

# PARENT/CARER CONCERNS & COMPLAINTS

## TAWONGA PRIMARY SCHOOL POLICY

### Rationale

We seek to provide a safe and friendly learning environment that is supportive of staff, students and their families. Whilst our primary aim is to build and maintain positive relationships between these parties, we accept that there will be times when a family has cause to make a complaint to the school and our responsibility is to resolve those complaints efficiently and courteously.

### Aims

To provide an effective process in accordance with Department of Education and Training (DET) policy, whereby complaints made by parents and carers are dealt with in a positive, timely and fair manner that is resolved with mutual satisfaction wherever possible.

### Concerns and Complaints covered by the procedures:

These 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/carers
- School fees and payments
- General administrative issues
- Any other school-related matters except as detailed below

These procedures do not cover matters for which there are existing rights of review or appeal, as detailed in the *Victorian Government Schools Reference guide* (see website).

Those 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 the Department's employees related to their employment
- Student critical incident matters
- Other criminal matters

### Ownership and Scope:

- Our school will develop its procedures to address concerns and complaints in collaboration with parents/carers and the school community and in accordance with DET policy.

### Expectations:

Our school expects a person raising a concern or complaint to:

- Do so promptly, as soon as possible after the issue occurs.
- Provide complete and factual information about the concern or complaint
- Maintain and respect the privacy and confidentiality of all parties
- Acknowledge that a common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
- Act in good faith, and in a calm and courteous manner
- Show respect and understanding of each other's point of view and value difference, rather than judge and blame
- Recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced.

Tawonga Primary School will address any concerns and complaints received from parents/carers:

- Courteously
- Efficiently
- Fairly
- Promptly, or within the timeline agreed with the person with the concern or complaint
- In accordance with due process, principles of natural justice and the department's regulatory framework.

**Procedure for raising concerns or complaints:**

In the first instance, a complaint should be made to the school.

- The student's classroom teacher about learning issues and incidents that happened in their class or group
- All other issues should be directed to the principal

If you are not sure who to contact, contact the Principal on 03 5754 4468.

**Help with raising concerns or complaints:**

Personal support is most appropriate in situations where the complainant and others involved in the complaint process have emotional issues related to the complaint.

- 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.
- The school will ensure that the complainant is aware of these supports. A complainant who wishes to use these support services should ensure the person addressing the concern or complaint is aware of their intention and is in agreement.

**Managing parent/carer concerns and complaints information:**

If the complaint is easily resolved in a telephone call, a brief note in the school's/principal's/teacher's diary recording the issue and the resolution may be all that is required.

If the complaint is more complex/serious the following details should be recorded:

- Name and contact details of the person with a concern or complaint
- The date the concern was expressed or complaint made
- The form in which the concern or complaint was received (such as face-to-face, by telephone, in writing, by email)
- A brief description of the concern or complaint
- Details of the school officer responding to the concern or complaint
- Action taken on the concern or complaint
- The outcome of action taken on the concern or complaint
- Any recommendations for future improvement in the school's policy or procedures.

**Addressing concerns or complaints:**

- Tawonga Primary School will make every effort to resolve concerns and complaints before involving other levels of the Department.
- The school will give a complainant a copy of the complaints procedures.
- The school will determine whether a concern or complaint should be managed through the school's concerns and complaints process or through other complaints processes of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.
- 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.
- Concerns and complaints about general school matters will be addressed by the principal or a relevant staff member.
- The school will make every attempt to resolve a concern or complaint as quickly as possible.
- Should the complaint involve complex issues, the school might need to take advice from the Department's Regional Office which may take more time. The school will tell the complainant the new

timeline for addressing the complaint and the reasons for any delays. In all cases, the school will try to resolve a concern or complaint with 20 school days.

### **Remedies:**

If a concern or complaint is substantiated in whole or part, the school will offer an appropriate remedy. For example, at its discretion and depending on the circumstances, the school might offer:

- An explanation or further information about the issue
- Mediation, counselling or other support
- An apology or expression of regret
- To change its decision
- To change its policies, procedures or practices
- To cancel a debt (such as for school payments)
- A fee refund

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

If a person with a concern or complaint is not satisfied with the outcome determined by the school, they should contact the Department's North East Regional Office.

- The 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 an officer from Group Coordination Division should act on the information provided.

### **Communication and training:**

Tawonga Primary School's procedures for addressing concerns and complaints will be:

- Published on the school's website
- Publicised in the school newsletter

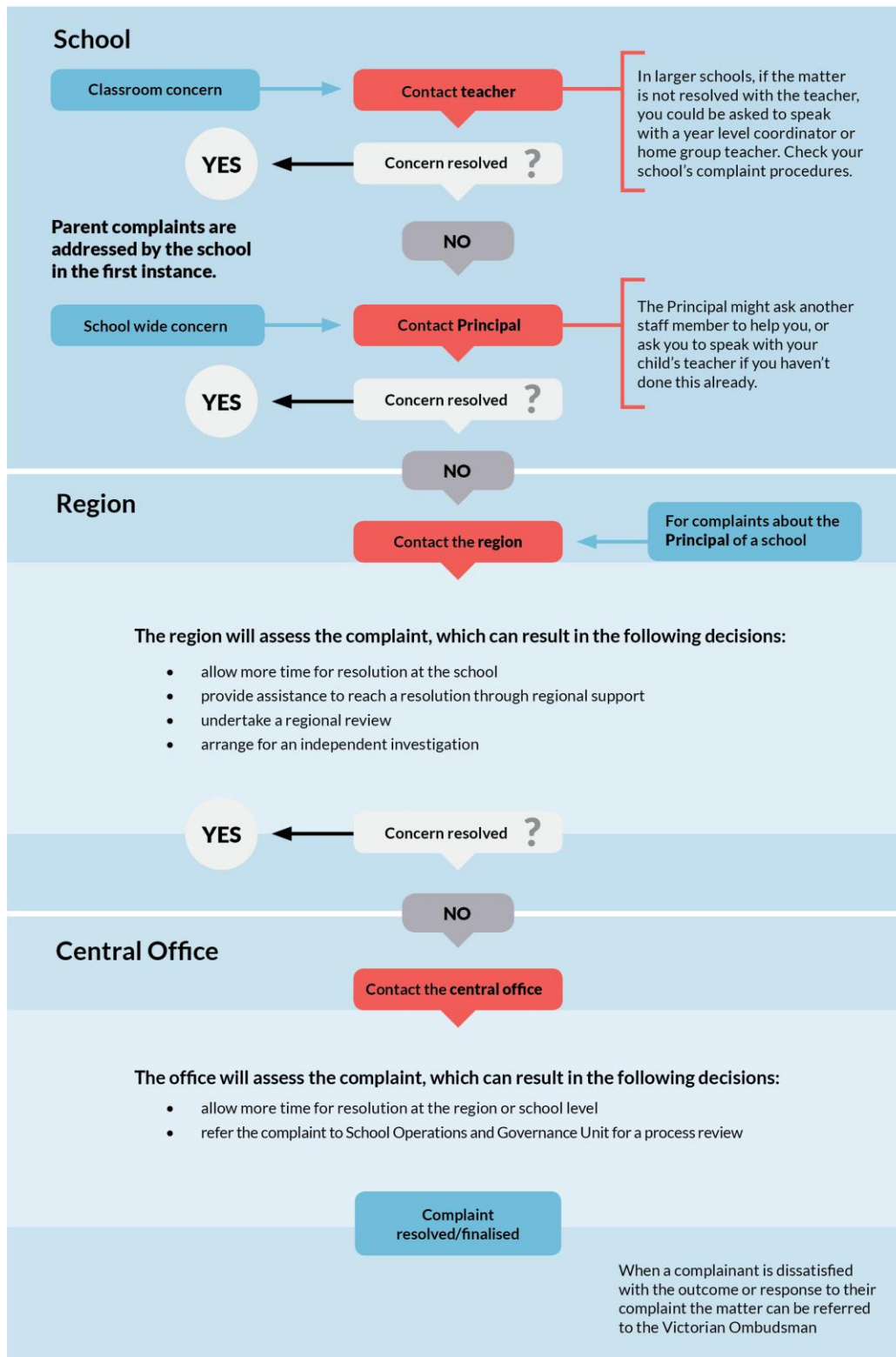
Tawonga Primary School will:

- Brief members of staff (including volunteers) about the procedures to address concerns and complaints.
- Provide staff with (or provide 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*

### **Monitoring the parent/carer concerns and complaints policy:**

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

# PARENT COMPLAINT FLOWCHART



## Evaluation

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

This policy was last ratified by School Council in...

**May 2017**