



## COMPLAINTS POLICY



### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide an outline of the complaints process at Foster Primary School so that parents, carers, students and members of the school community are informed of how they can raise complaints or concerns about issues arising at our school;
- ensure that all complaints regarding Foster Primary School are managed in a timely, effective, fair and respectful manner.

### SCOPE

This policy relates to complaints brought by parents, carers, students or members of the community (ie., volunteers and visitors) and applies to all matters relating to our school. In some limited instances, we may need to refer the complainant to another Department of Education and Training process where there are different mechanisms in place to review certain decisions (ie., expulsion appeals.)

### POLICY

Foster Primary School values open communication with our families and members of the community. We are committed to understanding complaints and addressing them appropriately and recognise that this 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/members of the community and our school.

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

- raise and discuss issues in a courteous and respectful manner;
- acknowledge that the goal is to achieve an outcome that is in the affected student's best interests and acceptable to all parties;
- act in good faith and respect the privacy and confidentiality of those involved (ie., keeping the matter between impacted parties);
- recognise that all parties, including the broader school community, have rights and responsibilities that must be balanced;
- recognise that Foster Primary School and the Department are subject to legal constraints on their ability to act or disclose information in some circumstances (ie., personal information about another party.)

### Preparation for Raising a Concern or Complaint

Foster 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 and think about whether it is feedback or a complaint;
- remember you may not have all the facts relating to the issues that you want to raise, so keep an open mind;
- think about how the matter could be resolved/what sort of resolution might be acceptable (ie., apology);
- be informed by checking the policies and guidelines set by the Department and Foster Primary School (see “Further Information and Resources” section below).

## Complaints Process

Foster Primary School is always happy to discuss with parents/carers and community members any concerns that they may have.

If it is appropriate, have the affected children try to resolve the issue between them without any intervention from the parents/carers or school. If this has been attempted and not successful, or it is not appropriate for the students to resolve the issue amongst themselves, concerns should then be directed to the affected child’s/children’s teacher. Where possible, school staff will work with you to ensure that your concerns are appropriately addressed.

If the complaint is about a teacher or the Principal and you have tried to address the issue directly and been unsuccessful or it is inappropriate to raise the issue directly, the issue relating to a teacher should be raised with the Principal. Where the complaint is about the Principal and cannot be resolved directly, refer to the Escalation Section of this policy.

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:** We can discuss your complaint in a way that is convenient for you, either in writing, in person or over the phone. Please either email, telephone or arrange a meeting through the office with the Principal, to outline your complaint so that we can fully understand what the issues are.
2. **Information gathering:** Depending on the issues raised in the complaint, the Principal, 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 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.

4. **Timelines:** Foster Primary School will acknowledge receipt of your complaint as soon as possible (usually within 48 hours) and will seek to resolve complaints in a timely manner. Depending on the complexity of the complaint, we 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 complaint being raised. In situations where further time is required, we will inform you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

## **Resolution**

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

- an apology or expression of regret (could be verbal or written)
- a change of decision (ie., not to suspend/expel a student)
- 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, Foster 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 a parent, carer or community member is not satisfied that their complaint has been resolved by the school, or if their complaint is about the Principal, then the complaint should be referred to the South Eastern Victoria Region Department by contacting Moe Regional Office on 03 5127 0400.

Foster Primary School may also refer a complaint to the South Eastern Victoria Region Department if we believe that we have done all we can to address the complaint. The complainant will be notified if this is the case.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES**

For more information about the Department's *Parent Complaints* policy, including the role of the Department's Regional Office, please see: [Parent complaints policy](#).