



## COMPLAINTS POLICY

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide an outline of the complaints process at Truganina South 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 Truganina South Primary School are managed in a timely, effective, fair and respectful manner.

Truganina South Primary School has both a desire and a responsibility to ensure that high standards of conduct are maintained by staff and students at all times, and that complaints are managed and resolved fairly, efficiently, promptly and in accordance with relative legislation.

### SCOPE

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.

### POLICY

Truganina South 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:

- 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
- 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.
- Our school seeks to provide a positive, harmonious and productive environment.
- It is the principal's responsibility to provide a healthy and positive school environment that is free from discrimination and harassment. In doing so, Principals must ensure that all staff are aware of their rights and responsibilities.
- The principal is required to use local complaints resolution procedures, where appropriate, for resolving complaints in relation to issues that fall within the school's area of responsibility. All cases of serious misconduct – sexual offences, criminal charges, or other serious incidents – must instead be referred to the Department of Education Conduct and Ethics Branch.
- It is incumbent upon the principal to act where unacceptable conduct is observed or brought to his or her attention.
- A complainant may at any stage choose to take their complaint directly to an external agency such as the Merit Protection Boards, Victorian Equal Opportunity Commission, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, a union of which they are a member, or the Ombudsman.
- It is important that all complaints, ensuing procedures and outcomes are fully documented.
- The principal may choose to respond to a complaint through an informal process in cases where the complaint is minor, the complainant wishes the matter to be dealt with informally or the complaint has arisen from lack of or unclear communication.
- Formal processes will be used when informal processes haven't been successful, a complainant seeks a formal process, or the principal believes the complaint warrants formal investigation.
- Full details regarding formal complaint resolution procedures are contained within the Department of Education 'Local Complaints Resolution Procedures' handbook, and contain the following steps.

### Preparation for raising a concern or complaint

Truganina South 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 Truganina South Primary School.

### Complaints process

Truganina South 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 child's classroom teacher and the complaint will be shared with members of the leadership team. 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 an Assistant Principal or the Principal.

The Department's Parent Complaint Policy requires schools to keep a written record of serious, substantial or unusual complaints that require resolution actions and document all steps taken to achieve agreement

**The formal process involves: -**

1. Investigating the complaint including formal interviews, written statements, conveying the details of the complaint to the respondent in writing providing the opportunity for a written response.
  2. Dismissing or accepting the complaint. Acceptance may involve the Conduct & Ethics Branch, verbal or written warnings, conciliation, counselling or consequences etc.
  3. Preparation of a detailed confidential report.
  4. Monitoring of the situation.
- Parties dissatisfied with the process can appeal to the previously mentioned external agencies.
  - All matters must be treated with utmost confidentiality, and professional respect at all times.

**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.

**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/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:** Truganina South 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, Truganina South 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, Truganina South Primary School will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

**5. Resolution:** Where appropriate, Truganina South Primary School may seek to resolve a complaint by:

- an apology or expression of regret
- a change of 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, Truganina South 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 South Western Region office by contacting 1300 333 232.

Truganina South Primary School may also refer a complaint to South Western Region 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 PERIOD

This policy was last updated in January 2021 and is scheduled for review in 2024.

This policy was last ratified by School Council in:	February, 2021
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