

## COMPLAINTS POLICY

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide an outline of the complaints process at Ringwood North Primary School so that parents and members of the school community are informed of how they can raise complaints or concerns about issues arising at our school;
- ensure that all complaints regarding Ringwood North Primary School are managed in a timely, effective, fair and respectful manner.

### 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.

### DEFINITION

For the purpose of this policy the following terms are defined as follows:

**School Community:** This term encompasses the school administrators, teachers, and staff members who work in the school; the students who attend the school and their parents and families; and local residents and organisations that have a stake in the school's success (Source: <https://www.edglossary.org/school-community/>). Using the following definition of **community**...

*A community is a group of people associated with one another who share common values. (Redding, S. The School Community Journal, Vol.1, No. 2, Fall/Winter 1991.)*

... those residents and organisations that are considered to be part of the community, will be those that demonstrate an active interest in providing opportunities or resources through the school that contribute to the learning and growth of children at Ringwood North Primary School.

#### Parent:

- a person who has parental responsibility for 'major long term issues' as defined in the Family Law Act 1975 (Commonwealth)
- a person appointed as 'guardian' pursuant to the Children Youth and Families Act 2005 (Victoria)
- an informal carer with whom the child normally or regularly resides, and who has day-to-day care and control of the child
- a mature minor student
- an adult student

**Complaint:** an expression of dissatisfaction with an action taken, decision made or service provided, or the failure to provide a service, take action or make a decision at a school. For example:

*My child has been left out of the school's netball team for the third time in a row. She is an accomplished netballer and deserves to be part of the team. It is not fair that she has been left out and I want to know what you intend to do about this!*

- a complaint is considered to be '**resolved**' when the complainant and the Department (school, region or central office) agree on an appropriate response or remedy
- a complaint is considered to be '**finalised**' when the Department (Regional Director, or other delegate of the Secretary) has made a final determination on the matter after exhausting the processes set out in this policy
- a complaint is considered to be '**unresolved**' when agreement cannot be reached on a course of action and/or a remedy, or if the remedy cannot be implemented.

## POLICY

Ringwood North 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 (See: Further Information and Resources - School Privacy Policy)
- 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

Ringwood North Primary School encourages parents, carers, students or members of our school 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 Ringwood North Primary School (see "Further Information and Resources" section below).

### Complaints process

Ringwood North Primary School is always happy to discuss with parents, carers, students or members of our school community any concerns that they may have. Concerns in the first instance should be directed to your child's teacher. 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, carers, students or members of our school community may wish to make a formal complaint to the Principal and Assistant Principals. Email using the Compass system is the preferred method of delivering a formal complaint.

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 an Assistant Principal or the 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 Principals 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 Principal or Assistant Principals 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.

**Timelines:** Ringwood North Primary School will acknowledge receipt of your complaint as soon as possible (usually within 2 business days) and will seek to resolve complaints in a timely manner. Depending on the complexity of the complaint, Ringwood North 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, Ringwood North Primary School will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

## Resolution

Where appropriate, complaints may be resolved 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 all instances, the school's process for selecting an appropriate resolution will be guided by the actions and principles outlined in the school's Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy (See: Further Information and Resources).

In some circumstances, Ringwood North 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 the complainant 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 North-East Victoria Region (DET) by contacting [nev.community.liaison@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:nev.community.liaison@edumail.vic.gov.au) or 03 8392 9375.

If a staff complainant 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 one of the following:

Regional Director, NEVR Region

Call: 8392 9375

Australian Education Union

[Link](#)

Education Speak Up (Fraud and corruption)

[Link](#)

Ringwood North Primary School may also refer a complaint to North-East Victoria Region (DET) 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](#).

## FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

### **Related Policies and Policy Documents:**

Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy

[Link](#)

School Privacy Policy

[Link](#)

### **Resources:**

Parent Complaints (DET website)

[Link](#)

DET Parent Complaints Policy (Interim)

[Link](#)

## REVIEW CYCLE

This policy was last updated on 31-JULY-2018 and is scheduled for review in JULY 2021.

This policy does not require School Council ratification.

**APPENDIX A: PROCEDURE**

- Not applicable