

SCHOOL NO. 4401 - KATANDRA WEST

Policy Statement: ENVIRONMENT
 670 - SCHOOL COMMUNITY CODE OF CONDUCT

Responsibility: Principal, Parents & Friends, Staff and School Council.

This Policy was last ratified by School Council in 2012.

1. PURPOSE:

Our school has both a desire and a responsibility to ensure that high standards of conduct are maintained by staff, students and parents at all times, and that complaints are managed and resolved fairly, efficiently, promptly and in accordance with relative legislation. We aim to provide a harmonious, positive and productive school environment.

2. GUIDELINES:

- 2.1 Our school seeks to provide a positive, harmonious and productive environment.
- 2.2 It is the Principal's responsibility to provide a healthy and positive school environment that is free from discrimination and harassment. In doing so, Principal's must ensure that all staff and parents are aware of their rights and responsibilities.
- 2.3 The principal is required to use local complaints resolution procedures, where appropriate, for resolving complaints in relation to issues that fall within the school's area of responsibility. All cases of serious misconduct – sexual offences, criminal charges, or other serious incidents – must instead be referred to the DEECD Complaints and Investigations Unit.
- 2.4 It is incumbent upon the principal to act where unacceptable conduct is observed or brought to his or her attention.
- 2.5 A complainant may at any stage choose to take their complaint directly to an external agency such as the Merit Protection Boards, Victorian Equal Opportunity Commission, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission or the Ombudsman.
- 2.6 It is important that all complaints, ensuing procedures and outcomes are fully documented.
- 2.7 The principal may choose to respond to a complaint through an informal process in cases where the complaint is minor, the complainant wishes the matter to be dealt with informally, or the complaint has arisen from lack of or unclear communication.
- 2.8 Formal processes will be used when informal processes haven't been successful, a complainant seeks a formal process, or the principal believes the complaint warrants formal investigation.

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- 2.9 Full details regarding formal complaint resolution procedures are contained within the DEECD ‘Local Complaints Resolution Procedures’ handbook, and contain the following steps.
- 2.10 The formal process involves: -
 - 1. Investigating the complaint including formal interviews, written statements, conveying the details of the complaint to the respondent in writing and providing the opportunity for a written response.
 - 2. Dismissing or accepting the complaint. Acceptance may involve the Complaints & Investigations Unit, verbal or written warnings, conciliation, or counselling etc.
 - 3. Preparation of a detailed confidential report.
 - 4. Monitoring of the situation.
- 2.11 Parties dissatisfied with the process can appeal to the previously mentioned external agencies.
- 2.12 All matters must be treated with utmost confidentiality, and professional respect at all times.
- 2.13 The School Council President will be kept informed of all complaints.
- 2.14 This Policy may be varied by the Principal, if circumstances require it, in consultation with School Council.

Everybody has rights.

- You have the right to expect that your concerns will be listened to respectfully and taken seriously.
- Your school has the right to expect that you approach any discussions or negotiations with an open mind and genuine interest to resolve the issue fairly.
- The children in our care have the right to expect a safe and supportive environment, and that at all times their welfare will be the highest priority of parents and school.
- Together we can work it out.

Why Do Issues Arise?

- Schools are a very busy place – there are often 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 occasions will arise when some parents agree with the school's actions while others disagree and wish to discuss the matter with the school.
- We welcome such discussions, and encourage parents to raise issues so that they can be dealt with speedily and resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned.
- Complaints, after all, are not a negative experience – so long as they are dealt with positively by everybody.
- The following process for presenting and managing parental concerns has been developed by School Council.
- We believe it works well and it is the way we manage all concerns at school.

Agreed Process To Resolve Issues.

The following procedures are to be used to resolve issues or concerns at our school.

STEP 1

Try and find out the facts before contacting the school. Many concerns are quickly resolved once the parent is aware of all the facts.

STEP 2

Let the school know via letter, telephone or in person that you have a concern, providing details of the issue.

STEP 3

The school WILL investigate the concern and the most appropriate person will contact you to discuss the matter, or to organise a meeting. Almost 100% of problems are resolved at this point.

STEP 4

If, however, the matter remains unresolved, we encourage you to come back and meet with us again or make a formal appointment to discuss the issue with the Principal. We aim to keep open communication.

Things to always remember.

- Problems are best resolved using a positive attitude. Anger is counter productive to solving problems.
- People need time to investigate and resolve many problems; a quick fix is not always possible or desirable.
- Schools are complex and very few decisions will suit everybody.
- There are at least two sides to every story – with students there are often as many stories as there are children.
- Not all disagreements can be resolved – sometimes we simply have to agree to disagree.
- Opinions vary widely – disagreement is a natural part of life.
- Everybody aims to achieve the best possible outcome for all involved in the school community.