

Complaints and Grievances Policy

The Village School

Registry Number:1836

Scope:	Parents and Guardians, Staff, and all learners
Implemented by:	The Village School Principal
Approved by:	The Village School Board
Review timeline:	Every two years or as necessary based on legislative change, research, policy and best practice.
Communicated via:	The Village School website, parent information package, staff induction/meetings, policy handbook

POLICY STATEMENT

The Village School places a high value on our learners, families and teachers having a voice. We encourage open communication and mutual respect within the Village School community. If parent(s)/guardian(s) have any complaints and/or grievances that they would like to discuss with their learner's teacher, or the school Principal, they can follow the procedures outlined in this policy. Learners and/or parent(s)/guardian(s) can raise a complaint or grievance of a general or specific nature, or a major or minor issue about the welfare or safety of a learner. The Village School aims to engage in a fair process that considers equity for all parties involved and will hear and address all complaints and grievances in a timely and sensitive manner.

A Complaint and/or grievance regarding bullying or violence will be addressed using the procedures as outlined in the Village School's Anti-Bullying Policy. A complaint and/or grievance that includes physical, sexual or emotional abuse will be addressed using the procedures as outlined in the Village School's Child Protection Mandatory Reporting Policy. A complaint and/or grievance that relates to equal opportunity or discrimination will be addressed using the procedures as outlined in the Village School's Equal Opportunity Policy.

PURPOSE

This policy will provide guidelines for:

- receiving and dealing with complaints and grievances at the Village School
- procedures to be followed when investigating complaints
- clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the Village School Staff/Principal/Board when addressing a complaint

DEFINITIONS

Complaint: a reason for not being satisfied

Grievance: something that you think is unfair and that you complain or protest about

Appeal: to make a formal request for a judgement or decision to be changed

Complainant: a person who makes a formal complaint or grievance

Respondent: the person who answers the complaint/grievance and/or the individual against whom the complaint is made

Complaints Register: records information about complaints received at the Village School, together with a record of the outcomes. This register is kept in a secure file, accessible only to educators and responsible persons at the Village School.

PROCEDURES

Steps for responding to complaints:

- Any member of the Village School community can raise a complaint or grievance with the appropriate person. The complainant can get in contact with the respondent via telephone, email, letter, or direct communication. If the complainant needs help accessing a translation or interpreter service or needs to use the national relay service to lodge a complaint or grievance, please get in touch with the school so we can help as best we can.
- If your complaint or grievance relates to classroom management, peer friendships or the learning environment, please contact your learner's classroom teacher directly.
- All other complaints and grievances are to be addressed to the Village School Principal. This might include complaints or grievances about curriculum, more complex learner issues, child safety concerns, learner welfare, breaking code of conduct, staff, school management or policies, enrolment, or any other general concerns
- Complaints and grievances need to be raised in a timely manner
- Details of any complaints and grievances may need to be provided in writing and include as much detail as possible
- When a complaint or grievance is lodged, the privacy and confidentiality of the complainant and all involved persons will be upheld.
- If a complaint or grievance is lodged anonymously there will be limitations on how much further investigation can be done and a resolution will not be communicated to the complainant

If complaint is of a minor nature, such as arising from unclear communication, or the complainant wishes to deal with the matter informally – then an informal process may be used. The resolution process may look like:

- a complainant can communicate directly with the respondent in a calm, clear and courteous manner
- the complainant may seek out advice and strategies from other services for how to deal with their concern
- the complainant may ask another person to communicate on their behalf
- if the above process is followed and the complaint or grievance is not resolved then the formal process will be followed

Steps for lodging a complaint or grievance using the formal process:

- The complainant needs to submit their complaint or grievance, in writing, to their learner's teacher or the school principal
- The complainant will receive a written acknowledgement that the complaint or grievance has been received by the respondent within 48 hours of it being accepted.
- The complaint, grievance or appeal gets recorded in the schools Complaints, Grievances and Appeals Register and lodged with the school Principal.
- The principal will investigate the complaint or grievance. During the investigation they will seek to clarify the context and cause of the complaint or grievance, as well as a possible resolution. This may include clarifying the school policy with the complainant.
- Based on the outcome of the investigation, the school principal will decide on a resolution and determine an appropriate action plan in response to the complaint or grievance or managing the appeal.
- The school principal will provide a written report and communicate with the complainant about a resolution and clear reasons for this decision. It is important that the complainant and respondent focus on reaching a positive resolution.
- The principal continues to monitor the situation and follows up 14 days after the discussion of resolution to see progress and if the complaint or grievance has been resolved.
- If the complaint or grievance is not resolved by this stage, it will be referred to a panel nominated by the school Board.
- If the Principal is the subject of a serious complaint or grievance, then the complaint or grievance should be submitted to the Chairperson of the Village School Board.
- Resolution to the complaint or grievance may include:
 - An explanation or further clarification of the situation
 - Mediation, counselling, or other support
 - An apology to the complainant/persons listed in the complaint or grievance
 - A review of the school's policies, procedures and/or educational practices
 - Reporting the complaint or grievance to an outside agency where appropriate

At the Village School we encourage learners, where they feel comfortable, to voice their concern directly with their teacher. This can avoid miscommunication between the learner, their parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school. Our aim is for complaints and grievances between our families and the school to be resolved quickly, directly, and amicably.

A complaint or grievance may be accepted or dismissed. For either outcome a reason will be always given for the resolution that has been recommended.

If there comes a time where the school, learner(s) or parent(s) decide that there is no longer a good relationship or match between them and the school, the school will follow a policy of 'no fault separation', where, if it is clear that the situation is not viable, either side can bring it to an end without rancour or pointing accusations of wrongdoing.

Where parents choose to withdraw their learner(s) then a term's notice needs to be given, otherwise fees for the remainder of the term, and the following term will be charged.

All complaints and grievances will be taken seriously and remain private and confidential. There will be no victimisation because of lodging a complaint or grievance. At all times the Village School aims to maintain professionalism and integrity. At the Village School we use feedback from our community so that we can continuously improve the quality of education that we offer our learners. We will continuously reflect whether changes need to be made to our policies and procedures to ensure the best governance for our school and community.

If a complaint or grievance is not resolved:

- If a complaint or grievance cannot be satisfactorily resolved directly with the classroom teacher, then it will be referred to the principal
- If the principal is the subject of a complaint or grievance, then it will be referred to the Chairperson of the Village School Board
- If the complaint or grievance cannot be satisfactorily resolved by the principal, then it will be referred to the Village School Board
- If the complaint or grievance includes a board member, or someone related to a board member, then the board member will be absent from deliberations
- If the complaint or grievance remains unresolved after discussions with the teacher, principal and school board, then the Board will provide information to the learner, parent or guardian to lodge an appeal with the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA)

RELATED POLICIES

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy
- Child Protection Mandatory Reporting Policy
- Child Safe Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Enrolment Policy
- Equal Opportunity Policy
- Fees Policy
- Mandatory Reporting Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Student Welfare Policy

SOURCES

- Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority:
<https://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx>
- <https://assets.ombudsman.vic.gov.au/assets/Best-Practice-Guides/Complaints-Good-Practice-Guide-for-Public-Sector-Agencies.pdf?mtime=20191217165914>

HOW TO LODGE A COMPLAINT OR GRIEVANCE

A person can lodge a complaint or grievance in a number of ways:

Mail	Complaints and grievances can be mailed to: Village School 9 Holloway Rd Croydon North, 3136
Telephone	Village School can be contacted on (03) 9726 4766
Email	Please email your learner's teacher directly, or you can email the Principal: principal@villageschool.vic.edu.au or, the Village School Board's Chairperson:
In person	Complaints and grievances can be discussed, in person, at the Village School campus: 9 Holloway Rd, Croydon North
VRQA	Phone: (03) 9637 2806 Email: vrqa@education.vic.gov.au

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Village School Board on 16th August 2022

REVIEW DATE: 16th August 2024