RAISING CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

**Basic Beliefs**

Tinternvale Primary School has developed these procedures to address concerns and complaints in collaboration with parents and the school community.

For schools to work effectively concerns and complaints are best addressed by students, parents, teachers, principals and support staff working in partnership.

The school’s approach to handling concerns and complaints is based on our values of:

- **Respect** – building relationships between students, parents and staff and providing a safe working environment for all
- **Responsibility** – taking ownership of one’s behaviour and building a safe and supportive learning environment
- **Honesty** – building a sense of fair play for all

These procedures cover concerns and complaints about:

- General issues of student behaviour that are contrary to the school 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.

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*.

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.

**Expectations**

Tinternvale Primary 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 or blame
- Recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced.

In addition the school will address any concerns and complaints received from parents:

- courteously
- efficiently
• fairly
• promptly, within timelines agreed with the person with the concern or complaint (where possible within 20 school days)
• in accordance with due process and where appropriate, the principles of natural justice and the Department’s regulatory framework.

Guidelines for Action

1. In the first instance, a complaint should be made to the school. The complainant should telephone, visit or write to:
   • the student’s teacher about learning issues and incidents that happened in their class or group
   • the team leader of the level if students from several classes are involved
   • the Principal about issues relating to staff members, complex student issues, school policy or school management

   To contact any staff member, call the school office on 97201215. If a parent is unsure who to contact then they should contact the Principal.

2. The Principal will ensure that parents are aware of their right to advocacy when communicating the issues involved in their complaint and negotiating an outcome. 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.

3. The school will record the following details of all complaints received, even if the complaint appears to be minor:
   • Name and contact details of the person with a concern or complaint
   • The date the concern was expressed or the complaint made
   • The form in which the concern or complaint was received
   • A brief description of the concern or complaint
   • Details of the person 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.

   All parties will receive a copy of the above details. Where the complaint is easily resolved in a telephone conversation the person addressing the complaint will make brief notes in their diary.

4. The school will make every effort to resolve concerns and complaints before involving other levels of the Department.
5. The school will give a complainant a copy of its complaints procedures.
6. The Principal 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.
7. The following process will take place:
   • 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 Principal or Assistant Principal will investigate all complaints and will provide a response to the complainant
   • Concerns and complaints about general school matters (such as timing of events, school policies and facilities) will be addressed by the Principal or a relevant staff member
• The school will make every attempt to resolve a concern or issue as quickly as possible. If the complaint involves many students and a range of issues, the school will need more time to investigate and resolve it.
• Should the complaint involve complex issues, the school will seek advice from the regional office which may take more time.
• The school will endeavour to resolve all complaints within 20 school days.

8. If a concern or complaint is substantiated in whole or part, the school will offer an appropriate remedy. Depending on the circumstances, the school may offer:
• an explanation or further information about the issue
• mediation, counselling or other support
• an apology, expression of regret or admission of fault
• to change its decision
• to change its policies, procedures or practices
• to cancel a debt (such as for school payments)
• a fee refund.
The school will implement the remedy as soon as practicable.

9. If a person with a concern or complaint is not satisfied with the outcomes determined by the school, they should contact the Department’s regional office. The complainant will be asked 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.

10. The school will make information about procedures for addressing concerns and complaints readily available to parents via the school website or in paper form from the school office
11. 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.
Policy Ratified by School Council:

Review Date: May 2016