

# COMPLAINT RESOLUTION POLICY

## HARTWELL PRIMARY SCHOOL

### Rationale

Hartwell Primary School has both a desire and a responsibility to ensure that high standards of conduct are maintained by staff, students and parents at all times, and that complaints against each are managed and resolved fairly, efficiently, promptly and in accordance with relative legislation.

### Aims:

- To provide a harmonious, positive and productive school environment.
- To resolve complaints fairly, efficiently, promptly and in accordance with relative legislation.

### Implementation:

- Hartwell Primary School seeks to provide a positive, harmonious and productive environment.
- It is the Principal's responsibility to provide a healthy and positive school environment that is free from discrimination and harassment. In doing so, the Principal must ensure that all staff are aware of their rights and responsibilities.
- The Principal is required to use local complaints resolution procedures, where appropriate, for resolving complaints in relation to issues that fall within the school's area of responsibility. All cases of serious misconduct – sexual offences, criminal charges, or other serious incidents – must instead be referred to the DET Conduct and Ethics Branch.
- It is incumbent upon the Principal to act where unacceptable conduct is observed or brought to his or her attention.
- A complainant may at any stage choose to take their complaint directly to an external agency such as the Merit Protection Boards, Australian Education Union, Victorian Equal Opportunity Commission, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission or the Ombudsman.
- It is important that all complaints, ensuing procedures, and outcomes are fully documented.
- The Principal may choose to respond to a complaint through an informal process in cases where the complaint is minor, the complainant wishes the matter to be dealt with informally, or where the complaint has arisen from lack of or unclear communication.
- Formal processes will be used when informal processes haven't been successful, a complainant seeks a formal process, or the principal believes the complaint warrants formal investigation.
- Full details regarding formal complaint resolution procedures are contained within the DET 'Parent Complaints Policy', and contain the following steps.

The formal process involves: -

### **Step 1**

**Complaint received:** Either email, telephone or arrange a meeting through the front office with the Principal or Assistant 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.

### **Step 2**

**Information gathering:** Depending on the issues raised in the complaint, the Principal or Assistant Principal 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.

### **Step 3**

**A timely response:** Where possible, a resolution meeting will be arranged with the Principal or Assistant Principal 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.

### **Step 4**

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

### **Step 5**

#### **Resolution/Escalation**

Where appropriate, Hartwell Primary School may seek to resolve a complaint 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 some circumstances, Hartwell 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 you are not satisfied that your complaint has been resolved by the school, or if your complaint is about the Principal and you do not want to raise it directly with them, then the complaint should be referred to the NEVR by contacting [1300 333 231](tel:1300333231).

Hartwell Primary School may also refer a complaint to NEVR 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](#).

## Review Period

This policy was last updated on July 2019 and is scheduled for review July 2022.