

## COMPLAINTS POLICY



Help for non-English speaking persons is available. Please get in touch with the Berwick Chase administration on 9707 7799.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide an outline of the complaints process at Berwick Chase so that students, parents and members of the community are informed of how they can raise complaints or concerns about issues arising at our school
- ensure that all Berwick Chase Primary School complaints are handled promptly, effectively, fairly and respectfully.

### SCOPE

This policy relates to complaints brought by parents, carers, students or members of our school community and applies to all matters relating to our school.

In some limited instances, we may need to refer the complainant to another policy area if there are different processes in place to manage the issue, including;

- Complaints and concerns relating to fraud and corruption will be managed by the department's Fraud and Corruption Policy
- Criminal matters will be referred to the Victorian Police
- Legal claims will be referred to the Department's Legal Division
- Our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures will manage complaints and concerns relating to child abuse

### POLICY

Berwick Chase Primary School welcomes positive and negative feedback and is committed to continuous improvement. We value open communication with our families and are dedicated to understanding and addressing complaints appropriately. We recognise that the complaints process provides an important opportunity for reflection and learning.

We value and encourage open and positive relationships with our school community. We understand that a trusting relationship between families and our school is in the student's best interests.

When addressing a complaint, it is expected that all parties will:



- be considerate of each other's views and respect each others's role
- raise and discuss issues in a courteous and respectful manner
- acknowledge that the goal is to achieve an outcome that is in the affected student's best interests and acceptable to all parties
- act in good faith and respect the privacy and confidentiality of those involved, as appropriate, and recognise that all parties, including the broader school community, have rights and responsibilities that must be balanced
- operate within and seek reasonable resolutions that comply with any applicable legislation and Department policy
- recognise that schools and the Department of Education may be subject to legal constraints on their ability to act or disclose information in some circumstances.

### Complaints and concerns process for students

Berwick Chase Primary School acknowledges that issues or concerns can cause stress or worry for students and impact their well-being and learning. Berwick Chase encourages our students to raise issues or concerns as they arise so that we can work together to resolve them.

Students with a concern or complaint can raise them with a trusted adult at school, such as their classroom teacher, Year Level Coordinators, well-being staff, Koori Education Support Officers, and Education Support staff. This person will take your concern or complaint seriously and will explain to you what steps we can take to try to resolve the issue and support you.

*You can also ask your parent, carer or another trusted adult outside school to talk to us about the issue instead. Information about our parent/carer complaints and concerns process is outlined below. The parent/carer process also applies to mature minors students; refer to Mature Minors and Decision Making.*

*Other ways you can raise a concern or complaint with us include:*

- *participating in our Attitudes to School Survey (for Grades 4-6)*
- *participating in our student Chaser forums held every term*
- *writing a note for our student safety issues box located near book room*
- *Tell it from me survey (Grades 3-6)*

*Further information and resources to support students in raising issues or concerns are available at:*

- *Report Racism Hotline (call 1800 722 476) – This hotline enables students to report problems relating to racism or religious discrimination*
- *Reach Out*
- *Headspace*
- *Kids Helpline (call 1800 55 1800)*
- *Victorian Aboriginal Education Association (VAEAI)*

### Complaints and concerns process for parents, carers and community members



### Preparation for raising a concern or complaint

Berwick Chase Primary School encourages parents, carers or members of the community who may wish to submit a complaint to:

- carefully consider the issues they would like to discuss
- remember that they may not have all the facts relating to the issues that they want to raise
- think about how the matter could be resolved
- be informed by checking the policies and guidelines set by the DET and Berwick Chase Primary School (see "Further Information and Resources" section below).

### Support person

You are welcome to have a support person to assist you in raising a complaint or concern with the school. Please advise us if you wish to have a support person help you and provide their name, contact details, and relationship with you.

### Raising a concern

Berwick Chase Primary School is always happy to discuss with parents/carers and community members any concerns that they may have. First, relations should be directed to your child's teacher, Year Level Coordinators, Assistant Principal or Principal. Where possible, school staff will work with you to address your concerns appropriately.

### Making a complaint

Berwick Chase Primary School is always happy to discuss with parents/carers and community members any concerns that they may have. First, relations should be directed to their child's teacher, Year Level Coordinators, Assistant Principal or Principal. School staff will work with them to address your concerns appropriately.

Where concerns cannot be resolved this way, parents or community members may wish to make a formal complaint to the Principal or Assistant Principal, noting that formal complaints should be directed to a school leadership team member.

If they would like to make a formal complaint, in most cases, depending on the nature of the complaint, our school will first seek to understand the issues. It will then convene a resolution meeting to resolve the complaint together. The following process will apply:

1. **Complaint received:** Please email, telephone or arrange a meeting through the front office with the Assistant Principal or Principal] to outline your complaint so we can fully understand the issues. We can discuss your complaint in a way convenient for you, whether in writing, in person or over the phone.
2. **Information gathering:** Depending on the issues raised in the complaint, the Principal, Assistant Principal or nominee may need to gather further information to understand the situation



appropriately. This process may also involve speaking to others to obtain details about the problem or the concerns raised.

3. **Response:** Where possible, a resolution meeting will be arranged with the Assistant Principal/Principal to discuss the complaint to resolve it satisfactorily to all parties. Suppose that after the meeting, we cannot resolve the problem; we will work with you to produce a written summary of the complaint if you would like to take further action. 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.
4. **Timelines:** Berwick Chase Primary School will acknowledge receipt of your complaint as soon as possible (usually within 48 hours) and seek to resolve complaints promptly. Depending on the complexity of the complaint, Berwick Chase Primary School may need time to gather enough information to understand your complaint's circumstances fully. We will endeavour to complete any necessary information gathering and hold a resolution meeting where appropriate within ten working days of the objection being raised. In situations where additional time is required, Berwick Chase Primary School will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

Please note that unreasonable conduct (e.g. vexatious complaints) may need to be managed differently to the procedures in this policy)

## Resolution

Where appropriate, Berwick Chase 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 intended to support the student, parent and school relationship, engagement, and participation in the school community.

In some circumstances, Berwick Chase 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 resolving the dispute.

## Escalation

If a parent or community member is not satisfied that the school has resolved their complaint, or if their complaint is about the Principal, and you do not want to raise it directly with them, then the complaint should be referred to the South-Eastern Victoria Region by contacting [sevr@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:sevr@education.vic.gov.au) or 1800 338 663.

Berwick Chase Primary School may also refer a complaint to South Eastern Victoria Region if we believe 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 [Raise a complaint or concern about your school](#).

Record Keeping and other requirements

To meet Department and legal requirements, our school must keep written records of the following:

- Serious, substantial or unusual complaints
- Complaints relating to the Child Information Sharing Scheme and Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme to meet regulatory requirements - refer to [Child and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes](#) for further information

Our school also follows Department policy to ensure that record-keeping, reporting, privacy and employment law obligations are met when responding to complaints or concerns.

## COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on a school website
- Included in staff induction processes
- Included in our staff handbook/manual
- Included in transition and enrolment packs
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions
- Included in student diaries so that it is easily accessible to parents, carers and students
- Annual reference in the school newsletter
- Discussed at student forums/through communication tools
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

## FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

The Department's Policy and Advisory Library (PAL):

- [Complaints - Parents](#)

The Department's parents' website:

- [Raise a complaint or concern about your school](#)
- [Report racism or religious discrimination in schools](#)

The following school policies are also relevant to this Complaints Policy:

- Statement of Values
- Student Engagement and Discipline Policy



#### REVIEW PERIOD

Policy last reviewed	June 2024
Consultation	School Council
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	June 2024