

## COMPLAINTS POLICY

“FOR BETTER OR WORSE TELL US FIRST”



If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact Michele Chng from our EAL Team who will arrange an interpreter for you.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

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

### DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this policy the following terms are defined as follows:

- A **'parent'**, in relation to a child, includes a guardian and any person who has parental responsibility for the child including parental responsibility under the Family Law Act of the Commonwealth, and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides.
  - This policy also applies to:
    - a person who is authorised to act on behalf of the parent such as a support person or an advocate
    - a mature minor student
    - an adult student.
- A **'complaint'** is an expression of dissatisfaction, either written or verbal, with an action taken, decision made, or service provided, or the failure to provide a service, take action or make a decision at a school.
- A **'complainant'** is the party making the complaint.
- A **'support person'** is someone who assists the complainant through the complaint process.
- An **'advocate'** is someone acting on behalf of the complainant.
- The **'Department'** refers to school, regional and central office staff of the Department of Education and Training.
- A **'designated regional officer'** is the relevant subject matter expert.

## 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.

## POLICY

Kangaroo Flat 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

Kangaroo Flat Primary School acknowledges that issues or concerns can cause stress or worry for students and impact their wellbeing and learning. Kangaroo Flat 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, education support staff or multicultural aides, or a member from the Wellbeing team such as Kim Anketell (Mental Health in Primary Schools Coordinator) or Rose Ryan (Chaplain). 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.

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:

- participating in our Attitudes to School Survey (for Grades 4-6)
- participating in our student forums held every term
- writing a note for our anonymous student suggestions box at our school office

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

Kangaroo Flat 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 of Education & Training and Kangaroo Flat Primary School.

### Complaints process

A positive relationship between students, parents and school staff is critical in realising and maintaining the best possible educational outcomes.

Complaints can be resolved early when a concern is first raised with the person responsible for the situation. The Department provides a three-step framework to help resolve complaints:

1. **Raise the complaint with the school** – If the matter relates to a teacher, school or principal, the complainant raises it with them first. This will typically result in the quickest response and is often in the best interests of the student.
2. **Raise the complaint with the regional office** – If a mutually agreed resolution cannot be reached or the complainant feels uncomfortable raising the complaint directly with the school, they can escalate the complaint to the local regional office for resolution.  
DET North West Victoria Region – Bendigo office ph: 1300 338 691 or  
Email: [nwvr@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:nwvr@education.vic.gov.au)

- 3. Raise the complaint with the central office** – If the matter still cannot be resolved by the regional office, the complaint can be further escalated to the Department’s central office or the Department may refer the matter to the Independent Office for School Dispute Resolution (Independent Office).

Kangaroo Flat 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 either your child’s Classroom teacher or Principal/Assistant 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/Assistant Principal, noting that formal complaints should be directed to a member of the school’s leadership team.

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 telephone or arrange a meeting through the front office, with the Principal/Assistant 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. 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 Principal/Assistant 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:** Kangaroo Flat Primary School will acknowledge receipt of your complaint as soon as possible and will seek to resolve complaints in a timely manner. Depending on the complexity of the complaint, Kangaroo Flat 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 complaint being raised. In situations where further time is required, Kangaroo Flat Primary School will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

## Resolution

Where appropriate, Kangaroo Flat 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, Kangaroo Flat 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 the complaint should be referred to the North West Victorian region by contacting 1300 338 691.

Kangaroo Flat Primary School may also refer a complaint to North West Victorian region if we believe that we have done all we can to address the complaint.

## 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.

## COMMUNICATION

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

- Available publicly on school website
- Included in staff induction processes
- Included in our staff handbook/manual
- Included in transition and enrolment packs
- Annual reference in school newsletter
- Discussed at student forums/through communication tools
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request



KANGAROO FLAT PRIMARY SCHOOL

## POLICY REVIEW PERIOD AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	November 2022
Consultation	Leadership Team United Classrooms – student forum Promoted in school newsletter.
Approved by	Principal
Next review Date.	November 2024