Maryborough Education Centre

# Complaints Policy

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide an outline of the complaints process at Maryborough Education Centre (MEC) 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 MEC are managed in a timely, effective, 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 (DET) process where there are different mechanisms in place to review certain decisions, for example, expulsion appeals.

## POLICY

MEC 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:

- raise and discuss issues in a courteous and respectful manner
- acknowledge that the goal is to achieve an outcome that is in the affected student's best interests and acceptable to all parties
- act in good faith and respect the privacy and confidentiality of those involved, as appropriate
- recognise that all parties, including the broader school community, have rights and responsibilities that must be balanced
- recognise that schools and DET may be subject to legal constraints on their ability to act or disclose information in some circumstances.

**Preparation for raising a concern or complaint**

MEC 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 DET and MEC (see "Further Information and Resources" section below).

**Complaints process**

MEC 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, Year Level Coordinator or Sub School Leader. 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 or community members may wish to make a formal complaint to the Assistant 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 Assistant 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 Assistant 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 Assistant Principal 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 appropriate. In this situation, a response to the complaint will be provided in writing. Where a resolution meeting is unsuccessful, or the complainants are dissatisfied with the process or outcome they can request to consult the Principal.

4. **Timelines:** MEC 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, MEC 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, MEC will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

**Resolution**

Where appropriate, MEC may seek to resolve a complaint by:

- Offering 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, MEC 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 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 North Western Region by emailing nwvr@edumail.vic.gov.au or calling 1300 338 691.

MEC may also refer a complaint to North Western Region if we believe that we have done all we can to address the complaint.

For more information about the DET *Parent Complaints* policy, including the role of the Regional Office, please see:

## FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

http://www.maryborougheducationcentre.vic.edu.au/ourschool.php?id=200

## REVIEW PERIOD

This policy was last updated on Wednesday 31st July, 2019 and is scheduled for review as part of the school's 3 year review cycle.

***This policy was last ratified by School Council on Wednesday 31st July, 2019***

**Signed:**

**Paul Rumpff**
**School Council President**

**Date**..31.7.2019.....