

LALOR EAST PRIMARY SCHOOL

RESPONDING TO PARENT COMPLAINTS & CONCERNS

Rationale

- The underlying premise of the complaints and concerns policy is that parent concerns and complaints are best and most effectively managed at the school level.
- This policy does not apply to matters about which there are existing rights and processes for review and appeal, such as matters relating to serious employee misconduct, student critical incidents and criminal activities.
- Complaints are an important way for the community to provide information and feedback to a school.
- When addressing parent/guardian concerns or complaints, DET and its schools must:
 - 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.

Purpose

- To ensure Lalor East Primary School responds to parent concerns and complaints in an effective and timely manner.
- To ensure the school complies with the legislative requirements of
 - Education and Training Reform Act 2006
 - Education and Training Reform Regulations 2007
 - Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
 - Information Privacy Act 2000
 - Wrongs Act 1958.
- To ensure the school complies with DET policy in relation to parent complaints and concerns.

Definitions

- A 'concern' is an area of interest because of its importance and effect which is raised informally.
- A 'complaint' is an expression of grievance or resentment where the complainant is seeking redress or injustice.

Implementation

- The school will differentiate between 'a concern' and 'a complaint'.
- The school will ensure it adheres to the principles of DET's 2006 Dignity and Respect Statement:

The Department is committed to providing safe and supportive work environments where diversity is valued and everyone is treated with respect, fairness and dignity. Discrimination, sexual and other forms of harassment, bullying, violence and threatening behaviour are unacceptable. All employees, students, parents and visitors in schools and other Departmental workplaces are expected to act accordingly. The Department (which includes schools) and school councils, will act to ensure that the safety, security, health and wellbeing of all employees, students, parents and visitors in schools and other Departmental workplaces are protected.

- A school level policy will be developed in conjunction with the school community and will be approved by School Council.

- Parents will be informed of the school's procedures about how to make a complaint.
- The school will endeavour to build positive relationships with parents and the school community.
- As Lalor East Primary School wishes to prevent the complainant from having to repeat the complaint over and over, the first person the he/she deals with will:
 - listen to the complainant carefully and with an open mind
 - treat them with respect and courtesy, take them seriously and let them have their say
 - make it clear that the complaint will be taken seriously
 - explain the procedures for resolving complaints
 - state what can be done, not what cannot be done
 - ask the complainant if the matter is a complaint or a concern
 - take notes
 - if the complaint involves complex issues which are difficult to understand on first hearing, ask the complainant to put the complaint in writing
 - check the facts to make sure they are clear and beyond doubt
 - make a mutually convenient time to meet, if a further meeting is required
 - give the complainant their name and ensure the complainant's name is known and used.
- In dealing with complaints, the school will:
 - maintain the confidentiality of all parties, in line with DET policy and legislative requirements
 - acknowledge that their common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
 - act in good faith and in a calm and courteous manner
 - recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced
 - act courteously, fairly, efficiently, promptly and in accordance with DET's policy and guidelines and the legislative framework
- If the complaint cannot be resolved by the complainant, school and Regional Office working together, the complainant may refer the complaint to the Deputy Secretary, Office for Government School Education, as per advice provided on DET's parent complaints website.
- The School Principal, Regional Director or General Manager, Group Coordination Division, will determine the extent to which an anonymous complaint received by the school will be investigated.

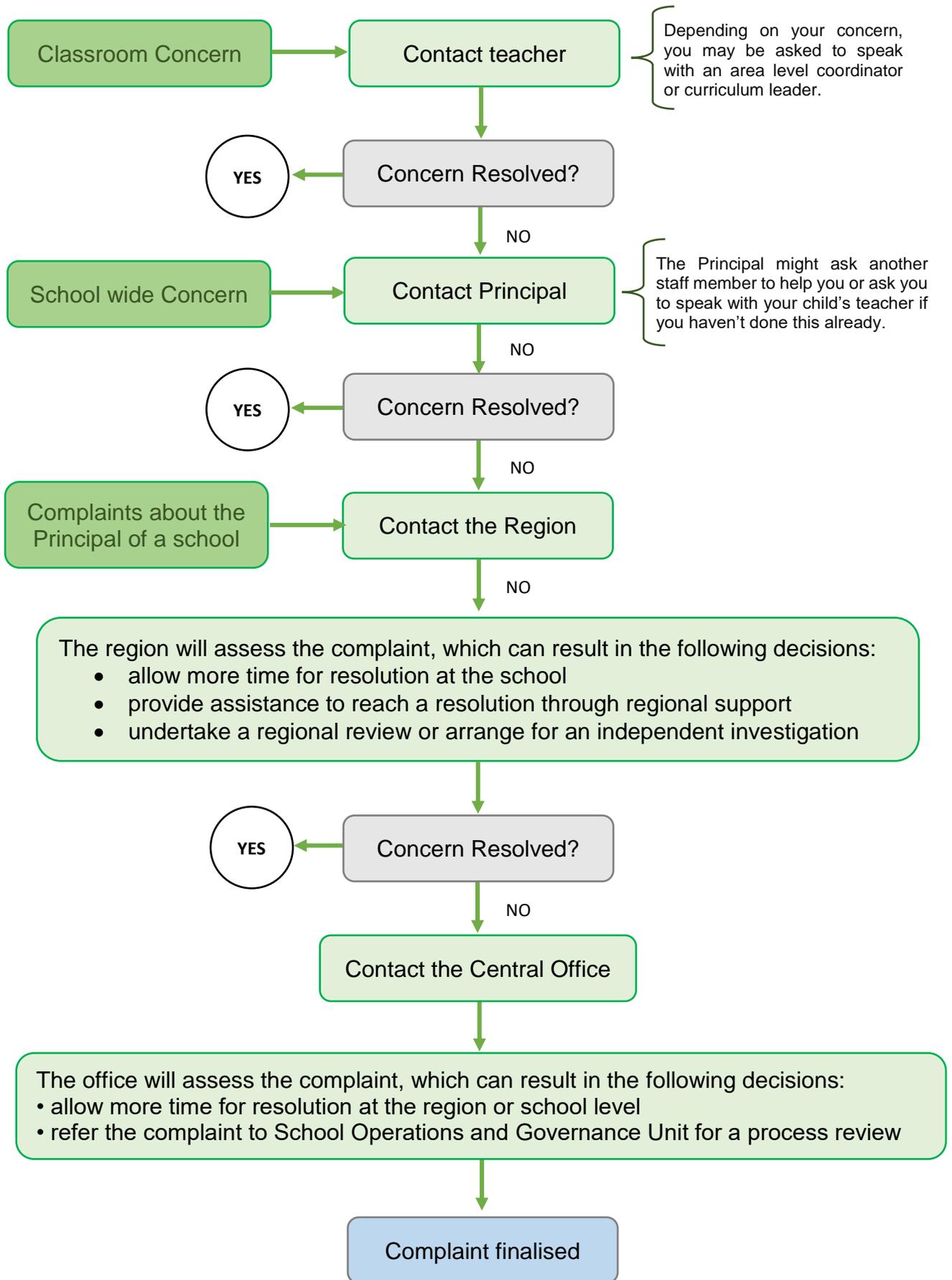
Evaluation

- This policy will be reviewed every three years as part of the school's policy review cycle, as changes are made to Victorian DET regulations or at times that the Principal forms the opinion that the policy warrants a review.

Approved at School Council:
Next review:

October 2017
October 2020

PARENT COMPLAINT FLOWCHART



When a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome or response to their complaint the matter can be referred to the Victorian Ombudsman.

General Information

The Department of Education and Training is committed to treating everyone with dignity and respect and encourages good communication between parents and schools.

Schools, regions and the central office act in accordance with the Department's parent complaints policy and processes when managing your complaint. Further information about the policy including everyone's role in resolving concerns and complaints can be found on the Department's website. All concerns and complaints lodged with the Department about a Government school are addressed in line with relevant professional and administrative standards and in accordance with obligations and rights afforded under Victorian legislative and regulatory frameworks. These include the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* and the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*.

How do I raise an issue or make a complaint?

The school should always be your first point of contact. Schools need to know if you have any concerns about your child's education. Teaching and learning works best when parents and teachers talk to each other and work together to solve any problems. You are always welcome to ask about and request a copy of your school's policies and procedures.

When contacting the school

Any appointments to speak with school staff about a complaint should be arranged through the school office.

- Plan what you will say so you can clearly explain what the problem is. You might want to make some notes to help you.
- Have some ideas about how the problem could be resolved realistically.
- Talk about the problem with your child's teacher/s by telephone or organise a face-to-face meeting. Most problems can be solved this way.
- If you still have a concern after talking to your child's teacher/s you may want to speak to the Assistant Principal or Principal.

When to contact the region

If the matter is not resolved by speaking to the Assistant Principal or Principal at your school, you can contact the community liaison officer at your region who will assist you and the school to find a solution.

North-Western Victoria

- Bendigo (03) 5440 3111
- Coburg (03) 9488 9488

When to contact the central office

If the matter remains unresolved after discussions with your region you can send your complaint, in writing, to:

Deputy Secretary, Regional Services Group
C/o Manager, Complaints
Performance Division
GPO Box 4367, Melbourne 3001
E: school.complaints@edumail.vic.gov.au

Victorian Ombudsman

If, after all avenues for resolution of your complaint have been explored, and you are not satisfied with the way in which your complaint has been handled by the Department, you are able to contact the Victorian Ombudsman on (03) 9613 6222.

E: ombudvic@ombudsman.vic.gov.au