

Parent Complaint Policy

1. *Rationale-*

Pakenham Springs is committed to good communication and treating everyone with dignity and respect.

At Pakenham Springs we understand that parents/caregivers often have a questions about the school or something they would like to discuss and can be unsure of the correct method of raising the issue. We believe that is only through direct communication that the complaint can be overcome or the issue resolved. At Pakenham Springs parents'/caregivers' views and suggestions are important to us. We believe teaching and learning works best when there is a partnership between the parent/guardian and the school.

Pakenham Springs is committed to providing safe and supportive learning environment where diversity is valued and everyone is treated with respect, fairness and dignity. It is recognised that parents and caregivers must have access to processes that allow them to resolve concerns in a supportive, conciliatory environment and for this reason the following procedure has been developed.

2. *Purpose of Policy-*

The purpose of this policy is to clearly communicate the process if a parent/guardian has a concern or wishes to make a complaint that is related to the school or their child's education.

Pakenham Springs Parent Complaint Policy is based on the following principles:

- Any parent or caregiver has the right to raise a concern and have it responded to promptly, fairly, without fear of repercussions and according to principles of procedural fairness. Most concerns will be able to be resolved informally.
- Any parent/caregiver has the right to confidentiality in regard to a concern that is raised at the school. However, if others need to be informed, this will be explained to the parent /caregiver raising the concern.
- Parents/caregivers have a responsibility to raise their concerns at the earliest possible time so that they do not become overwhelming for either the child or the family. The greatest success in resolving concerns is when they are addressed as soon as they arise.
- Parents/caregivers have a responsibility to maintain confidentiality in the best interests of their child and to ensure a just outcome for any other person who may be involved.

3. *Implementation Guidelines-*

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 process where there are different mechanisms in place to review certain decisions, for example, expulsion appeals.

General principles:

Confidentiality will be respected and maintained by all parties.

Concerns will be resolved according to the principles of procedural fairness as follows:

- the person considering the concern will act impartially
- anyone involved in the matter has the right to be heard fully
- all **relevant** information will be taken into account
- where a conflict of interest arises or is perceived to arise, an independent person may be involved with the consent of all parties

Every endeavour will be made to address all concerns within **reasonable timeframes** and under mutual agreement. The resolution of concerns is most successful when prompt responses are obtained. However, school staff may not always be available to address concerns at the exact time they are raised, but will make an appointment to do so at the earliest mutually available time.

Any person raising or responding to a concern, where it hasn't been resolved through an informal process may have a **support person** present during subsequent meetings or interviews. The support person would act as an observer but may take a more active role with the mutual agreement of all parties. Support persons must maintain confidentiality and other principles set out in this policy. The principal is to be advised of the attendance of a support person before any meeting or interview. Similarly the principal will advise of any other person he/she may invite to attend.

Accurate and appropriate notes will be kept with due regard to the confidentiality of the concerned parties.

Anonymous complaints or allegations will be only accepted and investigated in the case of:

- allegations of child abuse,
- allegations of misconduct of a sexual nature by a staff member against a student,
- alleged breaches of legislation, including the Crimes Act,
- other alleged behaviour which could lead to disciplinary action if substantiated.

While it is understood that all concerns about a child's education and well-being naturally cause anxiety for parents/caregivers, it is expected that **complaints will be lodged in a manner that respects the dignity of the person receiving them**. Similarly staff are expected to receive the complaint with the same level of respect.

The principal and staff are within their rights to require that **any meeting or discussion be discontinued** if a complainant becomes abusive, uses profane or threatening language or attempts to physically intimidate a staff member. Should this occur the complainant will be required to leave the school. A report will be filed with the Department's Emergency Management and security Branch

The Process - from a parent's perspective:

Parents and caregivers are strongly encouraged to contact their child's teacher in the first instance on all matters involving their child's education. The aim is to resolve the matter informally rather than a formal process having to be undertaken.

Step 1

Identify your topic or issue:

Making notes is a good idea as it ensures that you cover all points. Think about the resolution you would like to see as an outcome.

Step 2

Contact the school and speak to the teacher concerned:

They will discuss an appropriate way forward with you. This may include organising a meeting for a mutually convenient time. Remember that for the teacher to be able to give the matter the attention and time it requires the meeting may need to occur out of classroom hours.

Step 3

Meet with the teacher:

The teacher will make a record of the issue/concern and report your meeting and any outcomes to the principal. Where the teacher has been approached but the issue remains unresolved, make an appointment with the principal to discuss the issue further.

Step 3

Contact the school and speak to the principal

They will discuss an appropriate way forward with you. This may include organising a meeting for a mutually convenient time. The Principal will ask that you put the complaint in writing and email via Compass or the school email address prior to further meetings.

Step 4

Meet with the school's principal:

The principal will discuss the matter with you and gather information from you about your concern. The principal may need to gather other information so an arrangement may need to be made for the principal to contact you after further information has been gathered.

Step 4

Contact your local Department of Education and Training Regional Office:

If the matter is unresolved at the school level, you may wish to discuss if further with the community liaison officer at the Regional Office – Ph:1300 338 738.

Pakenham Springs Primary School may also refer a complaint to Regional Office if we believe that we have done all we can to address the complaint.

Step 5

If the matter is unresolved at the regional level you can address your complaint to the Independent Office for School Dispute Resolution at school.resolutions@edumail.vic.gov.au or on 1300 017 593.

For more information about the Department's *Parent Complaints* policy, including the role of the Regional Office, please see www.education.vic.gov.au

4. Evaluation-

The Parent Complaint Policy will be evaluated on an annual basis. The evaluation will be carried out by the school's Leadership and will be based on feedback from school staff and parents/caregivers.

This policy was last reviewed on 16/05/2019 and is scheduled for review in May 2020.