



COMPLAINTS POLICY

Latest DET Update: June 2021

First Developed: 2019

Updated: June 2021



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact the staff at Lethbridge Primary School.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide an outline of the complaints process at Lethbridge Primary School so that 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 regarding the school are managed in a timely, effective, ethical, fair and respectful manner.

SCOPE

This policy relates to complaints brought by parents, carers, students or members of our school community and applies to all matters relating to our school. In some limited instances, we may need to refer the complainant to another Department of Education and Training process where there are different mechanisms in place to review certain decisions, for example, expulsion appeals.

POLICY

This 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 as the priority
- 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.

For the purpose of this policy the following terms are defined as follows:

A **'parent'** includes:

- a person who has parental responsibility for 'major long term issues' as defined in the *Family Law Act 1975* (Commonwealth)
- a person appointed as 'guardian' pursuant to the *Children Youth and Families Act 2005* (Victoria)

- an informal carer with whom the child normally or regularly resides, and who has day-to-day care and control of the child
- a mature minor student
- an adult student

A **'complaint'** is an expression of dissatisfaction with an action taken, decision made or service provided, or the failure to provide a service, take action or make a decision at a school. For example:

My child has been left out of the school's netball team for the third time in a row. She is an accomplished netballer and deserves to be part of the team. It is not fair that she has been left out and I want to know what you intend to do about this!

A complaint is considered to be **'resolved'** when the complainant and the Department (school, region or central office) agree on an appropriate response or remedy

A complaint is considered to be **'finalised'** when the Department (Regional Director, or other delegate of the Secretary) has made a final determination on the matter after exhausting the processes set out in this policy

A complaint is considered to be **'unresolved'** when agreement cannot be reached on a course of action and/or a remedy, or if the remedy cannot be implemented

Preparation for Raising a Concern or Complaint

Lethbridge 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 the school (please see "Further Information and Resources" section below).

Complaints Process

The 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 or Principal. Where possible, school staff will work with you to ensure that your concerns are appropriately addressed.

Where concerns cannot be resolved in this way, parents/carers 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 front 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 or 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 nominee 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 or nominee 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:** The school will acknowledge receipt of your complaint as soon as possible (usually within 48 hours) and will seek to resolve complaints in a timely manner. Depending on the complexity of the complaint, the 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, we will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

Resolution

Where appropriate, the 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, the 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 a parent/carer or community member is not satisfied that their complaint has been resolved by the school, or if their complaint is about the Principal, then the complaint should be referred to the regional office, in Ballarat by phoning 1300 333 232.

The school may also refer a complaint to the regional office if we believe that we have done all we can to address the complaint.

For more information about the Department's *Parent Complaints* policy, including the role of the Regional Office, please see: [Parent Complaints policy](#).

COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our school's website and Sentral Parent Portal
- Discussed at staff briefings/meetings as required
- Included in our staff handbook/manual
- Included in transition and enrolment packs
- Included as annual reference in school newsletter
- Made available in hard copy from school administration upon request

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

If necessary, parents will be directed to [Parent Complaints - Government Schools](#) – a website for parents outlining the Department's complaint process. Includes advice on how to raise concerns.

Please refer also to the school's *Information and Privacy Policy on our school website*: www.lethbridgeps.vic.edu.au

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	June 2021
Consultation	Consultative Committee – July 2021 School Council – July 2021
Approved by	Principal & School Council
Next scheduled review date	2025

