



# Grievances and Complaints

## POLICY



### Procedure Statement

Every student, staff or community member should feel welcome, supported and emotionally and physically secure at school. The wellbeing of all students, staff and community members is a priority for our school. We understand that you cannot achieve your potential if someone is treating you unfairly, discriminating against you, vilifying, harassing or victimizing you.

Any member of the school community who raises an issue of discrimination, harassment, bullying or vilification in good faith will not be victimised or otherwise unfairly treated or disadvantaged. All complaints of victimisation will be taken seriously, investigated and acted upon as quickly as possible.

### 1. Guidelines

- 1.1 Port Melbourne School encourages all members of the school community to attempt to resolve complaints and concerns through the school.
- 1.2 All complaints will be treated confidentially, fairly and consistently, and resolved as speedily as possible.
- 1.3 Complaints procedures exist to provide an avenue to address unacceptable behaviour.
- 1.4 Complaints procedures are designed to explain what to do if you believe you have been discriminated against, harassed, sexually harassed, bullied, vilified or victimised (for definition please refer to endnote Equal Opportunity and Anti-harassment policy) and your complaint is about your education or employment at PMPS, or goods, services or sport provided by PMPS.

### 2. Implementation

- 2.1 If you are a member of staff: Please refer to the Department's Guidelines for Managing Complaints, Unsatisfactory Performance and Misconduct in relation to:

- Teachers
- Principals
- School Services Staff; and
- VPS staff

These guidelines are located on the Department's HR Web.

- 2.2 **If you are a parent or guardian:** Please refer to Appendix 1 of this document.

- 2.2.1 The Principal will publish a copy of the Parent Complaints brochure in the school newsletter twice yearly.

- 2.3 **If you are a student:** You have the right to be part of a safe and inclusive school that is free of discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, vilification and victimisation. This includes making you feel bad because of your:

- sex
- race
- sexual orientation
- physical features
- religious belief or activity
- carer status
- disability/impairment
- gender identity
- political belief or activity
- personal association with someone who has, or is assumed to have, one of these personal characteristics.

- 2.3.1 If you believe someone is discriminating, harassing, bullying, vilifying or victimising you and it is safe for you to do so, tell the other person to stop their behaviour. Let them know that their behaviour offends you. They may not realise this.
- 2.3.2 If the behaviour doesn't stop or you are not sure what to do, report it to your parent/guardian, a trusted adult, such as a teacher, the Principal or the Student Welfare Coordinator. Remember, you are not alone. If you have a problem or complaint, talking to someone, especially your parents, can help. If you do not want to talk to anyone about it, you can find more information at Kids Help Line, telephone 1800 55 1800.
- 2.3.3 PMPS will treat all reports of misconduct fairly, confidentially and quickly. Only people directly involved in the issue or complaint will be told about it. Each complaint will be investigated to work out whether it is more likely the behaviour happened than not and, if so, how serious it is. Appropriate action to resolve the problem will be taken.
- 2.3.4 The Principal (or his/her delegate) has responsibility for investigating complaints of discrimination, harassment, bullying, vilification and victimisation.
- 2.3.5 Consequences for a student who has bullied or harassed another student may include counselling, the removal of privileges, a parental interview, suspension or expulsion.
- 2.3.6 PMPS will arrange counselling and support, where appropriate or where requested, for any student who has experienced bullying or harassment. Counselling may also be provided for a person who has bullied or harassed another.
- 2.3.7 The school may also need to discuss the incident with parents.
- 2.3.8 PMPS will monitor how the complaint was resolved and the wellbeing of those involved. Further action will be taken if the problem behaviour continues.
- 2.4 We encourage all members of the school community to attempt to resolve complaints and concerns through the school if possible. It is also your right to seek help from outside the school. For example, you can contact the Department's regional office, the Ombudsman or the Equal Opportunity Commission Victoria for information or advice, or to make a complaint.
- 2.5 **Right to appeal/review:** If you are unhappy with the decision about your complaint, you may seek a review of the decision in accordance with departmental procedures.
- 2.6 **Where to obtain help and advice:**
- School complaints contact(s)
  - DEECD contacts including the regional office and Student Wellbeing Branch
  - Equal Opportunity Commission Victoria contact details
  - School Council contacts
  - Parent support contacts
  - Student contacts [help lines]

### 3. **References**

DEECD Sample EO Policy  
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/parentcomplaint.htm>

## **APPENDIX 1 GUIDELINES FOR PARENT COMPLAINTS**

This information is to assist parents who want to raise a concern or make a complaint that is related to their child's education or school.

For information on the Department's policy and guidelines regarding complaints, see:

[Addressing parents' concerns and complaints effectively \(PDF - 525Kb\)](#)

When making a complaint:

- your child's schools should always be your first point of contact
- concerns are best resolved at the school
- the Department expects that most complaints will be resolved by the school.

### **1. How do I raise an issue or make a complaint?**

#### **1.1 Clarify the issue (what is your concern?)**

Before you approach the school or your child's teacher:

- be clear about the topic or issue you want to discuss
- focus on the things that are genuinely affecting your child
- always remain calm and remember you may not have all the facts relating to the circumstances of the topic or issue you wish to discuss
- think about what would be an acceptable outcome for you and your child
- be informed; check the departments policies or guidelines, where relevant
- ask the school for a copy of their complaints policy, if they have one
- for further helpful hints, see: [Parent Complaints - Further Resources and Information](#)

#### **1.2 Contact the school**

There are a number of ways you can raise any concerns you have about your child and their education. You can:

- write a note to your child's teacher outlining your concerns
- make an appointment to speak on the phone or in person with their class teacher, the year level coordinator or home-group teacher; ensuring that you inform the school about the issue you wish to discuss
- consider speaking with the school's student welfare coordinator if you feel that this would be appropriate
- arrange any meeting times or phone calls through the school office (this is more convenient for both you and your child's teacher and does not interrupt teachers during the time they need to be with their students).

The class teacher or year level coordinator, together with any others who may be involved, should be given a reasonable amount of time to take the steps required to resolve or address your concerns. Remember, it may not always be possible to resolve an issue to your complete satisfaction.

#### **1.3 Contact the principal or assistant principal**

Most concerns are resolved by following the first two steps above. However, if the issue remains unresolved after you have approached your child's teacher or other school staff you can then ask to see the assistant principal or principal.

To do this, you will need to request an appointment through the school office. Please note that:

- the principal may ask another senior staff member to speak with you on their behalf
- if a teacher is going to be present at the meeting it is more likely to occur outside of classroom hours.

If your concern is related to issues of school policy, these should be raised more formally (in writing) with the principal or the school council.

#### **1.4 Contact the regional office**

If you still feel that your complaint has not been addressed satisfactorily after speaking to the teacher and the principal, you can then contact the Southern Metropolitan Regional Office on 9794 3555.

A regional community liaison officer will be able to provide you with advice and assistance and, if required, direct your complaint to other regional staff to respond.

The Regional Director will ensure any formal written complaint is reviewed.

It is the regional office's responsibility to:

- ensure that complaints, wherever possible, are resolved at the school
- ensure that procedures at the school are in accordance with the Department's regulatory framework.

The regional office may refer your complaint to other areas or branches within the Department. You will be notified of this and of any major delays in addressing your complaint.

#### **1.5 Contact the Department's central office**

Contact with the Department's central office should only take place if all other steps have not led to a satisfactory resolution. Where possible, all contact should be in writing.

If it is clear that you have not followed the above steps your letter (and your complaint) will be sent to the regional office. You will be contacted if this happens.

## **2. How to lodge a complaint in writing**

You can use the Department's Complaint Lodgment Form to help you to put together all the information you need to submit a complaint in writing, see: [Complaint Lodgment Form \(PDF - 83Kb\)](#)

If you are having difficulties filling out the form you can contact your regional office for assistance.

You can send your complaint by mail, email or fax.

The Department's central office will try to respond within 20 school days. However, the more complex and sensitive the issues you raise, the more time will be needed to investigate or follow up with the relevant parties.

They will let you know if there may be major delays.

#### **Please send your complaint to:**

Deputy Secretary

Office for Government School Education

C/- General Manager, Coordination and Strategy Division

GPO Box 4379

Melbourne Victoria 3001

**Or email:** [community.stakeholders@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:community.stakeholders@edumail.vic.gov.au)

**Or fax:** (03) 9637 2180

### **3. Further options**

You may submit your complaint to an external agency such as the Victorian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission if you feel that your issue has not been dealt with appropriately by the Department for details.