Complaints Resolution Policy June 2022

Purpose

Park Ridge Primary School acknowledges that parents and caregivers have a right to raise concerns and air complaints. The purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide an outline of the complaints process at Park Ridge 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 all complaints regarding Park Ridge Primary School are managed in a timely, effective, fair and respectful manner, and in accordance with relevant legislation, so as to achieve a satisfactory resolution for all parties involved.

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.

Scope

We recognise the difference between a concern and 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 relates to complaints brought by parents/carers, students or members of our school community 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 (DET) process, where there are different mechanisms in place to review certain decisions (eg. expulsion appeals). Park Ridge Primary School will make every effort to resolve concerns or complaints before involving other levels of the Department.

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

- Student discipline matters involving expulsions
- 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.

Implementation

Park Ridge 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 parties will:

- Raise and discuss issues in a courteous and respectful manner
- Acknowledge that the goal is to achieve an outcome that is in the affected student's best interests and acceptable to all parties
- Act in good faith and respect the privacy and confidentiality of those involved, as appropriate
- Recognise that all parties, including the broader school community, have rights and responsibilities that must be balanced
- Recognise that schools and the Department may be subject to legal constraints on their ability to act or disclose information in some circumstances.

Preparation for Raising a Concern or Complaint

Park Ridge 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
- Be informed by checking the policies and guidelines set by the Department and Park Ridge Primary School via the school's website.

Complaints Process

Park Ridge 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 the appropriate contact as outlined in the table below. Where possible, school staff will work with you to ensure that your concerns are appropriately addressed.

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	Assistant Principals	Telephone, note, email or arrange an appointment
School policy, school management	Principal	Telephone, note, email or arrange an appointment
School fees & payments, general inquiries	Office staff	Telephone, in person

Where concerns cannot be resolved in this way, parents/caregivers or community members may wish to make a formal complaint to the Principal or Assistant 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. The following process will apply:

1. **Complaint Received:** Please either email, telephone or arrange a meeting through the front office with 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.

Park Ridge Primary School encourages parents/caregivers 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.

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.

We ask that parents/caregivers:

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

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. 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.

Park Ridge 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
- Maintain a record of the complaint
- Give you a copy of the Parents Concerns and Complaints Resolution Policy
- Investigate and provide a response as soon as possible
- Make every effort to resolve the complaint within twenty (20) school days.

4. **Timelines:** Park Ridge Primary School will acknowledge receipt of your complaint as soon as possible (usually within 48 hours) and will seek to resolve complaints in a timely manner. Depending on the complexity of the complaint, Park Ridge 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. In situations where further time is required, Park Ridge Primary School will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

Resolution

Once information is gathered about a complaint, Park Ridge Primary School will work with you to find an appropriate resolution. Resolutions may include:

- An explanation or further information
- An apology, expression of regret or admission of fault
- A change of decision
- A change of policy, procedure or practice
- An opportunity for mediation, counselling or other support
- Cancellation of a debt (such as school payments)
- Refund of fees
- Other actions consistent with school values, intended to support the student, parent and school relationship, and foster engagement and participation in the school community.

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, 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 an accredited 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 DEECD Conduct & Ethics Unit.

Escalation

If a parent or community member is not satisfied that their complaint has been resolved by the school, or if their complaint is about the Principal, then the complaint should be referred to the Department's appropriate regional office: North-Eastern Region 8392-9500.

Park Ridge Primary School may also refer a complaint to the Department's North-Eastern Regional office if we believe that we have done all we can to address the complaint.

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

Review

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year internal controls.

Policy:	Complaints Policy		
Date Approved:	June 2022	Person Responsible:	Principal / Education Committee
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