

Complaints Policy



HELP FOR NON-ENGLISH SPEAKERS

IF YOU NEED HELP TO UNDERSTAND THE INFORMATION IN THIS POLICY PLEASE CONTACT PORT PHILLIP SPECIALIST SCHOOL ON (03) 9646 0855.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide an outline of the complaints process at Port Phillip Specialist 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 Port Phillip Specialist School are managed promptly, effectively, fairly and respectfully.

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.

POLICY

Port Phillip Specialist 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 the 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 parents, carers and community members](#)

Preparation for raising a concern or complaint

- Port Phillip Specialist 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 Example 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

Port Phillip Specialist 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 the Assistant 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 the Principal, noting that formal complaints should be directed to a member of the school’s leadership team.

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 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 the issues. We can discuss your complaint in a convenient way, whether in writing, in person or over the phone.
2. Information gathering: Depending on the issues raised in the complaint, the Principal, 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/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 be appropriate. In this situation, a response to the complaint will be provided in writing.

4. Timelines: Port Phillip Specialist 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, Port Phillip Specialist 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, Port Phillip Specialist 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 from the procedures in this policy.

Resolution

Where appropriate, Port Phillip Specialist 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, Port Phillip Specialist 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 East Regional Office by contacting 1300 338 738 or sevr@education.vic.gov.au

Port Phillip Specialist School may also refer a complaint to sevr@education.vic.gov.au 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 the school website
- Included in staff induction processes
- Included in our staff handbook/manual
- Included in transition and enrolment packs
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions
- Annual reference in the school newsletter

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

The Department's Policy and Advisory Library (PAL):

- [Complaints - Parents](#)

The Department's ~~parents~~parents' website:

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

Port Phillip Specialist School Policies

- Statement of Values and School Philosophy

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL Policy last reviewed	May 2023
Consultation	School Council
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	May 2025