



Communication & Complaints Policy

Rationale

Brunswick North West Primary School (BNWPS) encourages open discussion across the community, especially between parents/caregivers and staff. As in all communities, there may be times of disagreement and issues of concern that need to be resolved and it is important to understand who to approach.

In most cases, especially when the issue relates directly to the classroom, issues can be resolved through discussion with the relevant teacher. However there are times when a concern needs to be taken further.

This policy aims to maintain strong, positive relationships between the school, parents and caregivers by outlining procedures to effectively manage complaints and to ensure the continuation of a safe and supportive learning environment for students, staff and community members.

Communication

Clear and regular communication between school and home is vital to optimizing learning experiences of our children. Positive communication requires the active participation of all stakeholders, together with respect and empathy regarding each stakeholder's perspective.

It is an expectation that all parents, caregivers and staff communicate openly and respectfully with each other; asking questions and sharing information is an important step to clarifying misunderstandings and avoiding a complaint being formed.

Staff and teachers will endeavor to respond to all communication in a timely manner; however parents and caregivers must respect that no staff member is required to respond to correspondence outside of regular teaching hours.

Complaints

Raising Complaints

Parents and caregivers should feel they are able to raise concerns or complaints about any aspect of the school's operations. Complaints and concerns made by parents will in no way adversely affect their children.

When a concern between two or more students is related to the school or classroom, parents are asked to communicate via the school. Please refrain from speaking about your concerns directly with another parent or student within the school.

ISSUE	WHO TO CONTACT	HOW
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Classroom activities - Class curriculum - Friendship issues - Questions about class or year level operations 	You child's classroom teacher or appropriate specialist teacher	Telephone, Compass, email or in person <i>(*Please note, while we try to maintain an open-door policy, unscheduled meetings cannot be guaranteed. Where possible, and to avoid disappointment, please arrange an appointment.)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - OSHC related concerns 	Refer to OSHC documentation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complex student issues - Student Welfare - School wide Curriculum - Staff Members 	Assistant Principal (Hannah Reid)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School Policy - School Management 	Principal (Trevor Bowen)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School fees & payments - General Inquiries 	Office Staff	



Responsibility of Complainant

A person raising a complaint should:

- a) Do so as soon as possible after the issue occurs;
- b) Provide complete factual information regarding the complaint;
- c) Respect the privacy and confidentiality of all parties;
- d) Acknowledge the common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties;
- e) Act in good faith and in a calm and courteous manner;
- f) Show respect for and understanding of others' points of view, rather than judge or blame;
- g) Recognize that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced.

Responsibility of School

The school will address any complaints received from parents:

- a) Professionally, efficiently and fairly;
- b) Promptly, or within the timeline agreed by all parties;
- c) In accordance with due process, principles of natural justice and the Department's regulatory framework.

Help with Raising Complaints

Complainants can seek the services of an advocate when they feel they are unable to express their complaint clearly. An advocate can be a friend or someone who is available through an appropriate support organisation who does not receive a fee for their service. All parties involved in addressing a complaint may seek the services of a mediator if there is difficulty coming to an agreement.

Timeframe

The school will make every effort to resolve a concern or complaint as quickly as possible. If a complaint involves a number of students and/or a range of issues, the school will require additional time to fully investigate and resolve the complaint.

In the first instance the school will work with the complainant to set a timeframe for resolution. The school will aim to resolve any concern or complaint within twenty working days.

Should the complaint involve complex issues, the school may need to take advice from the Department's Regional Office, which may take additional time. The school will then inform the complainant of the adjusted timeframe and any reasons for the delay.

Complaint Escalation for Parents/Caregivers

If a person with a complaint is not satisfied with the outcome determined by the school, they can contact the Education Department's Regional Office. An officer from the Regional Office will ask for a complete and factual account in writing outlining the concern or complaint and a description about why the school was unable to resolve the problem to satisfaction.

If the complaint cannot be resolved by the person making the complaint, the school and the regional office working together, the regional office may refer it to the Deputy Secretary at the Department's Central Office.

Parents and caregivers should be aware they are able to take their complaint to the Victorian Ombudsman if they are dissatisfied with the outcome or response from the Department, or if they feel their complaint is not being handled appropriately or in a timely manner.



Unresolved Complaints

A complaint is considered to be unresolved if the complainant does not agree of a course of action and/or remedy, or if the remedy cannot be implemented. In such cases, BNWPS must involve the Department’s Regional Office to assist in resolving the complaint.

It may not be possible to fully resolve all complaints to the complainant’s satisfaction. This may happen if the complainant has unreasonable expectations of it the Department’s policies or regulations are contrary to their views.

Anonymous Complaints

BNWPS is required to investigate all complaints. However, staff may not be able to fully investigate a complaint if they cannot effectively liaise with the complainant. Furthermore, anonymous complaints raise issues of natural justice for respondents who have a right to know particulars of the allegations made against them.

The Principal will determine the extent to which an anonymous complaint received by the school shall be investigated. If the anonymous complaint involves the Principal, the Department’s Regional Director will decide whether it should be investigated.

Monitoring Complaints

When the complaint is made verbally, is simple and easily resolved in a quick chat or telephone call, a brief note by the appropriate staff member with details of the issue and the resolution is all that may be required.

For all other complaints, the school will record the following details:

- Name and contact details of the complainant
- A description of the complaint, including date and method through which complaint was made
- Details of the school’s actions in response to the complaint
- The outcome of the actions taken on the complaint
- Any recommendations for future improvements to the school’s policies or procedures

The Principal will monitor parent concerns and complaints and will review the information about complaints made over time to identify common or recurring issues that may need addressing. The Principal, with School Council, will assess the effectiveness of school policies and procedures and whether they are being followed.

All information about complaints and those involved in the complaint are kept in secure school records.

Important Contact Details

OFFICE	ADDRESS	PHONE/EMAIL
Brunswick North West Primary School	Culloden Street, Brunswick West, VIC 3055	(03) 9386 4624 brunswick.nw.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au
Community Liaison Officer, North Western Regional Office (Coburg)	L2 189 Urqhart Street, Coburg VIC 3058	(03) 9488 9488 nwvr@edumail.vic.gov.au
Deputy Secretary, Regional Services Group	2 Treasury Place, East Melbourne VIC 3002	 community.stakeholders@edumail.vic.gov.au
Victorian Ombudsman	L2 570 Bourke Street Melbourne VIC 3000	1800 806 314 (03) 9613 6222 ombudvic@ombudsman.vic.gov.au

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school’s policy review cycle.

