



# Bungaree Primary School Concerns and Complaints Policy



## Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact the office on 5334 0253.

## Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide an outline of the complaints process at Bungaree 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 Bungaree 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.

## Policy

Bungaree 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; and
- 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**

Bungaree Primary School acknowledges that issues or concerns can cause stress or worry for students and impact their wellbeing and learning. Bungaree 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 or Principal. 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:

- talking to a member of the Junior School Council about your concern and any suggestions you 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***

Bungaree 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 Bungaree 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***

Bungaree 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 the Principal. Where possible, school staff will work with you to ensure that your 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.

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 Office with the 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 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 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:** Bungaree Primary School will acknowledge receipt of your 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, Bungaree 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, Bungaree Primary School will consult with you 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, Bungaree 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, Bungaree 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 Department of Education Regional Office (Ballarat) by contacting 1300 333 232.

Bungaree Primary School may also refer a complaint to the Department of Education Regional Office (Ballarat) 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: [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; and
- 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:

- Provided to staff at induction
- Discussed at staff meetings/briefings as required
- Made available publicly on our school website
- Included as annual reference in school newsletter
- Made available in hard copy from school administration upon request.

## Related Policies 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](#)

Bungaree Primary School Policies:

- Statement of Values and School Philosophy Policy
- Communication with School Staff Policy
- Respect for School Staff Policy.

## Policy Review and Approval

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| Created date         | September, 2023                           |
| Consultation         | Staff and School Council, September, 2023 |
| Endorsed/Ratified by | Principal and School Council              |
| Endorsed/Ratified on | September, 2023                           |
| Next review date     | September, 2025                           |



# Bungaree Primary School Concerns and Complaints Advice for Parents

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## **Step 1. Think about the problem.**

- Before you approach the school it is important to be clear about the issue you wish to raise. Focus on the things that genuinely affect your child.
- It is easy to become emotional when discussing an issue involving your child, but it is really important to remain calm and be prepared to listen to additional information or circumstances you may not have been aware of.
- Think about what the school might be able to do to help. What would be an acceptable outcome for you and your child?
- Checking school and Department of Education and Training (DET) policies and guidelines might help you clarify the situation.
- Remember, the school wants a happy, respectful environment for everyone and staff want to work with parents and students to achieve the best outcome for all.

## **Step 2. Contact your child's teacher.**

- A brief note outlining your concerns will bring the teacher's attention to the issue, and may be all that is necessary to resolve the issue.
- Or, call the school to arrange an appointment with the teacher to discuss the matter over the phone or in person. Let them know beforehand what you wish to speak about.
- Once you have spoken with the teacher, give them a reasonable amount of time to address your concern.

*Issue resolved? That's great! Thanks for taking the time to contact the school directly.*

*Issue unresolved? Go to Step 3.*

## **Step 3. Contact the Principal.**

- If the issue remains unresolved after discussion with your child's teacher, you should make an appointment with the Principal.
- If a classroom teacher or other staff member is to be involved, the meeting will probably be after school hours.
- Again, please give the Principal and staff time to fully explore your concern and find the most suitable outcome.
- It is important that your conversation with the school remain calm and respectful. If you find it difficult to discuss your complaint or concern in person, please write/email your concerns and post or deliver it to the school office.

*Issue resolved? You and your child are important members of the school community, and it's great that we could help.*

*Issue unresolved? Go to Step 4.*

## **Step 4. Contact the Regional Office.**

If you have been unable to resolve the issue after speaking with the Principal, you can contact the Department of Education and Training's Regional Office on 1300 333 232 and ask to speak with a Community Liaison Officer.

Someone will then be able to provide you with advice and assistance. They may direct your complaint to other staff or another branch within the Department. They may also ask you to submit a formal, written complaint to be reviewed.

The Regional Office will work with you and the school to resolve the issue.

*Issue resolved? It's great that we can all support each other to find a resolution.*

*Issue unresolved? Go to Step 5.*

## **Step 5. Contact the Central Office.**

- Contact with the DET Central Office should only be considered when all other steps have been explored.
- This contact should be made in writing, using the Department's Parent Complaint Form, available from <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/contact/parentcomplaintform.pdf>
- If you would like further information, please visit <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/complaininfo.aspx>

