

Barton Primary School

COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT POLICY

14/12/2017

RATIONALE

Barton Primary School acknowledges that parents and caregivers have a right to raise concerns and air complaints they may have and to have them addressed appropriately. The School's approach to handling concerns and complaints is based on a commitment to:

- providing a safe and supportive learning environment
- building relationships between students, parents and staff
- providing a safe working environment for staff.

This policy and its associated procedures are to ensure that concerns and complaints are dealt with in a fair and transparent way. Concerns and complaints will be handled responsibly, openly and in a timely manner, with the aim of resolving the matter to the satisfaction of all parties.

AIM

The underlying premise of the complaints management policy is that parent concerns and complaints are best and most effectively managed at the school level, in a fair and efficient process.

When addressing a complaint it is expected that parents and school personnel will:

- show respect and understanding of each other's point of view
- operate within applicable legislation
- acknowledge that their 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.

All Department staff (schools, region, central office) must observe the code of conduct for Victorian public sector employees.

This policy does not apply to matters where rights and processes for review and appeal already exist. These include:

- student expulsions
- complaints about staff that if upheld would constitute misconduct
- student critical incident matters
- other criminal matters

IMPLEMENTATION

Parents should follow the processes as outlined in this policy. **Parents should not contact other parents or students about their concerns or complaints as the school will deal with them following due process.**

When the school receives a complaint (either written or verbal) from a parent, we will follow the processes outlined below:

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1. maintain fair procedures for parent complaint-handling (Appendix 1)
2. consider all parent complaints by:
 - a. raising the issues in the complaint with relevant staff and/or members of the school community
 - b. consulting, where appropriate, with relevant sections of the Department and/or external agencies for technical or other advice
 - c. discussing the school's findings with the parent in an attempt to reach an agreed resolution
 - d. considering the engagement of a mediator where a complaint has the potential to become intractable
3. publicise the complaint-handling procedures within the school community and make them readily available
4. review the complaint-handling procedures regularly
5. ensure that complaints received are recorded and actions taken to resolve the complaint are well documented
6. ensure a record of all complaints, both written and verbal, are maintained
7. seek advice from either the central office or region about the management of complaints, including complex or challenging complaints or complainants and the use of mediation/conciliation services, and seek specialist or technical advice from external agencies and/or the Department when required.
8. ensure all school personnel are aware of the school's parent complaint-handling procedures and provide opportunities for staff to attend training/professional development activities with a focus on complaint management.
9. actively assist parents with the complaint process, informing them that at any point of the complaint process they are able to be supported by an advocate/support person. The role of the advocate/support person in this process is a supportive and enabling one. A complainant's advocate/support person may be a member of the family, a friend, a community member or a person provided through an appropriate support/advocate agency. The advocate/support person in the parent complaint process does not receive a fee for service. The complainant will inform the principal if they want to include an advocate/support person in the complaint process and provide the name of the advocate, contact details and the relationship to the complainant. An advocate/support person's role may include:
 - a) assistance for the complainant to clarify the issues in the complaint
 - b) discussion of difficulties being experienced by the complainant
 - c) assistance in the development of a co-operative and collaborative working relationship between the complainant and the school community
 - d) assistance for the complainant to understand Department policy and guidelines and the resolution being proposed for the complaint.

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All complaints will be considered in accordance with the school's complaint-handling procedures including when parent behaviour is thought to be unreasonable.

While a decision maker considers a range of factors and views, they may at any point in the process outlined in this policy consider a parent's behaviour to be unreasonable. In these circumstances, it is appropriate for the decision maker to communicate the basis on which the conclusion was made to the parent in writing. The decision maker may also indicate an acceptable procedure for future communication with the parent about their complaint.

The Department considers behaviour to be unreasonable when:

- it is clearly and significantly outside the expectations of cooperation, courtesy and respect
- it calls for staff resources and time unjustified by the nature or significance of the complaint
- an action or complaint is brought without merit, often to cause annoyance to another person
- it is oriented towards conflict.

APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: Raising a concern or complain
- Appendix 2: Guiding Principles
- Appendix 3: Department flowchart

This policy was ratified by School Council on 9th November 2017

EVALUATION

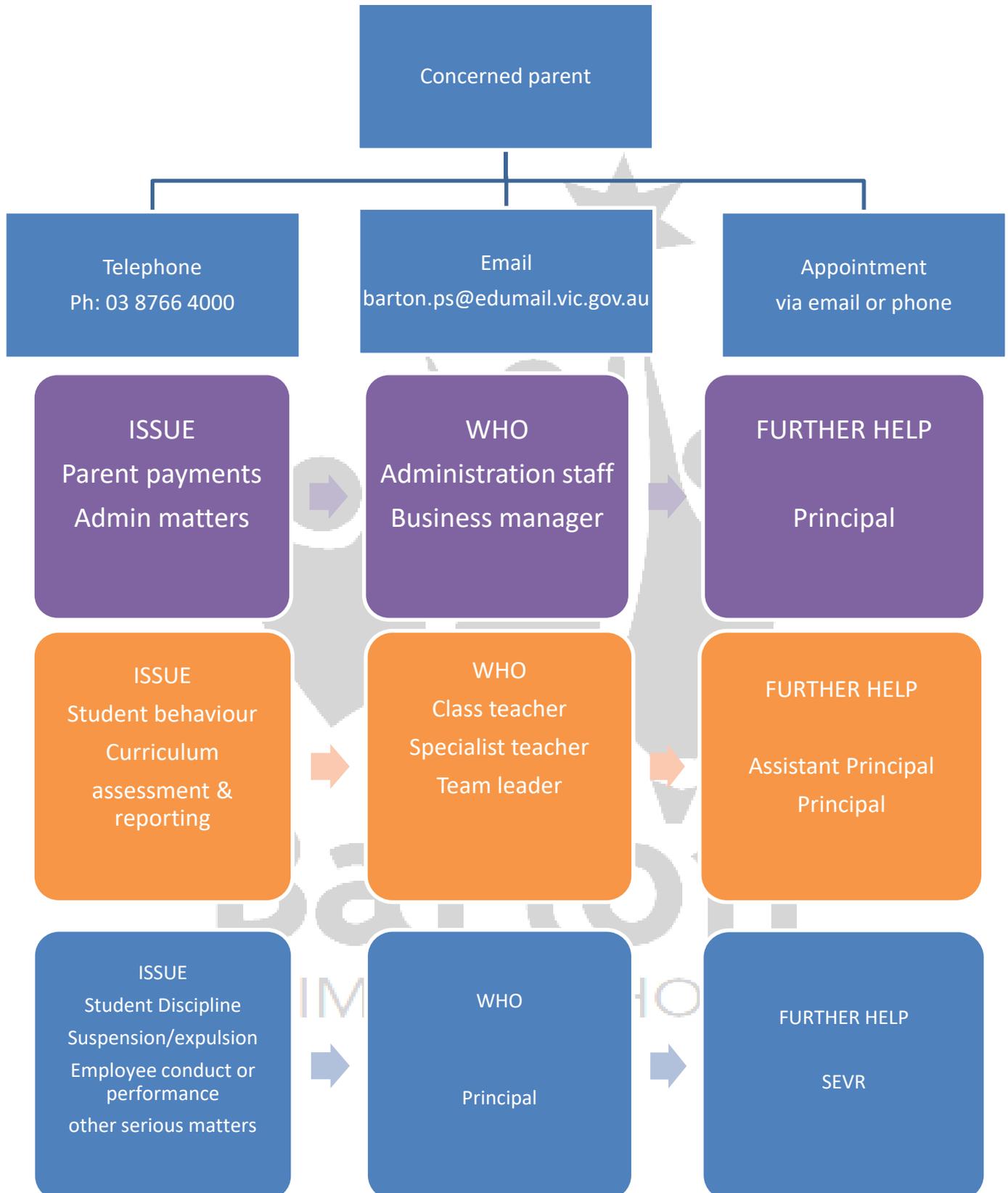
This policy will be reviewed annually or more often if necessary due to changes in regulations or circumstances.

REFERENCES

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/complaints/Pages/default.aspx>

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APPENDIX 1 RAISING A CONCERN OR COMPLAINT



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A parent/guardian can raise concerns or complaints about any **aspect of the school's**

PLEASE ...

- Raise your concern as soon as you can after the issue occurs
- Put it in writing, providing detailed factual information
- Maintain and respect everyone's privacy and confidentiality
- Be calm, courteous, honest and sincere

PLEASE ALSO ...

- Recognise everyone has rights and responsibilities that must be balanced
- Respect and understand each other's point of view; value difference rather than judge and blame
- Realise we need to achieve an outcome acceptable to everyone involved

ADDRESSING COMPLAINTS ...

- Our response will be prompt, courteous, efficient and fair. We will follow the process outlined below:
- Acknowledge your complaint by telephone or email and let you know how long it will take to investigate
- Give you a copy of the BPS Complaints Management Policy
- Investigate and provide a response as soon as possible
- Make every effort to resolve your complaint within 20 school days

RESOLVING A COMPLAINT

The school will work with you to find an appropriate way to resolve the complaint such as:

- An explanation or further information
- Mediation, counselling or other ongoing support

The school will resolve the issue as soon as it can and keep you up to date with progress if it is an ongoing concern.

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APPENDIX 2

Guiding principles

The complaint-handling process reflects the following guiding principles, which are informed by the *Australian/New Zealand Standard – Guidelines for complaint management in organizations (AS/NZS 10002:2014)*.

Visibility	Information about how and where to make a complaint, as well as how a complaint will be handled, will be regularly publicised within the school community. The actions taken to respond to a complaint will be well documented and include the reasons underpinning any decisions made.
Accessibility	Information about how to make a complaint and the school's procedures when responding to a complaint will be easily accessible. The complaint-handling process will be flexible and include the ability to make a complaint in person, by phone and in writing. Support will also be given to parents with special needs, including translations, interpreters and enabling a parent to seek the services of an advocate.
Responsiveness	Receipt of written complaints will be acknowledged by communicating with parents as soon as possible. Complaints will be addressed promptly and the parents kept informed of the progress of their complaint when the matter is complex and will take time to bring to resolution.
Objectivity	Each complaint will be treated in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner.
Cost	There will be no cost to the parent for access to the complaint-handling process at the school, region or central office.
Protection of Privacy	Personally identifiable information concerning the parent will be actively protected from disclosure except where needed in relation to the complaint. This means that the complaint will only be discussed with those directly involved in the complaint-handling process.
Student-focused	The school will be open to feedback including complaints and will show a commitment to resolving complaints with the educational wellbeing of students as the first priority.
Accountability	Schools are required to have a fair, effective and efficient complaint-handling process. Schools are accountable, both internally and externally, for their decision making and complaint-handling performance. Schools need to be able to provide explanations and reasons for their decisions.
Continual Improvement	Parent complaint-handling procedures will be regularly reviewed for improvement. Complaint data and feedback will be used to identify recurrent themes and to implement improvement measures where a need is identified.

APPENDIX 3 Department flowchart

PARENT COMPLAINT FLOWCHART

