

COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES POLICY

*The Currajong School takes a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse and is fully committed to ensuring that its strategies, policies, procedures and practices meet all **Child Safe Standards as specified in Ministerial Order No. 870 (2015)***

CONTEXT

The Currajong School is open to the concerns of parents/carers, students, staff, visitors and the wider School community and any complaint or grievance will be received in a positive manner and taken seriously. All decisions related to a complaint or grievance will be made with consideration for the wellbeing of the individual as well as for the reputation of the School.

Complaints and grievances may be heard informally or formally, and verbally or in writing. Formal avenues for handling of complaints and grievances will be fully documented. Complainants will be treated with respect and without intimidation should they choose to follow the Complaints and Grievance process.

The purpose of establishing and effectively implementing a complaint handling program within the School is to:

- ensure that the School complies with its legal obligations
- encourage constructive feedback from key stakeholders
- allow the School to identify real problems that must be resolved
- discourage vexatious or frivolous complaints and allow the School to take control of vexatious or frivolous complainants if received
- provide information with respect to potential risks the School faces
- enhance the School's ability to identify systematic and recurring problems
- assist the School to continually improve its internal systems and controls
- empower the School community by providing a clear path to resolve issues in a consistent, systematic and responsive way
- enhance relationships between staff, parents/carers, students and other key stakeholders
- provide school management and the governing body with critical knowledge that enhances their decision-making ability
- allow the School to clearly demonstrate its core values; that the School listens and learns from incidents which may arise
- set a positive role model for all members of the School community
- protect and enhance the School's reputation

AIM

To provide a process for parents/carers, students, staff, visitors and members of the School community to follow in the event that they have a complaint or grievance with the School.

To receive all complaints courteously and respect confidentiality - however anonymous, vexatious or malicious complaints will not be pursued. The School is committed to:

- abide by relevant regulatory and legislative frameworks
- maintain confidentiality
- balance the rights and responsibilities of all parties
- ensure all parties are aware of their right to advocacy
- act in a manner that seeks to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties

Definitions:

- Complaint: a statement that something is unsatisfactory or unacceptable
- Grievance: a real or imagined wrong or other cause for complaint or protest especially unfair treatment
- Complainant: refers to the individual making the complaint or grievance
- Respondent: refers to the individual against whom a complaint or allegation is made
- Investigator: refers to an independent person who may be asked to investigate allegations or details of a complaint or grievance, without personal interest or bias

Principles of Fairness:

The principles of natural justice must be observed and include the following:

- The right of each party to be aware of the complaint/allegation being made against him/her
- The right of each party to be heard with respect to the complaint/allegation
- The right of each party to be treated fairly
- The right of each party to have a support person present during meetings
- The right of each party to a decision maker who acts fairly and in good faith

Record keeping:

- Records of the complaint, the process for handling the complaint, and any outcomes should be carefully and accurately kept
- Where the complaint is found to be vexatious or based on misinformation, records should be kept in a file separate to that of the staff member concerned

- Where a complaint is addressed or acted upon, a copy of any reports related to the handling of the complaint should be made available to the individual concerned
- If an individual believes that the process of handling the complaint and/or the outcome of the complaint have been unfair and/or inappropriate, they have the right to pursue grievance procedures

Confidentiality:

- All persons involved in a complaint, grievance, unsatisfactory performance or misconduct process must observe confidentiality, unless otherwise authorised or required to disclose information
- Staff members are entitled to seek personal and professional support and advice from a union or other professional body or person
- Should details of a complaint or grievance become widely known, it may be less likely that the matter will be resolved to the satisfaction of parties involved
- The requirement for confidentiality should not impede the ability of any party to prepare a response to an allegation
- The Principal must advise all parties of their obligation to keep details of the investigation confidential and to respect the confidentiality rights of those involved
- The use of electronic communication including email as part of the process may require particular care to ensure that confidentiality is not breached

WHEN THE COMPLAINT OR GRIEVANCE INVOLVES A PARENT OR CARER

Initial Concerns – informal procedures

- Parents/carers are welcome at all times to discuss, with the staff member most closely involved with the issue, any concerns they may have in relation to their child as it may be able to be dealt with quickly and with a minimum of fuss
- If this is not appropriate, an appointment should be made with the Principal or Assistant Principal to discuss the matter. It is expected that most issues will be resolved in this way
- Parents/carers' views, concerns and ideas are important to us. A request may be made to either of the two Parent Representatives to include suggestions from parents/carers in a report to the School Board

Formal procedures

- If, following a meeting with the Principal, parents/parents do not feel that their concern has been fully and fairly considered, they may choose to complete a Complaint Form in order to facilitate further action on the part of the School
- The Principal will take the appropriate steps to attempt to resolve the issue. This may include contact with the Chairperson of the School Board or other appropriate person/s or agencies if the matter is considered serious and/or urgent. Otherwise, it will be tabled for discussion at the next scheduled meeting of the School Board

- Staff will be made aware of any complaints involving them and be given the opportunity to respond
- Every effort will be made to clarify any misunderstanding or miscommunication and to review policies and procedures in the light of the complaint made
- The complainant will be contacted by the Principal and informed of actions taken or proposed in relation to the complaint
- If all reasonable procedures have been followed and the complaint remains intractable, the Chairperson has the right to inform parents/carers in writing that the matter has been fully dealt with and is now closed

It should be noted that policies and procedures relating to curriculum and discipline are made clear to prospective parents/carers who, as part of the enrolment process, are required to sign an agreement to comply with these.

WHEN THE COMPLAINT OR GRIEVANCE INVOLVES A STUDENT

- The staff member and the student should act to resolve a minor complaint or grievance to the satisfaction of both parties. If the student feels that they cannot raise the matter directly with the staff member concerned, if a satisfactory resolution is not achieved, or if the matter is of a serious nature, the student may approach the Principal
- The School's representative will record the details of the complaint or grievance, the steps taken and timeframe involved to resolve the matter

WHEN THE COMPLAINT OR GRIEVANCE INVOLVES A STAFF MEMBER

Complaints in relation to school staff may arise from:

- Unprofessional conduct and/or unsatisfactory performance
- Allegations of aggressive, demeaning or uncooperative behaviour
- A particular incident
- Allegations of unlawful discrimination or racial or religious vilification
- Allegations of unlawful harassment, including sexual harassment
- Allegations of bullying, as defined by the Victorian Work Cover Authority
- Decisions made, or not made, by the Principal and/or staff, that a complainant believes are unfair, unreasonable or inappropriate

In relation to a complaint about another staff member, a staff member should consider:

- Arranging a meeting with, and speaking directly to, the staff member privately
- Speaking to an appropriate support person within the school
- Speaking directly to, or writing to, the Principal about the complaint or grievance who will then determine a course of action
- Seeking assistance from a union or other professional body or person

Note: All complaints which are considered to be serious should be taken directly to the Principal who may then consult with the Board Chairperson and/or members or with other appropriate parties.

WHEN THE COMPLAINT OR GRIEVANCE INVOLVES THE PRINCIPAL

In relation to a complaint about the Principal, the complainant should consider:

- Speaking directly to the Principal either alone or with a support person
- Writing to the Principal requesting a meeting to discuss the issue
- Seeking assistance from a union or other professional body or person
- Arranging to speak with a member of the Board of Management who may discuss issues related to school policy but not to school operations. If the complainant believes that the School Principal has breached laws in relation to assault, discrimination or financial management, then such matters should be documented and provided in writing to the Board Chairperson so that the matter may be further pursued. *All contact to the Board must be recorded and made via the Business Manager.*

EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed as per our three-year review cycle or more often if necessary due to changes in regulations or circumstances.

Approval date:	Approved by:	Next review:
October 2021	School Board	October 2024



The Currajong School acknowledges the traditional owners of this country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures and to the Elders past, present and emerging.