



# Parent Concerns and Complaint Policy

## Rationale

Boort District P-12 School acknowledges that parents and caregivers have a right to raise concerns and air complaints they may have and to have them addressed appropriately. The School's approach to handling concerns and complaints is based on a commitment to:

- Provide a safe and supportive learning environment
- Build relationships between students, parents and staff
- Provide a safe working environment for staff

This policy and its associated procedures are to ensure that concerns and complaints are dealt with in a fair and transparent way. Concerns and complaints will be handled responsibly, openly and in a timely manner, with the aim of resolving the matter to the satisfaction of all parties.

## Policy Statement

This policy and its associated procedures 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.

This policy does not cover matters for which there are existing rights of review or appeal, as detailed in the *Victorian Government Schools Reference Guide*. 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 Department's employees related to their employment
- Student critical incident matters
- Other criminal matters.

## Implementation

### Raising a concern or complaint

Parents should follow the processes as outlined in this policy. **Parents should not contact other parents or students about their concerns or complaints as the school will deal with them following due process.**

### Help with raising concerns or complaints:

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.

### **Addressing concerns or complaints:**

The school will make every effort to resolve concerns and complaints before involving other levels of the Department. Upon receipt of a concern or complaint the school will determine whether it should be managed through the School's concerns and complaints process or through other complaints processes of the Department.

All complaints will be noted and acted on promptly by the staff member who receives the complaint. The school will acknowledge all complaints made in writing. It will provide the complainant with a timeline for investigating the complaint. The school will make every attempt to resolve a concern or complaint as quickly as possible. However, if a complaint involves many students and/or complex issues, the school will need more time to investigate and resolve the issues.

Should the complaint involve complex issues, the school might need to take advice from the Department's regional office or central branch which may take more time. The school will inform the complainant the new timeline for addressing the complaint and the reasons for any delays.

### **Referral of concerns or complaints:**

If a person with a concern or complaint is not satisfied with the outcome determined by the school, they may contact the Department's appropriate regional office (North Western Region). An officer from the region will ask the complainant for a complete and factual account in writing of the concern or complaint and the complainant's opinion about why the school did not resolve it to their satisfaction.

If the complaint cannot be resolved by the complainant, school and regional office working together, the regional office may refer it to the Department's Group Coordination Division. The Division will ask the complainant for a complete and factual account in writing of the concern or complaint and the complainant's opinion about why the school and regional office did not resolve it to their satisfaction and will ask the complainant to outline their view on the course of action required to resolve the complaint.

Where the complainant is unable to provide a written account the officer from Group Coordination Division should act on the information provided.

### **Communication and training:**

The school will make information about procedures for addressing concerns and complaints readily available via the school website to parents and the school community, in clear and easy-to-understand language.

This information will include:

- How a person can make a complaint
- The person's responsibilities
- Information to be provided by the person
- Who the person should contact and their contact details
- The process and timeframes for managing complaints

The school will:

- Brief all members of staff about its procedures to address concerns and complaints
- Provide staff with access to training and support appropriate to their responsibilities under the procedures
- Ensure staff who manage complaints demonstrate the personal attributes outlined in the *Good Practice Guide: Ombudsman Victoria's guide to complaint handling for Victorian public sector agencies*.

## References:

“Addressing parent’s concerns and complaints effectively” - DET April 2009.

## Review

The School will monitor parent concerns and complaints and consider issues raised through the parent complaints process, and any other relevant information from the parent opinion survey, when undertaking a review of the school’s policies, procedures and operations.

The School Council will regularly review its policy and procedures to effectively address parent concerns and complaints as part of its cyclic policy and procedures review schedule.

## RAISING A CONCERN OR COMPLAINT

Concern/Complaint	Who to See	What to do
Classroom activities, class curriculum, Friendship issues	Home Group Teacher and/or Classroom Teacher	Telephone, email Arrange an appointment
Complex student issues, Student Welfare, School Curriculum	Assistant Principal or Welfare Coordinator	In writing by hand, email or mail. Telephone to arrange an appointment.
Staff Members	Principal	In writing by hand, email or mail. Telephone to arrange an appointment.
School Policy, School Management	Principal	In writing by hand, email or mail. Telephone to arrange an appointment.
School Fees & payments General enquiries	Office Staff	Telephone, in person
Principal	Regional Director	Telephone, in writing

### PLEASE ...

- Raise your concern as soon as you 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

### PLEASE ALSO ...

- 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 COMPLAINTS ...

Our response will be prompt, courteous, efficient and fair. We will follow the process outlined below:

- Acknowledge your complaint by telephone, email or mail and let you know how long it will take to investigate
- Give you a copy of the BDS Parent Concerns & Complaints Policy
- Investigate and provide a response as soon as possible
- Make every effort to resolve your complaint within 20 school days

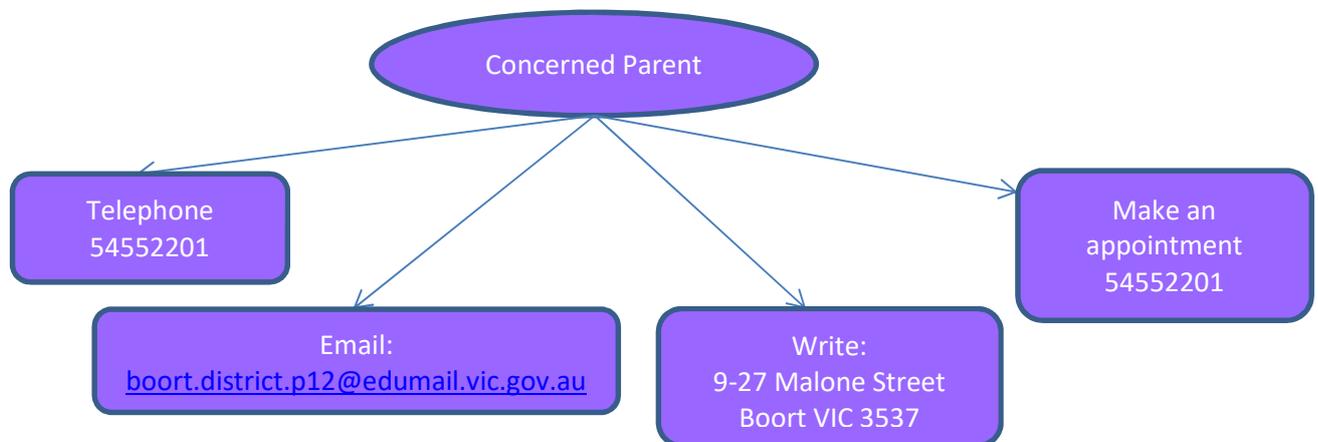
#### REMEDIES ...

When a complaint is justified, the school will work with you 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
- Change a decision
- Change policies, procedures or practices
- Cancel a debt (such as for school payments)
- Refund a fee

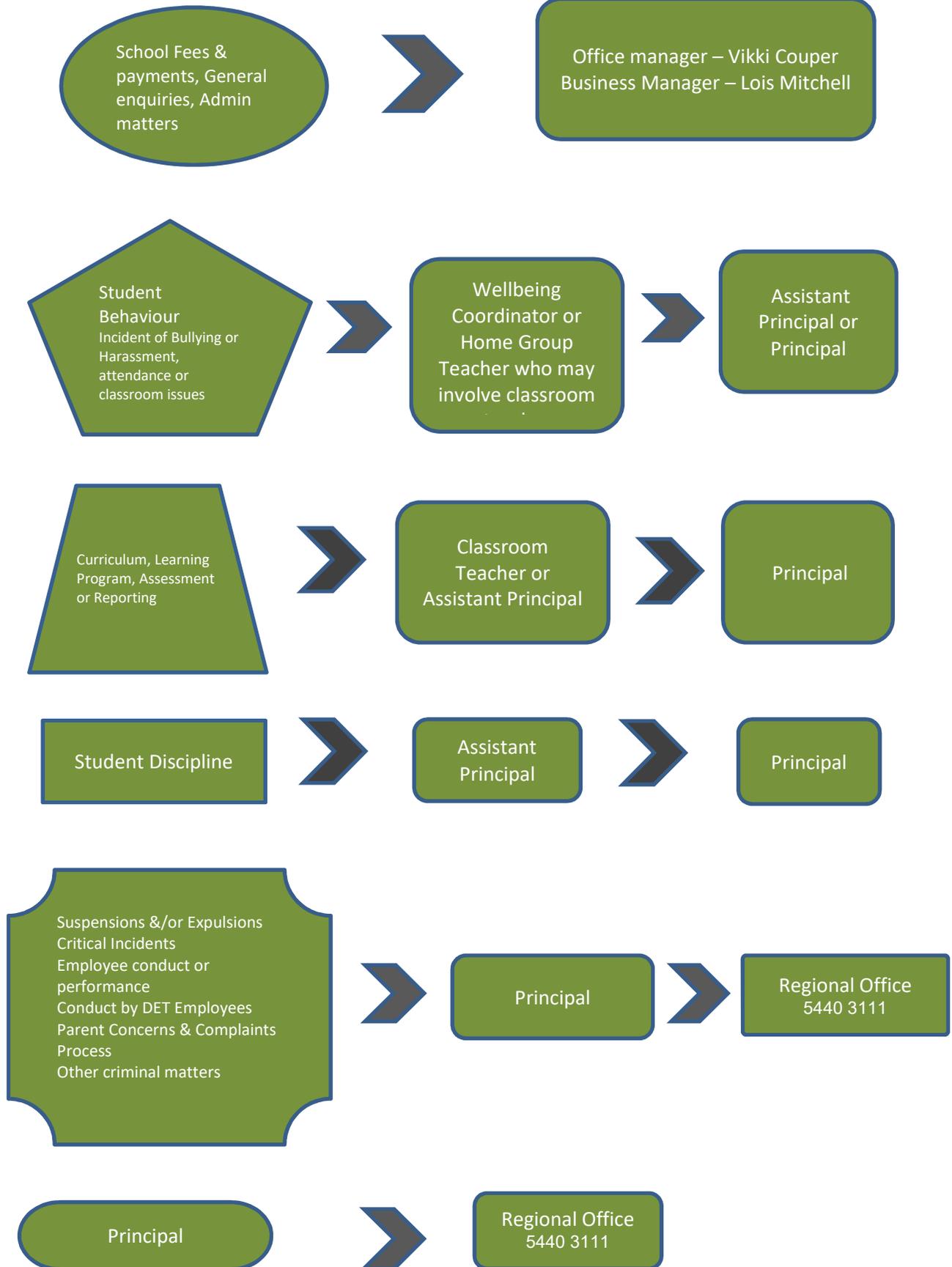
The school will implement the remedy as soon as it can. If the remedy is ongoing, the school will try and keep you up to date with progress.

## Parent Concerns and Complaints Protocols



## Issue

## Who can help?



All concerns, complaints and queries can be directed straight to the Regional Office.

**Evaluation:**

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

<b>Parent Concerns And Complaints Policy</b>	
First Developed	August 2016
Ratified by School Council	May 2017
Person / persons developing policy	School Council Education Policy Committee
Review date:	April 2020 Or if change in DET Regulations