# COMPLAINTS POLICY

**Help for non-English speakers**

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact the school office.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide an outline of the complaints process at Auburn South Primary School so that 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 regarding Auburn South 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. This policy also outlines the process for appeals against decisions related to the International Baccalaureate (IB) Primary Years Programme (PYP).

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.

## POLICY

Auburn South 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 and addressing complaints and managing appeals through a formal review process. We recognise that the complaints process provides an important opportunity for reflection and learning.

**Complaints vs Appeals:** A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about a service, action or decision. An appeal is a formal request for a review of a decision made by the school in relation to the IB Primary Years Programme (PYP). Appeals will be managed fairly, transparently, and in alignment with IB principles and school policies.
Appeals may relate to:

- assessment judgments
- student progression or support arrangements
- participation in key PYP components (e.g. Exhibition, action)
- implementation of IB-aligned school policies and expectations

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 student-focused
- be resolution focused and attempt to preserve working relationships
- act co-operatively and in good faith
- behave with respect and courtesy
- be inclusive, considerate, and respect the cultural safety of all people, including Aboriginal people, and the human rights of all parties including but not limited to disability, age, race, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, and marital status
- consider communication needs and preferences
- ensure that complainants and students related to complainants are not victimised for making a complaint or asserting their rights
- respect the privacy and confidentiality of those involved unless permitted or required to share information by law
- operate within and seek reasonable resolutions that comply with all applicable legislation and department policies.

## Complaints and concerns process for students

Auburn South Primary School acknowledges that issues or concerns can cause stress or worry for students and impact their wellbeing and learning. Auburn South 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 your classroom teacher, Year Level Coordinators or members of the school's principal team. This person will take your concern or complaint seriously and will explain to you what steps we can take to try to resolve the issue and support you. Students can also

request a review (appeal) of a decision related to their learning in the PYP. A trusted adult at school can help you understand how to do this and support you through the process.

You can also ask your 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 you can raise a concern or complaint with us include:

- talking to a member of the student representative council about your concern and any suggestions you have for resolving it
- participating in our Attitudes to School Survey (Years 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 concern or complaint*

Auburn South Primary School encourages parents, carers or members of the community who may wish to submit a complaint to:

- carefully consider the issues you would like to discuss
- remember you may not have all the facts relating to the issues that you want to raise
- think about how the matter could be resolved
- be informed by checking the policies and guidelines set by the Department and Auburn South Primary School (See "Further Information and Resources" section below).

### *Support person*

You are welcome to have a support person to assist you in raising a complaint or concern with our school. Please advise us if you wish to have a support person to assist you, and provide their name, contact details, and their relationship to you.

### *Raising a concern*

Auburn South Primary School is always happy to discuss with parents/carers and community members any concerns that they may have. Concerns in the first instance should be

directed to your child's teacher, Assistant Principal or Principal. Where possible, school staff will work with you to ensure that your concerns are appropriately addressed.

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.

If you would like to make a formal complaint, 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 complaint together. The following process will apply:

1. **Complaint received:** Please either email, telephone or arrange a meeting through the front office with the Assistant Principal or Principal, to outline your complaint so that we can fully understand what the issues are. We can discuss your complaint in a way that is convenient for you, whether in writing, in person or over the phone.

2. **Timelines:** Auburn South Primary School will acknowledge receipt of your complaint as soon as possible (within three school days) and will seek to resolve complaints in a timely manner. Depending on the complexity of the complaint, Auburn South Primary School may need some time to gather enough information to fully understand the circumstances of your complaint. We will endeavour to complete any necessary information gathering and hold a resolution meeting where appropriate within 10 working days of the acknowledgement of the complaint being sent. In situations where further time is required, Auburn South Primary School will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

3. **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.

4. **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 you to produce a written summary of the complaint in the event you would like to take further action about it. In some circumstances, the Principal may determine that a resolution meeting would not be appropriate. In this situation, a response to the complaint will be provided in writing.

Please note that unreasonable conduct (e.g. vexatious complaints) may need to be managed differently to the procedures in this policy.

***Resolution***

Where appropriate, Auburn South Primary School may seek to resolve a complaint by:

- 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, Auburn South Primary School may also ask you to attend 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 you are not satisfied that your complaint has been resolved by the school, or if your complaint is about the Principal and you do not want to raise it directly with them, then you may contact the Department by phone on 1800 338 663, via the Enquiries form, or by email at enquiries@education.vic.gov.au

More information is available at Make a complaint about your school. Auburn South Primary School may also refer a complaint to the North Eastern Victoria Region if we believe that we have done all we can to address the complaint.

For more information about the Department's parent complaints process, including the role of the Regional Office, please see: Make a complaint about your school.

### *Review of complaints*

Auburn South School will consider whether complaints relating to child safety identify any causes or systemic child safety risks, and take steps to address those risks and continuously improve our child safety practices.

### *Record keeping and other requirements*

To meet Department and legal requirements, our school must keep written records of:

- Serious, substantial or unusual complaints
- Records of formal appeals and outcomes will also be maintained
- 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.

### *Appeals Process for IB Programme Decisions*

Auburn South Primary School recognises that students and families have the right to request a formal review of decisions related to the Primary Years Programme (PYP). Appeals are managed separately from the complaints process and follow the procedure outlined below.

1. Informal discussion - Students and/or parents/carers are encouraged to first discuss the decision with the relevant teacher.
2. Formal appeal request - A written appeal can be submitted to the Assistant Principal or Principal outlining the decision and reasons.
3. Acknowledgement - The school will acknowledge receipt within 3 school days.
4. Review process - The appeal will be reviewed by a member of the leadership team not directly involved where possible.
5. Outcome - A written outcome will be provided within 10 school days where possible.
6. Escalation - Further review may be requested or referred to the Department.

## COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on school website
- Included in staff induction processes
- Annual reference in school newsletter
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

## 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

Local Auburn South Primary School Policies

- Statement of Values and School Philosophy

## POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

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| Policy last reviewed | March 2026 |
| Consultation | School Council |
| Approved by | Principal |
| Next scheduled review date | March 2028 |