



Torquay Coast Primary School

Complaints Policy

HELP FOR NON-ENGLISH SPEAKERS

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact Torquay Coast Primary School on 03 5218 5600 or torquay.coast.ps@education.vic.gov.au.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide an outline of the complaints process at Torquay Coast 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 Torquay Coast 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

Torquay Coast 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

Torquay Coast Primary School acknowledges that issues or concerns can cause stress or worry for students and impact their wellbeing and learning. Torquay Coast 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 their classroom teacher, the well-being officer, or Principal Class Officers.

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 student leadership – House and School Captains, 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

Torquay Coast 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 Torquay Coast 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

Torquay Coast 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 your child's teacher, Well Being Officer, then Assistant Principal or 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 a Principal Class Officer.

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 front office with the [Assistant Principal or 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 or their 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 or their delegate 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:** Torquay Coast 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, Torquay Coast 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, Torquay Coast 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, Torquay Coast Primary School may seek to resolve a complaint by:

- The provision of extended information
- an apology or expression of regret from the relevant party
- 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, Torquay Coast 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 South-Western Victoria Region by contacting swvr@education.vic.gov.au or 1300 333 232.

Torquay Coast Primary School may also refer a complaint to South-Western Victoria Region 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
- 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
- Discussed at student forums/through communication tools
- Emailed copy available from school administration upon request

APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: Raising a concern or complain
- Appendix 2: Guiding Principles
- Appendix 3: Department flowchart

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies on the Department's Policy and Advisory Library (PAL):

- [Complaints - Parents](#)

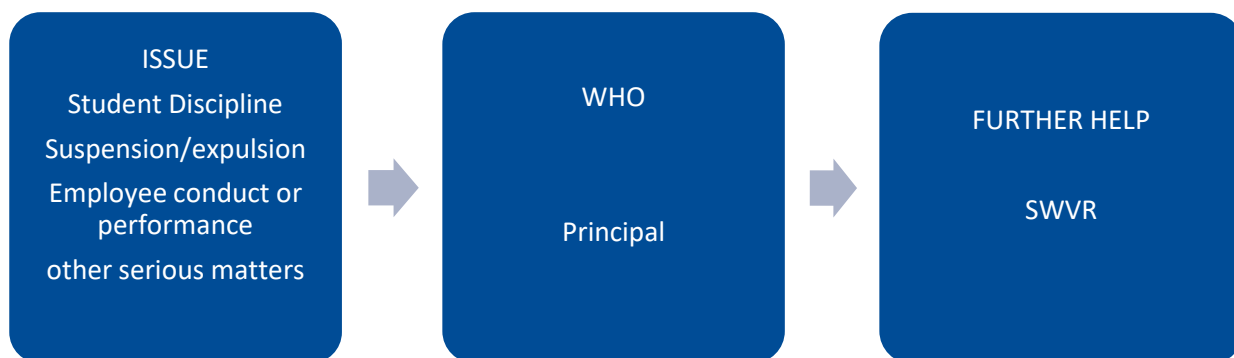
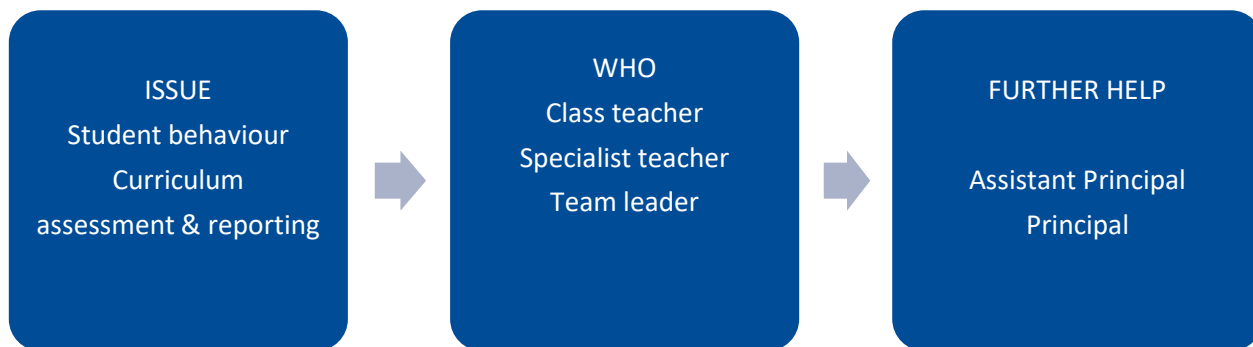
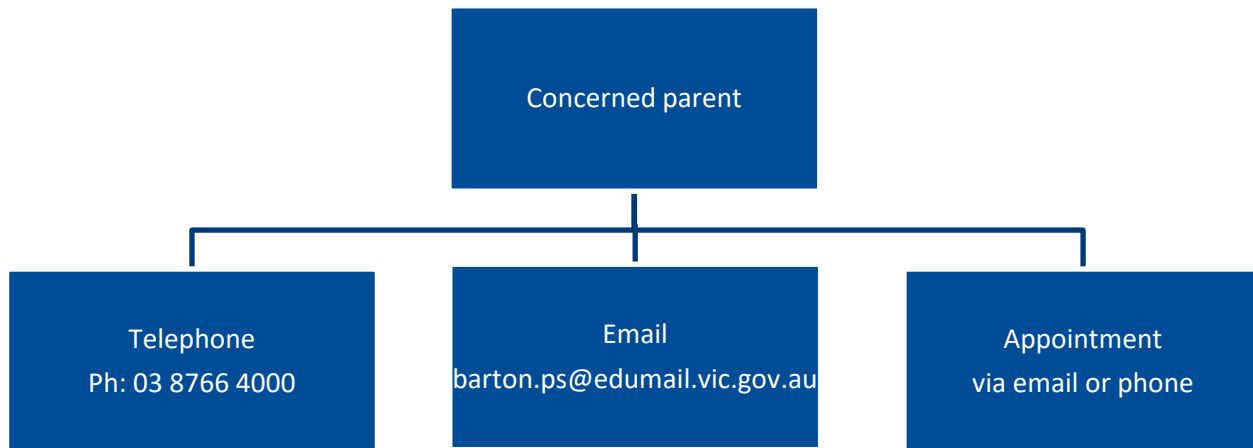
The Department's parents' website:

- [Raise a complaint or concern about your school](#)
- [Report racism or religious discrimination in schools](#)

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	February 2024
Consultation	School Council 2024
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	February 2026

Appendix 1 Raising a Concern or Complaint



A parent/guardian can raise concerns or complaints about any aspect of the school's operation.

PLEASE ...

- Raise your concern as soon as you can after the issue occurs
- Put it in writing, providing detailed factual information
- Maintain and respect everyone's privacy and confidentiality
- Be calm, courteous, honest and sincere

PLEASE ALSO ...

- Recognise everyone has rights and responsibilities that must be balanced
- Respect and understand each other's point of view; value difference rather than judge and blame
- Realise we need to achieve an outcome acceptable to everyone involved

ADDRESSING COMPLAINTS ...

- Our response will be prompt, courteous, efficient and fair. We will follow the process outlined below:
- Acknowledge your complaint by telephone or email and let you know how long it will take to investigate
- Give you a copy of the BPS Complaints Management Policy
- Investigate and provide a response as soon as possible
- Make every effort to resolve your complaint within 20 school days

RESOLVING A COMPLAINT

The school will work with you to find an appropriate way to resolve the complaint such as:

- An explanation or further information
- Mediation, counselling or other ongoing support

The school will resolve the issue as soon as it can and keep you up to date with progress if it is an ongoing concern.

APPENDIX 2

Guiding principles

The complaint-handling process reflects the following guiding principles, which are informed by the *Australian/New Zealand Standard – Guidelines for complaint management in organizations (AS/NZS 10002:2014)*.

Visibility	Information about how and where to make a complaint, as well as how a complaint will be handled, will be regularly publicised within the school community. The actions taken to respond to a complaint will be well documented and include the reasons underpinning any decisions made.
Accessibility	Information about how to make a complaint and the school's procedures when responding to a complaint will be easily accessible. The complaint-handling process will be flexible and include the ability to make a complaint in person, by phone and in writing. Support will also be given to parents with special needs, including translations, interpreters and enabling a parent to seek the services of an advocate.
Responsiveness	<u>Receipt of written complaints will be acknowledged by communicating with parents as soon as possible. Complaints will be addressed promptly and the parents kept informed of the progress of their complaint when the matter is complex and will take time to bring to resolution.</u>
Objectivity	Each complaint will be treated in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner.
Cost	There will be no cost to the parent for access to the complaint-handling process at the school, region or central office.
Protection of Privacy	Personally identifiable information concerning the parent will be actively protected from disclosure except where needed in relation to the complaint. This means that the complaint will only be discussed with those directly involved in the complaint-handling process.
Student-focused	The school will be open to feedback including complaints and will show a commitment to resolving complaints with the educational wellbeing of students as the first priority.
Accountability	Schools are required to have a fair, effective and efficient complaint-handling process. Schools are accountable, both internally and externally, for their decision making and complaint-handling performance. Schools need to be able to provide explanations and reasons for their decisions.
Continual Improvement	Parent complaint-handling procedures will be regularly reviewed for improvement. Complaint data and feedback will be used to identify recurrent themes and to implement improvement measures where a need is identified.

APPENDIX 3 Department flowchart

PARENT COMPLAINT FLOWCHART

