

<p>Castlemaine Steiner School &amp; Kindergarten</p>	<h2>COMPLAINTS &amp; GRIEVANCE POLICY</h2>
<p><b>PURPOSE</b></p>	<p>The purpose of this policy is to provide processes for the effective management and resolution of grievances and complaints within the school and to define the procedure to be used in the acknowledgement, recording, tracking and resolution of complaints.</p>
<p><b>AIMS</b></p>	<p>This Policy aims to facilitate the smooth functioning of the school and to assist students, staff and parents to work successfully together. The guidelines complement the regular, informal communications that already take place between members of the school community.</p>
<p><b>WHO MAY COMPLAIN</b></p>	<p>Students, parents, members of the community, and employees of the school in their private capacity are entitled to have their complaints addressed by the Principal.</p>
<p><b>DEFINITIONS</b></p>	<p><b>Alternative Complaint Resolution Processes</b> Formal methods of complaint resolution such as mediation that may be utilised in the resolution of complaints.</p> <p><b>Complainant</b> A student, parent, member of the community, or employee of the school in his or her private capacity who has a complaint.</p> <p><b>Complaint</b> The expression of dissatisfaction with any aspect of the school. It may be general in nature or relate to particular staff members, a part of the school, a policy or a decision. Any person may lodge a complaint, however, staff members employed by the school cannot use this process if they are acting in an official capacity. A complaint must contain sufficient detail to enable it to be addressed and recorded.</p> <p><b>Dispute</b> The expression of a pursued unsatisfied complaint against action taken by an employee of the school acting on behalf of the school; it may be general in nature or relate to a particular staff member or part of the school; and it may be lodged by any person other than a staff member employed by the school and acting in their official capacity.</p> <p><b>Enquiry/Concern</b> A request for service that can generally be addressed at the time of being raised without the need for more involved consideration.</p> <p><b>Investigation</b> Formal examination of a complaint by an authorised person.</p> <p><b>Managing a Complaint</b> Coordinating all the processes involved in addressing the complaint to its conclusion/resolution.</p> <p><b>Procedural Fairness</b> The concept of procedural fairness is derived from the principles of natural justice. A process that demonstrates procedural fairness is one in which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• decision makers act fairly and provide reasons for decisions;</li> <li>• the person affected is given a fair hearing;</li> <li>• all parties to a matter have an opportunity to put their case where an adverse decision</li> </ul>

	<p>or finding is made; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all relevant arguments are considered and irrelevant arguments are excluded.</li> </ul> <p><b>Referring a Complaint</b> Forwarding the complaint to a more appropriate person or agency to manage.</p> <p><b>Resolution</b> An outcome of a complaint that is satisfactory to both parties.</p> <p><b>Unresolved Complaint</b> A complaint which has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant and may be referred by the complainant to an outside agency.</p> <p>CSSK encourages all members of the school community to attempt to resolve complaints and concerns through the school if possible.</p> <p>It is also your right to seek help from outside the school. For example, you can contact the <i>Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC)</i> for information or advice, or to make a complaint.</p> <p>To contact the <i>Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC)</i> call 1800 134 142</p>
<p><b>POLICY</b></p>	<p><b>Complaints Handling</b></p> <p>Complaints will be handled promptly, confidentially and in accordance with procedural fairness.</p> <p>Persons who are the subject of a complaint, who make a complaint or provide information in the course of an investigation into a complaint shall not be subject to prejudice, intimidation, and harassment or be subject to any detriment because of their involvement.</p> <p>Where disciplinary processes are commenced against an employee as a consequence of a complaint being received complainants will be informed whether the allegation was substantiated or not substantiated. Complainants are not informed of the nature of any disciplinary action taken against an employee in respect to disciplinary matters due to confidentiality requirements.</p> <p>Appropriate confidentiality is to be observed in any discussion of complaints. This means that at the workplace these matters are to remain confidential between the employee and his or her supervisor and any other parties who have a legitimate interest in the process.</p> <p>The Principal will maintain a Concerns and Complaints Register. These files are confidential and may only to be accessed by members of school staff in the presence of the Principal.</p> <p>Complaints must be handled generally in accordance with the provisions of <i>AS4269 Australian Standard for Complaints Handling, Equal Opportunity Act 1995</i> and <i>Information Privacy Act 2000</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confidentially</li> <li>• Thoroughly</li> <li>• Impartially</li> <li>• Fairly</li> <li>• In a timely manner</li> </ul>

And according to the following principles of procedural fairness:

The 'hearing rule' includes the right of the person to:

- Know details of any allegation including any other information that may be taken into account in considering the matter
- Know the process by which the matter will be considered
- Know how to seek a review of the decision made in response to the allegations.

An unbiased decision, implying:

- Impartiality in the investigation and decision-making
- An absence of bias by a decision-maker

Procedural fairness includes making available to students and parents or caregivers policies and procedures under which disciplinary action is taken. It also includes providing details of an allegation relating to a specific matter or incident. This will usually involve providing an outline of the allegations made in witness statements and consideration of witness protection. As part of ensuring the right to be heard, the school would establish any need for parents/caregivers to be provided with interpreter services and, if required, make arrangements for such services to be available.

While it is generally preferable that different people carry out the investigation and decision-making in the school setting this may not always be possible. If the teacher is conducting both the investigative and decision-making stages, he or she must be reasonable and objective. To be procedurally fair, the teacher must act justly and be seen to act justly. While it is difficult to combine the roles of investigator and adjudicator, it is acceptable to do so given the nature of the teacher's responsibilities. Nevertheless, it may be preferable to have another appropriate officer, such as the College, Principal, or child protection officers, carry out the investigation where possible. The review mechanism adds to the fairness of the process.

In matters where a significant disciplinary procedure is contemplated, the gravity of the circumstances requires particular emphasis to be given to procedural fairness. This includes the offer of having a support person/observer attend formal interviews. The key points of the interview/discussion are taken down in writing.

### **Lodging a Complaint**

*(Refer also to Appendix B- Guidelines for Parents Wishing to Raise a Concern or Complaint)*

A person is able to complain verbally or in writing to the Principal. If a verbal complaint is complex or very serious the complainant may be required to restate the complaint in writing or sign a written summary prepared by the Principal.

A written complaint which contains personal abuse, inflammatory statements or material that is clearly intended to intimidate will not be addressed and the complainant will be informed accordingly.

Similarly, a verbal complaint that contains personal abuse, inflammatory statements or comments of a threatening nature may be terminated at the discretion of the staff member after firstly warning complainants of that intention.

A person making a written complaint must provide his or her name, address and details of the complaint.

## Withdrawal of a Complaint

A person who has made a complaint is able to withdraw the complaint at any time. A written complaint should preferably, be withdrawn in writing. However, a signed and dated notation on the complaint by an employee that it has been withdrawn by the complainant will suffice. A verbal complaint can be withdrawn verbally and a notation made to that effect.

The person who received the complaint must give notice in writing to any parties affected by the complaint that it has been withdrawn. Complaints that warrant investigation must be pursued even though the complaint has been withdrawn.

## Management of Complaints

When a verbal or written complaint is made to the Principal and the nature of the issue raised is such that it is appropriate to resolve it within the school, the Principal will take action to resolve the issue.

- The school will acknowledge receipt of a complaint within 5 days.
- The school aims to resolve complaints within 20 days of receipt
- When complaints are made in writing about the conduct of any employee of the school, only the substance of the complaint will be provided to the respondent. The full text of the complaint will not be provided to the subject of the complaint except in extraordinary circumstances. In the majority of cases, the name of the complainant is withheld for safety and/or investigative reasons.
- The Principal can reject a complaint that in their opinion is vexatious, trivial or without substance; or does not warrant further action taking into account the provisions of this policy
- If a complaint or grievance cannot be resolved internally, the Principal may appoint an independent mediator

## Invalid and Unreasonable Complaints

From time to time complaints received will be found to be invalid and/or vexatious (that is, an action or complaint that is brought without merit, often to cause annoyance to another person). Complainants (and/or anyone acting on their behalf) may be considered to be vexatious complainants where previous or current contact with them shows that they meet two or more of the following criteria, in that the complainants:

- **Persist in pursuing a complaint** where the School's complaints procedure has been fully and properly implemented and exhausted.
- **Change the substance** of a complaint or **continually raise new issues** or seek to prolong contact by **continually raising further concerns or questions** upon receipt of a response whilst the complaint is being addressed. (Care must be taken not to discard new issues which are significantly different from the original complaint. These might need to be addressed as separate complaints.)
- Are **unwilling to accept documented evidence** of treatment given as being factual, or deny receipt of an adequate response in spite of correspondence specifically answering their questions or **do not accept that facts can sometimes be difficult to verify** when a long period of time has elapsed.
- **Do not clearly identify the precise issues** which they wish to be investigated, despite reasonable efforts of school staff to help them specify their concerns, and/or where the concerns identified are not within the remit of the school to investigate.
- **Focus on a trivial matter** to an extent which is out of proportion to its significance and continue to focus on this point. (It is recognised that determining what is a 'trivial' matter can be subjective and careful judgment must be used in applying this criteria)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have <b>threatened or used actual physical violence</b> towards staff at any time - this will in itself cause personal contact with the complainant and/or their representatives to be discontinued and the complaint will, thereafter, only be pursued through written communication. All such incidences should be documented.</li> <li>• Have in the course of addressing a registered complaint had an <b>excessive number of contacts</b> with the School placing unreasonable demands on staff. (A contact may be in person or by telephone, letter, fax, or email. Discretion must be used in determining the precise number of "excessive contacts" applicable under this section, using judgment based on the specific circumstances of each individual case.)</li> <li>• Have <b>harassed</b> or been personally <b>abusive or verbally aggressive</b> on more than one occasion towards staff dealing with their complaint. (Staff must recognise that complainants may sometimes act out of character at times of stress, anxiety, or distress and should make reasonable allowances for this. They should document all incidents of harassment.)</li> <li>• Are known to have <b>recorded</b> meetings or face-to-face/telephone <b>conversations without</b> the prior knowledge and <b>consent</b> of other parties involved.</li> <li>• <b>Display unreasonable demands or complainant expectations and fail to accept that these may be unreasonable</b> (eg insist on responses to complaints or enquiries being provided more urgently than is reasonable or normal recognised practice).</li> </ul> <p>If the complaint is found to be invalid or vexatious <b>it will not be further investigated</b>. Affected parties will be informed of this decision in writing.</p>
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<p><b>COMPLAINT RESOLUTION PROCESS</b></p>	<p>The following guidelines will be in place to assist with the establishment and implementation of processes for managing and reviewing enquiries, concerns and complaints in line with this policy.</p> <p><b><i>Guidelines for Staff in the Management of Complaints (Appendix A)</i></b>  <b><i>Guidelines for Parents wishing to raise a concern or complaint (Appendix B)</i></b></p> <p>The <b><i>Staff Guidelines</i></b> should include information on how to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• receive, clarifying and document enquiries, concerns and complaints;</li> <li>• seek and document further information;</li> <li>• decide how the matter should be dealt with;</li> <li>• take action about the matter;</li> <li>• communicate the action to the complainant and ensure the issue is resolved; document the issue, the action and the outcome; and</li> <li>• review processes and procedures.</li> <li>• regularly communicate the processes and procedures to all students, parents and staff members.</li> <li>• Monitor, evaluate and review processes and procedures</li> </ul>
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<p><b>MEDIATION</b></p>	<p>Either party to a dispute or grievance may request external mediation. Both parties must agree to the mediation, and costs will be shared.</p> <p>The Principal will consider mediation only after all other avenues available under this policy are exhausted.</p>
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	<p>The primary focus of mediation is to reach a fair and workable agreement between the parties in conflict. It should be a voluntary process with parties agreeing to mediation and taking responsibility for making decisions through the process.</p> <p><b>Mediation Process</b></p> <p><b>Pre-Mediation</b> The process of pre-mediation involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The mediator meeting with each party individually and listening to their perspective on the situation.</li> <li>• Discussing and finalising the agenda for the mediation; what are their primary concerns and what requests do they wish to make of the other party? How best might they phrase these concerns and requests to ensure the best possible outcome?</li> <li>• Anticipating what the other party might raise and how the individual will respond.</li> <li>• Discussing the ground rules for successful mediation.</li> <li>• Seeking commitment to the mediation process.</li> </ul> <p>If parties are in agreement, then mediation proceeds. Only two people are generally involved in mediation. Therefore, with three parties, either two or three mediations will be required.</p> <p>Note that pre-mediation may identify other organisational needs and appropriate interventions will be discussed following pre-mediation.</p> <p><b>Mediation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brief meetings are held with each party immediately prior to joint meeting to confirm the parties readiness to proceed and that agenda is still appropriate.</li> <li>• Mediator introduces the process to the parties.</li> <li>• Ground rules developed and/or reinforced.</li> <li>• Each party presents a statement or request from their agenda in turn and clarifies as necessary.</li> <li>• Parties develop options to address/resolve the point being discussed (only move on to next point when some agreement or understanding is demonstrated).</li> <li>• A written document is developed stating the outcome of mediation, agreement reached between the parties and recommendations for further action.</li> <li>• A review period is agreed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>RESPONSIBILITIES</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All staff are responsible for ensuring that the requirements of this policy are met and the correct procedures are followed appropriately</li> <li>• The Principal is responsible for the resolution of complaints</li> <li>• The Principal is responsible for implementing systems to identify systemic issues and develop appropriate responses</li> </ul> <p><b>COMMUNICATION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This policy will be available on the school website</li> <li>• This policy will be reviewed annually by all staff on Planning Days</li> <li>• At the beginning of each semester Class teachers will ensure their Students are aware that they are able to raise concerns about any member of staff with whom they feel comfortable, whether it is the Class Teacher, a Specialist Teacher, or a member of the support staff.</li> </ul>
<p><b>SUPPORT</b></p>	<p>At any stage following receipt of a complaint, either party is entitled to refer the complaint to another authority for resolution, e.g.: the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA), Victoria Police, or the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC). This will not necessarily prevent the school from pursuing an investigation.</p>

	<p>Complaints about the quality of education at a school, including its facilities, curriculum and assessment and how the school handles safety, welfare or discipline issues can be investigated by the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA), which can be contacted in writing at:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Complaints Unit VRQA GPO Box 2317 MELBOURNE VIC 3001 Or email <a href="mailto:vrqa.complaints@edumail.vic.gov.au">vrqa.complaints@edumail.vic.gov.au</a></p> <p><i>The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) can be contacted on (03) 9281 7100 or via email <a href="mailto:complaints@veohrc.vic.gov.au">complaints@veohrc.vic.gov.au</a></i></p> <p><i>Victorian State Government The Department of Education and Training offers learning and development support, services and resources for parents</i> <a href="http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/community/Pages/parentcomplaints.aspx">http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/community/Pages/parentcomplaints.aspx</a></p> <p><i>Victorian Institute of Teaching is responsible for investigating, and if necessary exercising disciplinary functions relating to teacher conduct, competence and fitness to teach.</i> <a href="http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/professional-responsibilities/investigations">http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/professional-responsibilities/investigations</a></p> <p><i>NOTE: Only AFTER all processes at the school have been explored, a parent who remains dissatisfied that their complaint has not been properly handled, may contact the relevant external organisation.</i></p>
<b>RESOURCES</b>	<p><i>Education and Training Reform Act 2006, Education and Training Reform Regulations 2007, Information Privacy Act 2000, Wrongs Act 1958</i></p> <p><i>Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) call 1800 134 142 or (03) 9281 7100 or via email <a href="mailto:complaints@veohrc.vic.gov.au">complaints@veohrc.vic.gov.au</a></i></p> <p><i>Victorian State Government The Department of Education and Training offers learning and development support, services and resources for parents</i> <a href="http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/community/Pages/parentcomplaints.aspx">http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/community/Pages/parentcomplaints.aspx</a></p> <p><i>Victorian Institute of Teaching is responsible for investigating, and if necessary exercising disciplinary functions relating to teacher conduct, competence and fitness to teach.</i> <a href="http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/professional-responsibilities/investigations">http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/professional-responsibilities/investigations</a></p>
<b>Date Implemented</b>	25.02.17
<b>Author</b>	Jane Staley & Danilo Paglialonga
<b>Approved By</b>	Principal, College of Teachers and Board of Governors
<b>Approval Authority (Signature &amp; Date)</b>	25.03.17 
<b>Date Reviewed</b>	20.02.17
<b>Responsible for Review</b>	Principal
<b>Review Date</b>	20.04.18

## APPENDIX A

# STAFF GUIDELINES FOR MANAGEMENT OF COMPLAINTS

<p><b>OVERVIEW</b></p>	<p>The following guidelines are to assist with the establishment and implementation of processes for managing and reviewing enquiries, concerns and complaints. They should be read in conjunction with the <i>CSSK Complaints &amp; Grievance Policy</i></p> <p><b>Positive Outcomes from Handling Complaints Well</b></p> <p>Quality management of a complaint goes beyond simply complying with policy. A complaint is a sign that something is wrong even if we think the complainant is mistaken. Although we need to distinguish misunderstandings from valid complaints, both indicate real problems that must be solved.</p> <p>We should not be afraid of complaints. Complaints are a valuable source of feedback on the service we provide. The fact that a complaint has been made suggests that the complainant trusts us to respond in a positive way.</p> <p>How well we handle complaints can be critical to the image of our school and relationship with the community. A badly handled complaint can result in both a dissatisfied parent and bad word of mouth or informal publicity.</p> <p>When we handle a complaint well we not only satisfy the complainant, we improve our relationship with the complainant and increase confidence in the school. Handling a complaint properly shows that we listen, we learn from our mistakes, we are committed to continuous improvement and we care.</p> <p>Further, processes for handling complaints should provide feedback to school leadership to support improvement in our policy and operations.</p>
<p><b>Principles for Handling Complaints</b></p>	<p><b><i>Act Promptly</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find out as quickly as possible both the nature of the complaint and the outcome the complainant wants.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>Listen Carefully, Discuss the Issues Calmly and Maintain Confidentiality</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treat complainants with respect and courtesy</li> <li>• Approach the complaint with an open mind, taking the person seriously and letting them have their say</li> <li>• We should welcome complaints and assure complainants that they will be dealt with properly</li> <li>• Record all relevant details on the Concern or Complaint Lodgement form (Appendix C)</li> <li>• Ask the complainant if they require a formal response from the school</li> <li>• Maintain confidentiality to protect complainants, their children and the staff members involved</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Focus on Relevant Issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep the discussion to relevant issues and check the facts.</li> <li>• It is important to hear all sides of the story and keep everyone involved informed of the progress and outcome of the complaint.</li> <li>• Be clear about current policy and processes.</li> </ul> <p><b>Give Personal and Specific Responses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give the complainant your name. Let them decide whether the matter is really an enquiry, a concern or a complaint.</li> <li>• Be clear about what solutions we can actually offer.</li> <li>• Explain what will happen next and what steps and support are available.</li> <li>• Make sure written responses address all of the issues, contain correct information and use plain English.</li> </ul> <p><b>Keep a Record of Complaints, Timeline for Action, Action Taken and Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recording details helps to ensure that we deal with each complaint satisfactorily. In many cases some brief notes are all that is required</li> <li>• A clear record is helpful where there are subsequent enquiries, concerns, complaints or investigation.</li> <li>• Tracking complaints will help us improve our policies and operations both in managing complaints and in the areas of operations about which we receive complaints.</li> <li>• The emphasis should be on learning rather than attributing blame. We need information to plan for improvement.</li> </ul>
<p><b>How to receive a concern or complaint</b></p>	<p><b>Verbal Concerns/Complaints</b></p> <p>School staff receiving verbal complaints or concerns (including telephone complaints) should follow these steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• listen and record details and determine what the complainant wants</li> <li>• If useful refer the complainant to the Grievance Procedure or give the complainant a copy of this policy</li> <li>• Confirm and record the details received.</li> <li>• Empathise with the complainant in a courteous manner.</li> <li>• If it is more than a simple or straightforward matter that you can resolve easily - refer the matter to a senior teacher or manager as appropriate.</li> <li>• Explain the courses of action available to the complainant.</li> <li>• Do not attempt to lay blame or be defensive.</li> <li>• Ensure the complainant is informed who the complaint will be referred to Maintain confidentiality at all times.</li> <li>• Forward the completed Concern or Complaint form to the Principal as soon as possible, and within 24 hours</li> <li>•</li> </ul> <p>If a verbal complaint is complex or very serious the complainant may be required to restate the complaint in writing or sign a written summary prepared by the Principal.</p> <p><b>Written Complaints</b></p> <p>School staff receiving written complaints should direct them immediately to the Principal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Principal must acknowledge all written complaints within five working days</li> <li>• Every endeavour should be made to resolve the complaint within 20 days</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the circumstances warrant a longer timeframe for management of the complaint the complainant needs to be informed of the reasons for the delay in addressing the matter and of the likely time frame required to conclude the matter.</li> <li>• If the Principal decides to reject a complaint on the grounds that it is vexatious, trivial or without substance, or does not warrant further action, they will inform the complainant in writing within 20 days</li> </ul>
<p><b>FORMAL COMPLAINT PROCESS</b></p>	<p><b>Recording and Evaluation of Formal Complaint</b></p> <p>The following process is to be used by the Principal for all complex/formal complaints:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep full confidential records of details of all complaints</li> <li>• Obtain full information from the ‘complainant’ about their complaint and the resolution they are seeking</li> <li>• Empathise with the complainant in a courteous manner</li> <li>• Do not attempt to lay blame or be defensive</li> <li>• Confirm the details received</li> <li>• From the information received determine the nature of the complaint</li> <li>• Record the complaint in the Issues Register (Formal Complaints Record)</li> <li>• Determine who is the appropriate person to continue handling the complaint on the basis of perceived and real impartiality - Assign responsibility</li> <li>• Assignee to respond to the complainant to explain the courses of action available</li> <li>• Assignee to check whether the complainant understands and is satisfied with the proposed action and if not advise alternative course of action</li> <li>• Assignee to ensure the complainant is informed that the complaint is receiving attention without creating false expectations.</li> <li>• Assignee to provide acknowledgement eg a follow up email, phone call or letter – depending on nature and seriousness of complaint</li> <li>• If relevant Assignee to hold a formal interview with the subject(s) of the complaint</li> <li>• Assignee to provide an opportunity for the subject(s) of the complaint to respond to the complaint</li> <li>• Assignee to determine the ‘issues’ at the heart of the complaint and evaluate the validity of the complaint.</li> <li>• Maintain confidentiality at all times.</li> </ul> <p><b>Issues Register (Formal Complaints Record)</b></p> <p>An Issues Register for recording complaints is kept in the Principal’s office. It is important that the Principal records the details of the complaint accurately as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It may become the cause of legal action in the future</li> <li>• Patterns in the record may indicate a need for action; and</li> <li>• The Principal should be able to check the Register and report on it regularly to the School Board of Directors.</li> </ul> <p>The Issues Register should contain the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Date when the issue was raised</li> <li>• Name of person making complaint</li> <li>• Name of pupil (if applicable)</li> <li>• Brief statement of issue</li> <li>• Location of detailed file</li> <li>• Member of staff handling the issue</li> <li>• Brief statement of outcome</li> </ul> <p>These files are confidential and are only to be accessed by members of school staff in the</p>

presence of the Principal. The files should contain simple but clear notes of all conversations with parents about any source of dissatisfaction. This applies to friendly chats and to telephone conversations, as misunderstandings easily arise. There should be a clear statement of what is concerning the complainant/s. The notes can be agreed with parents.

### **Determining and Taking Action to Resolve a Complaint**

If the complaint is considered to be a valid complaint, the Principal (or their Assingee) will determine and promptly initiate appropriate action to resolve the complaint. Appropriate action includes, but is not limited to any or all of the following:

- Conducting an evaluation of teacher(s) and/or student(s) behaviour, determining if action is needed and reporting appropriately the outcome of any action
- Holding a three-way meeting with the complainant, teacher or other staff member and support person(s) to resolve the complaint. (NB teacher support person(s) should have at least three years' experience in the school).
- Seeking a meeting with any other interested parties and appropriate support person(s) to resolve the complaint.
- Reviewing reasons for administrative action that is the subject of a complaint.
- Reviewing any Policy that is the subject of a complaint and reporting outcome of review to the Management Team, then:
  - Determining if the Policy needs to be revised
  - If required revising the policy in accordance with the approved procedure
  - Publishing the revised policy in accordance with the approved procedure
- Conducting a detailed investigation into the circumstances giving rise to the complaint.
- Mediation using internal expertise
  - use appropriate persons and mediation process to bring about resolution.
- For mediation using external expertise.
  - Seek the agreement between the school and the complainant as to the cost-sharing arrangements.
  - Use appropriate external expertise and mediation processes to bring about resolution

(Note: Any mediation requires the agreement of both parties. Parties are not required to settle in the mediation. However, if a settlement is reached, the terms of the settlement should be set down in writing, binding upon the parties.)

### **Resolution and Further Action on a Complaint**

Once the appropriate course of action has been determined, advise the complainant. Seek agreement as to how the issues might be resolved. If agreement cannot be reached and/or the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the complaints resolution process they have three further options available to them:

- Take no further action.
- Request further resolution or a review of the process from the Principal.
- Request that the matter be referred to an external resolution process.

### **Disciplinary Action**

At the conclusion of a complaint resolution process some form of disciplinary action may be taken against a person or persons if:

- They have breached one of the school's policies or standards
- They have otherwise engaged in inappropriate conduct

- A complaint is found to be vexatious
- A person has breached confidentiality or discussed an incident about which a complaint has been made when there is an attempt in progress to resolve the complaint.

The nature of the disciplinary action will depend on the circumstances and the following may be taken into account in deciding what disciplinary action is appropriate:

- The seriousness of the circumstances
- Whether the person(s) knew what they were doing;
- Whether the person(s) has been officially warned or disciplined before about the same type of conduct; and
- Whether there are any circumstances that mean the person(s) should not be disciplined at all or not disciplined seriously.

Disciplinary action could involve one or more of the following:

Possible options for disciplinary action against a **teacher or other staff member**

- Verbal warning - no staff file record
- Written warning - letter on staff file
- Compulsory counselling.
- Suspension from duty with pay
- Suspension from duty without pay
- Dismissal

Possible options for disciplinary action against a **parent**

- Verbal warning -- no file record
- Written warning -- letter on file
- Restriction of parent contact with school.
- Severance of relationship with the school

Possible options for disciplinary action against a **student**

- Verbal warning -- no file record
- Written warning -- letter on file
- Suspension.
- Expulsion.

## **Review and Closure Process**

The Principal in conjunction with the Management Group shall review all open and recent grievances and complaints monthly in order to:

- Monitor the progress of grievances and complaints
- Assess the effectiveness of resolution processes
- Determine the presence of any recurring complaints or issues
- Assess the need for further corrective action.

Once resolved the person assigned to the complaint (Assignee) is responsible for advising the Principal by email that the matter is closed.

The Principal will record the matter as closed and enter the closure date on the Issues Register.

## STUDENT COMPLAINTS

### Student Complaints

The principles that apply to parental complaints should also be applied to complaints and concerns from students. There are, however, differences in approaches. One important difference from the handling of parental complaints is that students should be able to raise concerns with any member of staff with whom they feel comfortable, whether it is the Class Teacher, a Specialist Teacher, or a member of the support staff.

In more complex situations, once the matter is resolved, the outcome should be discussed with the pupil by a member of staff. To make sure that it is fully understood, a written record may be shared.

Complaints that appear trivial still need to be handled seriously. Young people may test the complaints procedures on relatively minor issues before finding the confidence to raise something painful, such as bullying.

If the issue is a painful one, or if exploration of it is taking time, a student may need support from another student or from an adult. Students should be encouraged to choose a person with whom they feel comfortable to provide support.

Complaints, and ways of dealing with them, also need to be explained to students. Personal and Social Education programs can be of use, not only in teaching students how they may support and act as mentors to others, but also in encouraging them to understand that their views matter.

#### A NOTICE FOR STUDENTS

##### **Any Problems, Complaints, or Suggestions?**

If so, the school would like to hear.

##### ***How do I make a complaint?***

By talking about it – or by writing it down if you find that easier. You can do it by yourself, or as part of a group, or through your parents.

##### ***To Whom?***

To anyone on staff.

##### ***Does it matter what the issue is?***

No, it can be a big problem or a small one. By discussing it, you may come up with some positive ideas.

##### ***What will happen next?***

If possible, the staff member will deal with it in person. If not, he or she will go on your behalf to someone who can help.

##### ***Do others have to know?***

If you are worried about confidentiality, tell the staff member – he/she will understand.

**Even if you find the issue hurtful or embarrassing, don't worry – it will only be discussed by staff members who can help you.**

The school will review its information about complaints made over time to:

- Identify common or recurring issues that may need addressing
- assess the effectiveness of these and other procedures and whether they are being

	<p>followed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use information provided to the school through the parent opinion survey on the views of parents.</li> </ul>
<b>Date Implemented</b>	25.02.17
<b>Author</b>	Jane Staley & Danilo Paglialonga
<b>Approved By</b>	Principal, College of Teachers and Board of Governors
<b>Approval Authority (Signature &amp; Date)</b>	25.03.17 <i>B. J. Dodd</i>
<b>Date Reviewed</b>	20.02.17
<b>Responsible for Review</b>	Principal
<b>Review Date</b>	20.04.18
Castlemaine Steiner School & Kindergarten	<b>APPENDIX B</b> <b>GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS WISHING TO RAISE A CONCERN OR COMPLAINT</b>
<b>PURPOSE</b>	<p>This information will assist parents who are raising concerns or making a complaint that is related to the school or their child's education.</p> <p>These guidelines shall be read in conjunction with the school's <i>Complaints and Grievance Policy</i>.</p>
<b>AIMS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school is open to the concerns of parents and students</li> <li>• Complaints are received in a positive manner</li> <li>• Parents and students can expect to be taken seriously and can approach any member of staff about their concerns</li> <li>• Information about complaints is clear and readily available - The school will make information about procedures for addressing concerns and complaints readily available to parents and the school community, in clear and easy-to-understand language and formats that are accessible to everyone so that no-one is disadvantaged</li> <li>• Concerns are dealt with speedily and those who have raised them are kept informed about progress</li> <li>• It is not acceptable for students to receive adverse treatment because they or their parents have raised a concern or complaint</li> <li>• Clear confidential files and a log are kept</li> <li>• Confidentiality is respected and maintained so far as is possible</li> <li>• Resolution of the matter is sought</li> </ul>
<b>DEFINITIONS</b>	<p>The <i>Complaints and Grievance Policy</i> defines a complaint as:</p> <p>“The expression of dissatisfaction with any aspect of the school. It may be general in nature or relate to particular staff members, a part of the school, a policy or a decision. Any person may lodge a complaint, however, staff members employed by the school cannot use this process if they are acting in an official capacity. A complaint must contain sufficient detail to enable it to be addressed and recorded.”</p> <p>An enquiry or concern is defined as</p> <p>“A request for service that can generally be addressed at the time of being raised without the</p>

	need for more involved consideration.”
<p><b>INTRODUCTION</b></p>	<p>We cannot overestimate the critical role parents play in successful learning: parents contribute much to their child’s development and are among the most important influences on the way in which the child approaches learning.</p> <p>Teachers are responsible for the more formal educational experiences of the child. This is most effective where there is an active partnership with parents.</p> <p>Two-way communication is a critical factor in the partnership between parents and the school. Where a partnership exists, it is easier for parents to feel confident about the teaching and learning taking place in the classroom and to solve problems.</p> <p>Seeking information as early as possible can solve many problems. If you have any questions or concerns about your child’s progress, the homework set, or the assessment procedures, contact the Class Teacher. The Class Teacher will let you know the best way to contact them to arrange a mutually convenient time for a telephone conversation or meeting. Concerns are best resolved at classroom level if possible.</p> <p>Your Class Teacher should always be your first point of contact</p> <p>Parents may wish to go straight to the Principal with their concerns, and this will be respected. However, the Principal might not be able to respond until he/she has consulted the staff members who can help.</p>
<p><b>RAISING CONCERNS</b></p>	<p><b>What Might You Talk to the School About?</b></p> <p>Issues particular to your child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• attitude;</li> <li>• academic progress; participation;</li> <li>• behaviour;</li> <li>• how he/she gets along with teachers and other students socially and emotionally;</li> <li>• physical development and wellbeing;</li> <li>• development of responsibility;</li> <li>• non-attendance or truancy; and</li> <li>• learning program issues.</li> </ul> <p>School or class issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• quality of teaching;</li> <li>• homework;</li> <li>• learning environment;</li> <li>• general student behaviour;</li> <li>• pastoral care for students;</li> <li>• school policies and procedures; and</li> <li>• conduct of staff</li> </ul> <p>You are welcome to talk to your child’s teacher whenever you need to. However you should make an appointment through the Office to talk with a teacher, to avoid disrupting the learning program.</p> <p><b>What Can You Do If You Have a Concern or Query?</b></p>

	<p>Seeking information as early as possible can solve many problems. If you have any questions or concerns about your child's progress, the homework set or the assessment procedures, contact the Class Teacher. The Class Teacher will let you know the best way to contact them to arrange a mutually convenient time for a telephone conversation or meeting.</p>
<p><b>LODGING A COMPLAINT</b></p>	<p><b>Step 1: Clarify the issue</b>  Before you approach the school or your Class Teacher:</p> <p>Decide whether the issue is being raised as an <b>enquiry</b>, a <b>concern</b> or a <b>complaint</b> (see definitions above). This will help in finding a solution.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try to identify the problem clearly before going to the school. If there is more than one problem, list them to ensure that the extent of the problem is clear to the school.</li> <li>• Make an appointment to talk with the teacher. If your concern is about the conduct of a staff member, you may prefer to discuss the matter with the Principal.</li> <li>• be informed; check school policies or guidelines, where relevant;</li> </ul> <p><b>Step 2: Contact the school</b>  There are a number of ways you can raise any concerns you have about your child. You can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• write a note to your Class Teacher outlining your concerns</li> <li>• make an appointment to speak on the phone or in person with the Class Teacher via the school office.</li> <li>• please arrange any meeting times or phone calls through the school office (this is more convenient for both you and your child's teacher and does not interrupt teachers during the time they need to be with their students).</li> </ul> <p>Should the complaint involve complex issues, the class teacher/school might need to take advice which may take more time. The school will tell the complainant the new timeline for addressing the complaint and the reasons for any delays.</p> <p><b>In all cases, the school will try to resolve a concern or complaint within 20 school days.</b></p> <p><b>Step 3: Contact the Principal</b>  Most concerns are resolved by following the first two steps above. However, if the issue remains unresolved after you have approached your child's teacher or other school staff you can then ask to see the Principal.</p> <p>To do this, you will need to request an appointment through the school office.  Be aware that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Principal may ask another senior staff member to speak with you on their behalf</li> <li>• If a teacher is going to be present at the meeting it is more likely to occur outside of classroom hours.</li> </ul> <p>If your concern is related to issues of school policy, these should be raised more formally (in writing) with the Principal or the Board of Directors.</p> <p><b>Step 4: Contact the Board of Directors</b>  If you still feel that your complaint has not been addressed satisfactorily after speaking to the teacher and Principal, you can then contact the Board of Directors. Letters to the Board of Directors should be addressed to the Chair of the Board c/o the school office.</p>

**How to lodge a complaint in writing**

You can send your complaint by mail, email or fax. If you wish you can use the school's Complaints form, attached to this document.

Written Complaints should be addressed to:

The Principal  
Castlemaine Steiner School and Kindergarten,  
PO Box 473  
Castlemaine  
Victoria, 3450  
**EMAIL:** [principal@cssk.vic.edu.au](mailto:principal@cssk.vic.edu.au)

**Step 5: Contact External Body**

Complaints about the quality of education at a school, including its facilities, curriculum and assessment and how the school handles safety, welfare or discipline issues can be investigated by the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA), which can be contacted in writing at:

Complaints Unit  
VRQA  
GPO Box 2317  
MELBOURNE VIC 3001  
Or email  
[vrqa.complaints@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:vrqa.complaints@edumail.vic.gov.au)

The external body used for the school's external grievance procedure is the Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria which is part of the Department of Justice, Victoria.

*The Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria can be contacted on 1800 658 528 or via email [dscv@justice.vic.gov.au](mailto:dscv@justice.vic.gov.au)*

