CRAIGIEBURN PRIMARY SCHOOL

MANAGING COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES POLICY

Rationale:
Craigieburn Primary School has a commitment to providing a safe and supportive environment for the whole school community. We believe that when a member of our school community has a grievance about any aspect of education and our schools processes and procedures, the issue needs to be addressed in a timely and professional manner that effectively encourages communication, builds trust and resolves issues in a way which is respectful of all the parties involved.

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

Our approach to handling concerns and complaints is based on our intention;
- To build positive and genuine relationships between students, parents and staff.
- To provide a safe and supportive learning environment.
- To provide a safe working environment for all staff.
- To resolve complaints fairly, efficiently, promptly and in accordance with DET guidelines.

Guidelines: (Reference DET Parents Complaint Policy)

It is the responsibility of the school to respond to and address written (letter and email) and verbal (face-to-face and phone) complaints raised by parents from their school community. Schools are required to develop and maintain fair procedures for parent complaint-handling.

The procedures must include:
- Who to contact when making a complaint.
- A description of the actions the school could take once a complaint is received.
- A time frame for acknowledging written complaints and an expected time frame for complaint resolution.
- The types of outcomes that the parent could expect.
- Information about what the school will do if the complaint is not able to be resolved by the school and the options the parent has to take their complaint further.

Schools will consider all parent complaints by:
- Raising the issues in the complaint with relevant staff and/or members of the school community.
- Consulting, where appropriate, with relevant sections of the Department and/or external agencies for technical or other advice.
- Discussing the school’s findings with the parent in an attempt to reach an agreed resolution.
- Considering the engagement of a mediator where a complaint has the potential to become intractable.
Implementation:
The school has a responsibility to:

- Publicise the school’s complaint-handling procedures within the school community and make them readily available.
- Review the school’s complaint-handling procedures regularly.
- Ensure that complaints received are recorded and actions taken to resolve the complaint are well documented.
- Ensure a school record of all complaints, both written and verbal, is maintained at the school.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

Concerns and Complaints covered by the procedures:
These procedures cover concerns and complaints about:
- General issues of student behaviour that are contrary to the school’s code of conduct.
- Incidents of bullying or harassment in the classroom or the school yard.
- Learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning.
- Communication with parents.
- School voluntary contributions fees and payments.
- General administrative issues.
- Any other school-related matters except as detailed below.

Concerns and Complaints Not Covered by the Procedures:
These procedures do not cover matters for which there are existing rights of review or appeal, as detailed in The School Policy and Advisory Guide SPAG
These matters include:
- Student discipline matters involving expulsions.
- Complaints about employee conduct or performance and complaints that should be dealt with by performance management, grievance resolution or disciplinary action.
- Criminal matters will be referred to the appropriate authorities.

Parent Complaints:
Parent complaints are best handled at the school level.

- Parents should not approach other children or parents in an attempt to solve issues at the school.

Schools need to know if you have any concerns about your child’s education. Teaching and learning works best when parents and schools work together to solve any problems.

Before you approach your child's teacher or school:
- Be clear about the issues you want to discuss
- Focus on the facts and the things that affect your child
- Remember you may not have all the facts relating to the matter you want to raise
- Think about how the matter could be resolved
- Be informed by checking the Department and the school's policies and guidelines
- Be realistic about what the school can do.
When addressing parent/guardian concerns or complaints, the Department 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.

**Resolving complaints:**

A principal may contact the regional director and request the region’s intervention to help resolve a complaint. The principal would need to have exhausted the school’s parent grievance procedures and be of the belief that the complaint would not be able to be resolved at the school level. The parent should be advised that their complaint will be handled by personnel from the region.

Where a complaint is found to be justified, schools are able to resolve complaints by:

- An apology or expression of regret.
- A change of decision.
- A change of policy, procedure or practice.
- A refund of parent payments.
- Offering the opportunity for student counselling or other support.

**The school expects a person raising a concern or complaint to:**

- Do so promptly.
- Provide complete and factual information about the concern or complaint.
- Maintain and respect the privacy and confidentiality of all parties.
- Acknowledge that a common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to both parties.
- Act in good faith and in a calm and courteous manner.
- Show respect and understanding of each other’s point of view and value differences.
- Recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced.

**Staff complaints:**

A significant driver in the creation of workplace stress and psychological injuries arises through interpersonal conflict between employees when issues are not successfully resolved at an early stage. At times this will result in individuals moving fairly quickly to formal grievance procedures with claims of unacceptable behaviour. Whilst these provisions are indeed the re for aggrieved employees to utilise, it is more often the case that if sufficient work and determination to resolve difficult issues was engaged in earlier in the process, a great deal of pain and suffering could have been avoided for all parties concerned.

Wherever possible, an early resolution of difficulties and conflict between staff is to be preferred by using a structured and systematic approach to managing the conflict. In the first instance the goal needs to be for the conflicting parties to attempt to address the issues themselves. If unresolved then support from another colleague, a Health and Safety Representative (HSR), or a Union representative can be obtained that may assist in resolving the issues. Should this not be successful then support and assistance from Human Resources (HR) could be obtained to assist with a degree of mediation and even independent mediation should that be deemed preferable. At all times through the process, staff are able to access the services of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider to talk things over with and to look at strategies that may be useful to bring about an early resolution of the conflict.


**Legislation, guidance and Codes of Practice**

*Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*

*Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007*

OHS Advisory Service on 1300 074 715
CPS Procedure for Managing Complaints and Grievances:

Step 1 - Raising Concerns or Complaints:
The concern or complaint should be made to the school administration.
- The complainant should telephone, visit, write a letter or email;
  - The student’s teacher about learning issues and incidents that happen in their class.
  - The Principal if several students are involved.
  - The Principal about issues relating to staff members or complex student issues.
  - The Principal about issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members or
    community members.
- Complainants can seek the services of an advocate.
- All parties involved in addressing a complaint may seek the services of a mediator.

Step 2 - Addressing Concerns and Complaints:
The school administration will make every effort to resolve concerns and complaints by:
- Determining if the complaint is to be handled by the school or the DET processes.
- Referring the complainant to a copy of the school’s concerns and complaints procedures.
- Establishing a timeline for the investigation of the complaint.
- Ensuring that all concerns and complaints will be noted and investigated by the relevant staff.

Step 3 - Possible Resolutions:
If the complaint is substantiated in whole or part, the school administration will offer an appropriate
resolution. Examples could include:
- An explanation or more information
- Mediation, counselling or other support
- An apology, expression of regret
- Change of procedures
- Refund
- If the complaint is not substantiated, the school Principal or his delegate will make contact with= the
  parent.

Step 4 - Referral of Concerns or Complaints:
If a parent is not satisfied that their complaint has been resolved by the school, or if their complaint is about
the principal of the school, they may refer their complaint to the relevant region. The region has
responsibility to respond to parent complaints when:
- A complainant is not satisfied that the complaint has been addressed in accordance with the school’s
  parent complaint-handling processes.
- A complainant is not satisfied that an acceptable resolution has been reached
- The subject of the complaint relates to government educational policy outside the
  responsibility/management of the school
- A school requests assistance to resolve a parent complaint
- The subject of the complaint is the principal of a school.

References:
All concerns and complaints must be addressed in line with the Department’s legislative and regulatory
framework which includes:
- *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*
- Education and Training Reform Regulations 2007
- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
Evaluation:
This policy will be reviewed as a part of the school’s cyclic process or more often if necessary due to changes in legislation or regulations.

This policy was last ratified by School Council in Oct 2016 and will be reviewed 2019.