



## COMPLAINTS POLICY

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide an outline of the complaints process at Gardenvale Primary School 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 complaints and concerns regarding Gardenvale Primary School are managed in a timely, effective, fair and respectful manner.

### SCOPE

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

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

- Complaints and concerns relating to fraud and corruption will be managed in accordance with the department's [Fraud and Corruption Policy](#)
- Criminal matters will be referred to Victorian Police
- Legal claims will be referred to the Department's Legal Division

Complaints and concerns relating to child abuse will be managed in accordance with our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures.

<https://www.gardenvaleps.vic.edu.au/policies>

### POLICY

Gardenvale Primary School welcomes feedback, both positive and negative, and is committed to continuous improvement. We value open communication with our families and are committed to understanding complaints and addressing them 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 it is in the best interests of students for there to be a trusting relationship between families and our school.

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

- be considerate of each other's views and respect each other's role
- be focused on resolution of the complaint, with the interests of the student involved at the centre
- act in good faith and cooperation
- behave with respect and courtesy
- respect the privacy and confidentiality of those involved, as appropriate
- operate within and seek reasonable resolutions that comply with any applicable legislation and Department policy.



- recognise that schools and the Department may be subject to legal constraints on their ability to act or disclose information in some circumstances.

### Complaints and concerns process for students

Gardenvale Primary School acknowledges that issues or concerns can cause stress or worry for students and impact their wellbeing and learning. Gardenvale Primary School 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, for example, with their classroom teacher, Year Level Coordinator, Specialist staff, Education Aide, Assistant Principals/Principal. This person will take the concern or complaint seriously and will explain to the student what steps can be taken to try to resolve the issue and support them.

A student can also ask their parent, carer or another trusted adult outside of the school, to talk to us about the issue instead. Information about our parent/carer complaints and concerns process is outlined further below. The parent/carer process also applies to students who are mature minors, refer to: [Mature Minors and Decision Making](#).

Other ways students can raise a concern or complaint with the school include:

- talking to a member of the Student Representative Council or Peer Mediators about the concern and any suggestions they have for resolving it
- participating in our Attitudes to School Survey (for Grades 4-6)

Further information and resources to support students to raise issues or concerns are available at:

- [Report Racism Hotline](#) (call 1800 722 476) – this hotline enables students to report concerns 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

Gardenvale 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 they may not have all the facts relating to the issues raised
- consider in advance how the matter could be resolved
- be informed by checking the policies and guidelines set by the Department and Gardenvale Primary School (see “Further Information and Resources” section below).

#### Support Person

Complainants are welcome to have a support person to assist them in raising a complaint or concern with our school. Please advise us if this is the case and provide that support person’s name, contact details, and their relationship to you.



## Raising a concern

Gardenvale Primary School is always happy to discuss with parents/carers and community members any concerns that they may have. For matters involving a particular child or an issue of everyday class operation, parents should make an appointment to see the relevant teacher, detailing the reason for the appointment. Where possible, school staff will work with the complainant to ensure that their concerns are appropriately addressed.

## Making a complaint

Where concerns cannot be resolved in this way, parents or community members may wish to make a formal complaint to the Principal or Assistant Principal.

In most cases, depending on the nature of the complaint raised, our school will first seek to understand the issues and will then convene a resolution meeting with the aim of resolving the formal complaint together. The following process will apply:

1. **Complaint received:** Please either email, telephone or arrange a meeting through the office with the Assistant Principal or Principal, to outline the complaint so that we can fully understand what the issues are. We can discuss the complaint in a way that is convenient, 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 properly understand the situation. This process may also involve speaking to others to obtain details about the situation or the concerns raised.
3. **Response:** Where possible, a resolution meeting will be arranged with the Assistant Principal/Principal to discuss the complaint with the objective of reaching a resolution satisfactory to all parties. If after the resolution meeting we are unable to resolve the complaint together, we will work with the person to produce a written summary of the complaint in the event that further action is required. In some circumstances, the Principal may determine that a resolution meeting may not be appropriate. In this situation, a response to the complaint will be provided in writing.
4. **Timelines:** Gardenvale Primary School will acknowledge receipt a complaint as soon as possible (usually within two school days) and will seek to resolve complaints in a timely manner. Depending on the complexity of the complaint, Gardenvale Primary School may need some time to gather enough information to fully understand the circumstances of the complaint. We will endeavour to complete any necessary information gathering and hold a resolution meeting where appropriate within 10 working days of the complaint being raised. In situations where further time is required, Gardenvale Primary School will advise the person 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, the issue or complaint may be solved by:



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- 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 that are intended to support the student, parent and school relationship, engagement, and participation in the school community.

In some circumstances, Gardenvale Primary School may also request attendance a meeting with an independent third party, or participate in a mediation with an accredited mediator to assist in the resolution of the dispute.

### Escalation

If complainant is not satisfied that their complaint has been resolved by the school, or if their complaint is about the Principal and the person does not want to raise it directly with them, then the complaint should be referred to the South Eastern Region, DET by contacting, **Phone:** 1300 338 738, **Email:** [sevr@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:sevr@edumail.vic.gov.au)

Gardenvale Primary School may also refer a complaint to South Eastern Region if we believe that 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: [Parent complaints policy](#).

For more information about the Department's parent complaints process, 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:

- 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.

### 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](#)

### POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL



GARDENVALE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Policy last reviewed	August 2022
Consultation	Education Sub-Committee – 8/8/22
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	August 2024