



COMPLAINTS & GRIEVANCES POLICY & PROCEDURES

Fitzroy Community School is committed to providing a safe and supportive work and learning environment for all employees and students. We acknowledge that employees, students and parents, or people from the wider community, can sometimes feel aggrieved about something that is happening at the school which appears to be discriminatory, is unfair, unjust or unreasonable, constitute harassment or cause concern.

An employee, student, parent or community member can have a complaint about any decision, behaviour, act or omission (whether by the Principal, members staff students or parents) that they feel is discriminatory or unreasonable.

Sometimes the aggrieved person can address the issue by raising the complaint directly with the person involved with the issue. However, that is not always possible, and sometimes several attempts at local or face-to-face resolution have been attempted or have taken place with little success. Whilst most issues can be resolved through direct discussion with the parties involved, there may be instances in which to take up the issue with the other person on a face-to-face basis is not possible.

In line with our stated school values, we aim to treat all persons within the school or wider community with respect and in a manner mindful of the diverse nature of our school. We acknowledge our overarching responsibility in responding to all matters concerning complaints, grievances and concerns with integrity, and we endeavour to provide a satisfactory outcome within the scope of these guidelines.

The process for dealing with complaints or grievances relates to:

- Curriculum
- Assessment
- Staffing
- Treatment of students by other students
- Other matters as they arise

Should disputes occur between school and parents we hope that they can be resolved quickly, directly and amicably. However there may come a time when the school or the parents and child or children feel that there is no longer a good match between us. In these circumstances, as per our Enrolment Form, we follow a policy of 'no fault divorce', where, if it is clear that the situation is not viable, either side can bring it to an end. This provision is consistent with Victorian law, which gives Independent schools the power to suspend, expel or punish a student; that power arising from the agreement between the school and the parents that their child will obey the rules and regulations of the school.

Guidelines:

- Initially a complaint or appeal is to be managed between the parties in order to attempt to resolve the issue.
- Should a satisfactory outcome not result, the student should then place their complaint or appeal in writing to the Principal. The Principal will arrange a meeting, where further attempts to resolve the issue will be made and at which the complainant can put their case.
- If resolution is not achieved the Principal will refer the issue to an independent mediator as appropriate to the complaint.



- The School will attempt to resolve any complaints fairly and equitably within the shortest time frame possible.
- All outcomes arising from complaints will be reported in writing to the complainant. The report will contain reasons for the decision that has been made.
- All forms associated with the process will be filed on the student's file
- Any complaints that are found to be substantiated, will be recorded as such and dealt with by the Principal through the relevant team meetings.

Persons wishing to make a complaint are asked to:

- Raise their concern as soon as possible
- Provide detailed information, which may be requested in writing
- Maintain and respect everyone's privacy and confidentiality
- Be calm, courteous, honest and sincere
- 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

Addressing Concerns and Complaints

The School's response will be prompt, courteous, efficient and fair. All matters will be dealt with in-line with School Policies, including the Mandatory Reporting Policy and Child Safe Standards Statement.

The following process will be followed in response to a concern or complaint:

- The concern or complaint will be acknowledged either in person, by telephone, or in writing
- The appropriate staff member will look into the concern or complaint and provide a response as soon as possible
- All formal discussions and actions will be recorded

Responses

The school will work with the person making the complaint to find an appropriate remedy such as:

- An explanation or further information
- Mediation, counselling or other support
- An apology, expression of regret or admission of fault
- Review a decision
- Review policies, procedures or practices

What to do if you have a Complaint, Grievance or Concern

Approach the person involved

In many situations, the most appropriate thing to do first is to tell the person who is the cause of the complaint how you feel. If the complaint is about their behaviour, tell them that it is offensive/hurtful/not acceptable. If it is about a work decision, tell them why you think it is discriminatory, harassment, unfair, unjust or unreasonable. Telling the person will give them a chance to stop or change what they are doing or explain what they had decided and why. In this way many situations can be resolved before they become formal complaints.

If the complaint is able to be resolved immediately, no further action is deemed necessary.

Contact the School



Where you feel you cannot approach the person directly or you are not happy with their response or reaction, then you can explain the matter to the appropriate person at the school. An inquiry at the school office may be the first point of contact for people with complaints. You do not have to tell the front office staff the nature of your complaint if you do not wish to, but any information you do give will assist them in directing your complaint to the right person.

You will be advised as to the person designated to deal with the nature of the complaint. This person may be a teacher or the Principal. The designated person will advise you about what your options are and what will happen if you make a formal complaint.

All staff are authorised to receive complaints in the initial stage and act as a 'designated person'. Once the complaint becomes a formal complaint it will be passed on to the Principal who will then be deemed the Investigating Officer. Any Investigating Officer may co-opt other staff to assist in any part of the process.

What happens next?

Once you have made the complaint to the school the dedicated person will then consider whether there are any reasons why they should not proceed to deal with the complaint. If it is inappropriate for the designated person to deal with your complaint, they will, with your consent refer you to another appropriate person.

The designated person will then decide the most suitable personnel to be involved in the process. They will then interview you or organise another appropriate person to interview you. During this interview a number of things will be explained to you, such as what will happen if the complaint is found to be supported by the evidence, or if it is found to not be supported by the evidence. You will also be told where you can go for assistance if you are not happy with the way the school is dealing with the complaint. The designated person will then take a written record of the complaint.

The designated person will then speak to the person about whom the complaint is made to hear their side of the story. Any witnesses will also be interviewed. These interviews will be conducted separately and impartially. Written reports about the complaint may be requested. The importance of confidentiality will be stressed to all parties and they will be warned of the consequences if there is a breach of confidentiality (e.g. possible defamation action, initiation of a complaint for harassment etc.).

The designated person will then tell you what the other people said and discuss what should be done to sort out the matter. You should tell the person what action you would like taken, e.g. a written apology from the person, a written warning, etc. This allows the designated person to understand, from your perspective, what you believe you need from the process. It will not dictate the remedy that might ultimately apply.

The steps to resolve the issue will then be decided based on the individual nature of the case and in consultation with parties affected.

The relevant designated person will make sure that whatever outcome is decided upon actually happens. The designated person or the school Principal (unless they are the object of the complaint or grievance) will also assess the effectiveness of the outcome.

Making a Complaint, or expressing a Grievance or Concern



Some complaints, because of the seriousness of their nature, should be referred immediately to the Principal – e.g. complaints about behaviour which places others at risk of serious harm. All issues to do with the abuse of children should be immediately reported as per the Child Safe Policy.

Parents are advised not to approach the children of other families with a school related complaint. This is often a sensitive area and in order to protect all the parties it is advisable to work through the relevant teacher or the Principal.

Before making a formal complaint.

If a problem or concern that arises within a school, cannot be resolved with the person involved with the issue, then it would normally be raised with an appropriate staff member with a view to discussing the issue and seeking resolution of such problems or concerns.

Making a formal complaint

All persons submitting a formal complaint should use a Complaint Form.

The school recognises that some complaints may not be resolved within the confines of the school and that any complainant is entitled to seek further redress as outlined below.

Where you feel you cannot approach the person directly or you are not happy with their response or reaction, and you have a good reason not to raise the issue either with the school designated person or the school Principal, then you can contact the VIT or VRQA or any relevant other statutory body. An officer will usually discuss raising your concerns at the school level with you. They can also advise you about your options. These bodies can also assist with advice if you feel the matter with the school has not been resolved.

The Victorian Registration & Qualifications Authority (VRQA)
Independent Schools Victoria (ISV)
Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT)

Grievances and Complaints Management Procedure

Parents and students should be given guidance as to whom they should contact in the first instance when they have a concern and the method of contact they should use. This may well vary with the nature of the grievance.

All parties to the dispute should be given guidance as to the next step they can take if the dispute is not settled to their satisfaction in the first instance.

The distinction between an informal process and a formal process to resolve complaints should be made with parents and students being encouraged to attempt to resolve their grievances initially in an informal manner. If this is not possible a more formal procedure needs to be established and parents and students should be aware of this.

The outcome of complaint investigations may be used to inform the policies of the school and risk management strategies.

Nothing in this document replaces procedures developed by the school in respect of the investigation of matters arising under the Child Safe Standards.



Records of complaints, interviews and other documentation relating to a complaint are kept at the school (where dealt with at school level) in a separate complaints file. If the complaint is about a person, documents are placed in a restricted access file.

The Complaints and Grievances policy forms part of the Enrolment process and is available on request and from the school website.

This Policy has been endorsed by the Fitzroy Community School Governing Body.

Date: June 2022

Review Date: June 2024

Review Cycle. Every 2 years.

This Policy may be reviewed earlier than the date stated subject to circumstance.