

Vision

Fitzroy High School values children as individual learners who are full of potential and capable of excellence. Our students will be lifelong learners, reflective and creative thinkers, responsible and active citizens, and resilient and adaptable problem solvers able to navigate through an uncertain and constantly changing future. Fitzroy is a learning community where students and teams of teachers work together to:

- Achieve high standards so that all students fulfil their capabilities in academic, intellectual, social, emotional and physical development
- Celebrate diversity and embrace individual differences, including class, culture, race, gender, sexuality and ethnicity
- Build a cohesive, compassionate and proud school community with a productive legacy for the future
- Develop beyond our current capacity through continuous change and review
- Participate in and contribute to our wider community.

Philosophy

Fitzroy High embraces a bold and ambitious dream: striving for excellence and equity. We aim to be a humane learning community in which teachers use relationships to deepen their knowledge of students. This is in order to engage all of them in an intellectually challenging education based on powerful ideas, help them toward social maturity, and prepare them for a life of meaningful possibilities and active participation as Australian and global citizens.

1. School values

The school's approach to handling concerns and complaints is based on our values of:

- Providing a safe and supportive learning environment
- Building relationships between students, parents and staff
- Providing a safe working environment for staff.

2. Concerns and complaints covered by the policy

These procedures cover concerns and complaints about:

- General issues of student behaviour that are contrary to the school's Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- Incidents of bullying or harassment in the classroom or the school yard
- Learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
- School communication with parents
- School fees and payments
- General administrative issues
- Any other school-related matters except as detailed below.

This policy does not apply to matters where rights and processes for review and appeal already exist. These include:

- student expulsions

- complaints about staff that if upheld would constitute misconduct
- student critical incident matters
- other criminal matters

3. Scope

The school has developed its procedures to address concerns and complaints in collaboration with parents and the school community. The procedures are reviewed on a regular basis by School Council

4. Expectations

The school expects a person raising a concern or complaint to:

- Do so promptly, as soon as possible after the issue occurs
- Provide complete and factual information about the concern or complaint
- Maintain and respect the privacy and confidentiality of all parties
- Acknowledge that a common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
- Act in good faith, and in a calm and courteous manner
- Show respect and understanding of each other's point of view and value difference, rather than judge and blame
- Recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced.

The school will address any concerns and complaints received from parents:

Courteously

- Efficiently
- Fairly
- Promptly, or within the timeline agreed with the person with the concern or complaint
- In accordance with due process, principles of natural justice and the Department of Education and Trainings's (DET) regulatory framework.

5. Raising concerns or complaints

In the first instance, a complaint should be made to the school.

The complainant should telephone, visit or write to the:

- Student's teacher or Advisory teacher about learning issues and incidents that happened in their class or group
- Team Leader if students from several classes are involved
- Assistant Principal about issues relating to staff members or complex student issues
- Principal about issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members or very complex student issues.

For contact details for any staff member, call the office on 9488 1900.

If you are not sure who to contact, contact the Assistant Principal on 9488 1900.

For complaints about the Principal, the complainant should telephone, visit or write to the North Western Regional Office of DET on 9488 9488.

6. Help with raising concerns or complaints

Personal support is most appropriate in situations where the complainant and others involved in the complaint process have emotional issues related to the complaint.

Complainants can seek the services of an advocate when they feel they are unable to express their concern clearly. An advocate can be a friend or someone who is available through an appropriate support organisation who does not receive a fee for service.

All parties involved in addressing a complaint may seek the services of a mediator when there is difficulty coming to an agreement.

The school will ensure that the complainant is aware of these supports. A complainant who wishes to use these support services should ensure the person addressing the concern or complaint is aware of their intention and is in agreement.

7. Managing parent concerns and complaints information

- The school will record the following details of all complaints received:
- The name and contact details (with permission) of the person with a concern or complaint
- The date the concern was expressed or complaint made
- The form in which the concern or complaint was received (such as face-to-face, by telephone, in writing, by email)
- A brief description of the concern or complaint
- Details of the school staff member responding to the concern or complaint
- Action taken on the concern or complaint
- The outcome of action taken on the concern or complaint
- Any recommendations for future improvement in the school's policy or procedures.

However, in the first instance when a complaint is easily resolved in a telephone call, a brief note will be made in the school's/principal's/teacher's diary recording the issue and the resolution.

8. Addressing concerns or complaints

The school will make every effort to resolve concerns and complaints before involving other levels of DET.

The school will give a complainant a copy of its complaints procedures.

The school will determine whether a concern or complaint should be managed through the school's concerns and complaints process or through other complaints processes of DET.

All complaints will be noted and acted on promptly by the staff member who receives the complaint. The school will acknowledge all complaints made in writing and provide the complainant with a timeline for investigating the complaint.

The Assistant Principal and or Principal will investigate all complaints and will provide a response to the complainant. The complainant will receive regular updates.

Concerns and complaints about general school matters (such as the timing of events, school policies and facilities) will be addressed by the Principal or a relevant staff member.

The school will make every attempt to resolve a concern or complaint as quickly as possible.

If the complaint involves many students and a range of issues, the school will need more time to investigate and resolve it.

Should the complaint involve complex issues, the school might need to take advice from the DET's regional office which may take more time. The school will inform the complainant of the new timeline for addressing the complaint and the reasons for any delays. In all cases, the school will try to resolve a concern or complaint within 20 school days (4 weeks).

9. Remedies

If a concern or complaint is substantiated in whole or part, the school will offer an appropriate remedy. For example, at its discretion and depending on the circumstances, the school might offer:

- An explanation or further information about the issue
- Mediation, counselling or other support
- An apology, expression of regret or admission of fault
- To change its decision
- To change its policies, procedures or practices
- To cancel a debt (such as for school payments)
- A fee refund.

The school will implement the remedy as soon as practicable.

10. Referral of concerns or complaints

Parents 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 properly or in a timely manner.

When it is unlikely that a complaint will be resolved using the school's complaint-handling procedures the principal will consider seeking advice from the North Western Region.

When a parent is not satisfied with the manner in which their complaint has been treated by the school, or their complaint is about the principal of the school, the parent can contact the North Western Regional Office on 9488 9488

When a complaint remains unresolved after referral to the region, parents are able to request a review of process through the Deputy Secretary, Regional Services Group.

It may not always be possible to resolve all complaints to the parent's satisfaction. This could happen when the nature of the issues raised in the complaint is governed by the Department's policies or guidelines or if the parent has unrealistic expectations about the outcome of their complaint.

When complaints are sent to areas of the Department not identified above, the complaint may be referred to the relevant level as identified in Appendix A

11. Students with a disability

Students with disabilities have rights under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth), the Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Commonwealth) and the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Victoria) to access their education on the same basis as their peers, including the right to reasonable adjustments.

As with all complaints to which this policy applies, parents should raise any concerns or complaints regarding the treatment of a student with a disability with the school in the first instance. The community liaison officer or the regional disabilities coordinator can also provide advice to parents when they are seeking to raise a concern or make a complaint at their school.

Fitzroy High School also recognises that parents of students with a disability can raise complaints or concerns regarding a student with a disability in a number of forums, including:

- the Australian Human Rights Commission - in relation to complaints regarding compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act or the Disability Standards for Education
- the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission - in relation to complaints regarding compliance with the Equal Opportunity Act
- in consultation with the principal and any established student support group, to the Wellbeing, Health and Engagement Division of the Department. This may relate to matters arising under the Program for Students with Disabilities, including applications, Years 6-7 reviews, reappraisals and appeals procedures.

12. Communication and training

The school will make information about procedures for addressing concerns and complaints readily available to parents and the school community, in clear and easy-to-understand language and, where appropriate, in a range of community languages and formats that are accessible to everyone so that no one is disadvantaged.

The information will include:

- How a person can make a complaint
- The person's responsibilities
- Information to be provided by the person
- Who the person should contact and their contact details
- The process and timeframes for managing complaints.
- The school's procedures for addressing concerns and complaints will be communicated to the school community through appropriate means.

The school will:

- Brief all members of staff (including volunteers) about its procedures to address concerns and complaints annually
- Provide staff with (or provide access to) training and support appropriate to their responsibilities under the procedures
- Ensure staff who manage complaints demonstrate the personal attributes outlined in the *Good Practice Guide: Ombudsman Victoria's guide to complaint handling for Victorian public sector agencies*.

13. Monitoring the parents complaint policy

The school will monitor parent concerns and complaints and consider issues raised through the parent complaints process, and any other relevant information from the parent opinion survey, when undertaking a review of the school's policies, procedures and operations.

The school council will regularly review its policy and procedures to effectively address parent concerns and complaints as part of its cyclic policy and procedures review schedule.

The school will review its information about complaints made over time to:

- Identify common or recurring issues that may need addressing
- Assess the effectiveness of these and other procedures and whether they are being followed
- Use information provided to the school through the parent opinion survey on the views of parents.

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References	http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/spag/community/policyparentsconcerns.pdf

Appendix A: Complaints Flowchart

