



PROCEDURES FOR MANAGING PARENTAL COMPLAINTS

Schools are very busy places – there are lots of things that happen, and there are many decisions made every day. At the same time, the community is quite diverse, with many individuals or groups having vastly different opinions on how things should be done. It is inevitable, therefore, that situations will arise when some parents agree with the school's actions, whilst others disagree and wish to discuss the matter with the school. At Boolarra Primary School we welcome this feedback and encourage parents to raise issues so they can be dealt with speedily and resolved to the best of our capacity.

The following procedures have been developed by our School Council to assist parents in handling concerns:

Step 1: Get All the Facts:

Raise the matter with the school via telephone, diary entry or written communication, remembering that you have one side of an issue, others will have another side.

Arrange a mutually convenient time to speak with the Class Teacher, Coordinator or the appropriate staff member, depending on the particular concern. Personnel in the school office will be able to advise whom it is best to speak to if you are uncertain. You can always follow up your concern with other people in the school later if necessary but in the first instance it is a good idea to speak to the school personnel directly involved so that you get a more complete picture of what has occurred. Please do not attempt to meet with the staff during class time, as the children in their care require their undivided attention. Staff will always be willing to meet with you before or after class or during planning time if you set up an appointment.

Step 2: Let the School Know / Further Investigation:

If the issue is not resolved following initial discussion, make an appointment to see the Principal. Inform the Principal of the nature of the issue. The Principal will explain the course of action they will take with regard to the matter you raise – usually this will involve some further investigation on the part of the Principal. The Principal will give a commitment to get back in contact with you regarding the matter to relay what they have discovered and advise what further action will be undertaken. It is important that all parties be sure to really listen to each other to assist in the speedy resolution of the problem. Following on from the meeting with the Principal you may need to:

- Be prepared to monitor the situation with follow up phone calls or meetings
Be available for further discussions with appropriate people at school
- Consider involving the support of outside agencies such as Guidance Officers or Social Workers. This can also be arranged through the Principal.

Step 3: Hopefully - Resolution

At this stage it is hoped that agreement will be reached with regard to the concern – even if the agreement is that all parties agree to disagree. However, if it is not possible to reach some form of agreement, an independent mediator will be brought in to assist (the Principal can initiate

this for you). This would most likely be the Senior Education Officer (SEO) for our District. All parties would then need to follow the process as managed by the SEO.

Please Note: The Regional Director for the Department of Education in Gippsland has advised that the role of Regional staff is to provide additional advice, support and feedback to the school in seeking a positive solution but that all issues and complaints must ultimately be resolved at the school level and the Principal is the key person in seeking a satisfactory outcome.

Things to Remember:

- ❖ Problems are best resolved using a positive attitude. Anger is usually counter-productive to solving problems.
- ❖ People need time to investigate and resolve problems; a quick fix is not always possible or desirable.
- ❖ Schools are large and complex organizations – decisions will seldom suit everyone.
- ❖ There are always at least two sides to every story – with children there are often as many stories as there are children.
- ❖ Not all disagreements can be resolved – sometimes we do just have to agree to disagree.
- ❖ Opinions vary a great deal – disagreement is a natural part of life.
- ❖ Everybody is doing what they believe is right, even if it's different to what we think.
- ❖ There are no silly questions – ask anything! It is always better to ask and learn than to wonder or misconstrue.
- ❖ It can be the sign of a very healthy school if there are people challenging what is happening, it means that we are exploring all our options so that we can do the best possible job!

At Boolarra Primary School we are committed to seek a resolution to all concerns sensitively and with a commitment to listening and responding positively.

<p>This policy was ratified at the School Council meeting of August 2014. This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three year review cycle.</p>
