



eton farm
Education

Policy No/Name	EFE111 – Complaints & Concerns
Version	7
Status	Complete
Reviewed by	Eton Farm School Board
Responsibility	Eton Farm School Board/ Principal
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Complaints and Concerns Policy

1. Statement

This policy will outline how to respond to concerns and complaints in a fair, effective, and timely manner and will be clearly child-focused.



Our processes will be easily accessible, outline the roles and responsibilities, and will involve purposeful education to all leadership, staff, children, young people and volunteers. At all times it will be culturally safe.

It will demonstrate the approaches of dealing with different types of complaints, breaches of relevant policies, or the Code of Conduct, and obligations to act and report. All complaints will be taken seriously and responded to promptly and thoroughly; and when necessary, will be reported to relevant authorities, whether or not the law requires it.

Records and reporting will respect privacy and employment laws. Confidentiality and privacy are key to creating a safe environment and protects all parties' rights to procedural fairness.

This policy will be reviewed annually, and evaluations will include improvements for child safe practices. System failures in complaints, concerns, and safety incidents will be analysed to allow continuous improvement. Evaluations and relevant information from these reviews will be shared with all concerned: staff, volunteers, community families, children, and young people.

Eton Farm Education will remain attentive and responsive to new challenges to maintain a child safe and friendly environment.

The school will apply the rules of procedural fairness:

(a) a hearing appropriate to the circumstances; (b) lack of bias; (c) evidence to support a decision; (d) inquiry into matters in dispute; (e) culturally safe. ¹

Enquiries relating to this policy should be directed to the Principal, or Board Chairperson. Any breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action.

Note: *This policy does not apply to matters relating to serious employee misconduct, student critical incidents or criminal activities.*

1.2 Scope

Former Students, Parents, Employees, Volunteers, Board Members and Community who have been involved in Eton Farm Education will be covered by this policy.

1.3 Purpose

The complaints handling policies and procedures are provided as a legal mandate. This policy implements relevant aspects of Principles 6 and 9 of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (National Principles) and references the complaint handling guide produced by the National Office for Child Safety (National Guide).

1.4 Student Protection

Eton Farm Education supports the rights of children and young people and is committed to ensuring the safety, welfare, and wellbeing of students, and views them as the highest priority at all times.

1.5 Definition of terms

For the purpose of clarity within the policy.

1.5(i) Complaint

A written expression of dissatisfaction made to the school about:

- its services decisions, policies or actions
- behaviours or actions of students, teachers or the Principal
- the complaint management process itself

The resolution is to be provided by the appropriate representative of Eton Farm Education.

Addressing any complaint will remain child focused.

1.5(ii) Concern

Identified as an issue, which due to its importance and the effect on the students, is of interest. These are less formal than complaints and the aim of lodging a concern is to improve a situation within the school.

Concerns will be briefly recorded and reviewed when this policy is reviewed, if not before.

Children have the right to know their rights! Adults should know about these rights and help children learn about them, too.

— Article 42 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

2. Information provided to demonstrate policy requirements

- Students
 - Student code of conduct provided at induction (Induction).
 - Suggestion boxes present in each of the primary classrooms with teachers discussing and encouraging children to feedback through the box
 - Posters around the school with pictures of examples of complaints and procedures for reporting.
 - Promote the rights, safety and wellbeing of all children and young people.
 - Take all necessary measures to ensure students with disabilities have equal access to participation.
- Parents
 - Enrolment interview
 - Directed to website – policies available.
 - Student code of conduct (to help their child).
- Employees
 - Induction meeting.
 - Staff meetings twice yearly.
- Community members
 - Information shared through the website

- Visitors to the school
 - Policies are accessible via digital means upon request at the front office

3. In the event of a complaint or concern

3.1. Making a complaint or concern

Any complaint or concern will be taken seriously.

A concern is made to a teacher, the Principal or the Chairperson of the Board in a verbal manner. If a concern is made in writing, it needs to be clearly labelled as a 'concern' to be dealt with accordingly.

A concern is usually a more minor issue that is acknowledged and discussed verbally, or by email and a resolution reached in short timeframe in most cases.

A complaint has a more serious nature, is submitted in writing, recorded, lodged and addressed through a formal process.

- Students
 - Are provided with an alternative format.
 - E.g. a suggestions box in the class for children to write or draw any complaint or concern.
 - Teacher educate children about the complaints process and confiding in an adult who they trust. Eg. Teachers, Support Educators or the Principal
- Parents, Teachers, and Community Members
 - To ensure a complaint is written concisely
 - Complaints can be submitted by Email or handed to Class Teacher / Principal
 - If a phone call has been used as the first instance of making the complaint, Eton Farm Education will request that it be submitted in writing so that the complaint can be fairly addressed
 - A complaint that is not submitted in writing will be classed as a concern and addressed accordingly .

3.2 Processing the complaint or concern

The individual who processes the complaint (referred to as the initial point of contact) will act in accordance with the following procedure:

- Formally lodge the communication as a complaint with the Principal / or Chairperson of the Board.
- The initial point of contact will not attempt to resolve the complaint.
- The complaint will be communicated and referred to the Principal / or Chairperson of the Board within 48 hours of the complaint being lodged.
- All complaints will be formally recorded in the Complaint Register.
- The initial point of contact will update the complainant once the complaint has been lodged with the relevant individual or governance.

3.3 Roles and responsibilities in the event of a complaint or concern

3.3(i) Initial Point of Contact:

- Identify if it is a complaint or a concern. (a verbal concern will be classed as a complaint once it is received in writing)
- Record and lodge the complaint formally.
- Relay the complaint to the relevant resolution officer within 48 hours.
- Notify the complainant that the complaint has been formally lodged.

3.3(ii) Teachers :

- Guide all students towards appropriate and respectful behavior whenever on school grounds.
- Practice early intervention techniques.
- Practice conflict resolution techniques.
- Be available for a resolution meeting with the complainant at a mutually convenient time.
- Act fairly, respectfully and efficiently when involved in any resolutions.
- Will maintain confidentiality of complainant when investigating complaints.
- Ensure no undue hardship befalls any student who is involved in a complaint or concern.

3.3(iii) Principal:

- Act as the resolution officer in complaints concerning—
 - The children and their concerns;
 - The education program and its delivery;
 - The staff and teachers;
 - The school grounds and administration;
 - The behavior and wellbeing of students;
 - Unsatisfactory resolutions by teachers or staff members;
 - Culturally safe complaints.
- Ensure that teachers and staff have relevant early intervention and conflict resolution techniques, and ensure the techniques remain updated.
- Be available to attend a resolution meeting with the complainant at a mutually convenient time.

- Ensure that the school and community are aware of the complaints and concerns policy, and that the policy is adhered to by all parties.
- Act in a fair, respectful and efficient manner when dealing with all complaints and concerns.
- Use diligence, confidentiality and impartiality when investigating complaints.
- Ensure all complaints are formally lodged and maintained in a correct manner.
- Ensuring all information related to a complaint is maintained thoroughly and stored responsibly.
- Ensure there is no conflict of interest, and if so, refer the complaint to the board or governing body.

3.3(iv) Board / Governing Body:

- Developing and reviewing the Complaints and Concerns policy annually.
- Ensuring all parties involved with the school have access to the Policy through the website, and that it is adhered to.
- Direct a complainant to the relevant complaint pathway.
- Act in a manner which is impartial, diligent, and respectful when investigating any issues.
- Be able to demonstrate the school has dealt with complaints with full diligence, respect and impartiality.

3.3(v) Director General:

- The Director General of the Department of Education is responsible for ensuring that the school observes the registration standards; included is the standard about its complaints handling system.
- Any student, parent, or community member is entitled to contact the Director General with concerns about how the school has dealt with a claimant complaint. Information is available on the Department of Education website².
- While the Director General may consider whether the school has breached the registration standards, they do not have power to intervene in a complaint or override the school's decision.

3.3(vi) Complainant:

- Identify if they are wishing to lodge a complaint or a concern.
- Give full written details of complaint at time of lodging.
- Be available for a resolution meeting at a mutually convenient time.
- Request information in regard to the complaint communication pathway.
- Adhere to the complaint's resolution guidelines at all times.

4. Reporting Responsibilities:

Part of complaints handling is the legal obligation to report certain complaints or concerning behaviours, both internally and externally. This aspect of complaints handling will apply in particular to child protection-related complaints.

Policies and procedures need to include clear reporting structures, which include what needs to be reported and to whom. Not only does this protect the school from civil or criminal liability, but it is essential to protecting the safety of students at the school. (Principle 6 requires reporting obligations are met)

5. Categories of Complaints

Complaints may come from a range of aspects in relation to Eton Farm Education. The common areas of complaint would be classed under:

1. Educational
2. Administrative/Staffing
3. Behavioural

5.1 Making a complaint:

1. Contact the school representative (initial point of contact) you wish to lodge the complaint with
 - a. Educational – teacher
 - b. Administrative/Staffing – Principal or Board Chairperson
 - c. Behavioural – Teacher
2. Briefly explain the complaint and request a mutually suitable time to meet and discuss, forward a written record prior to the meeting
3. The aim of the discussion will be to address the complaint, determine if and how the complaint will be investigated and come to a satisfactory resolution
4. Should the complaint not be resolved it will be referred to the Principal or the Chairperson (depending on the nature of the complaint) The Principal or Chairperson will determine if and how an investigation will be undertaken, and will communicate this with the complainant
5. Should the complaint now be the responsibility of the Principal, they will address and determine an outcome and close the complaint,
6. The complaint will be recorded and evaluated for any further action, and the Board will be notified at the next scheduled Board meeting.
7. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, they may contact the Chairperson for further discussion. The Board (Chairperson and 2 Board Members) have the discretion to favour the Principal's outcome or to investigate further, Should the board be satisfied with the Principals outcome they will notify the complainant in writing within 48 hours of acknowledging the receipt of the written complaint and close the case.
8. Should the Board choose to investigate further they will aim to have an outcome and the case closed within 5 days of the investigation being undertaken.

6. Complaint Resolution Guidelines for All Parties

We require all parties involved in a complaint or concern to act within these guidelines:

- Respectful communication to be practiced at all times.
- Refrain from any comments or actions of a personally malicious nature.
- Adhere to confidentiality and privacy policies
- Be willing to work towards a resolution that is positive for all parties.
- Engage in productive communication and processes.
- Be willing to be flexible with negotiating or exploring options to achieve a resolution.
- Practice empathy and patience with all parties.
- Refrain from any actions or communication which may be seen as aggressive.
- Be willing to be guided towards a resolution if one party is able to practice more productive assertiveness.
- Communication must remain relevant to the complaint in question.

The school may determine the end point of a complaint has been reached if the complainant acts in a manner which is deemed in contradiction to our complaint resolution guidelines.

7. Outcomes, Objectives and Principles:

- All complaints will be received respectfully and in a positive and supportive manner.
- Any member of the school body (teachers, parents, students, the Principal, the Board) or the greater community may lodge a complaint.
- Concerns may be submitted as complaints if the individual raising the concern does not feel it has been resolved.
- All complaints will be recorded formally and accurately.
- No student will face any undue hardship or exclusions due to their parents lodging a complaint.
- The process of reaching a resolution will be done in a timely a manner to allow an adequate outcome.
- Resolutions and the process of reaching an outcome will be dealt with in a manner that is respectful and fair to all parties involved. Fairness includes: avoiding misconceptions and biases; addressing impartiality and bias; recognising and managing conflicts of interest, including potential conflicts of interest; affording fairness to the subject of the complaint.
- Open communication with all parties regarding the process and timeline of the complaint.
- Complaints will be treated with discretion and confidentiality regarding all parties as much as can be achieved.

- **Reporting, record keeping, privacy and employment law obligations will be met.**
- The review process of this policy is undertaken by the Board of Directors who will take into consideration any feedback or reviews that are provided by parents, children, community members and staff.
- Each complaint, concern and safety incident will be analysed as part of the review process to identify causes and systemic failures, and thus inform continuous improvement. The findings of relevant reviews will be reported appropriately to staff, volunteers, community, families, children, and young people.

8. Record-Keeping and Complaints Data

Guideline 9 provides standards for how records should be kept so that they comply with legal, contractual or other record keeping obligations. It also explains the value of complaints in the continuous improvement of the school's services.

Key things to note:

- Information is provided to students and their families about what kinds of records are kept by the school, for how long, and how they can access them now or in the future.
- Full and accurate records about complaints involving children and young people is a fundamental rights issue.
- The requirements for record keeping and related processes need to be clearly outlined in the school's complaints handling policies and procedures.
- Best practice is for the complaints register, including all anonymous complaints, to form a regular report to both the school's management team, and a summary report for the school's governing body.
- (Principle 6 requires record keeping, privacy and employment law obligations are met)

9. Related Policies:

- Student Code of Conduct and Induction
- Child Protection and Mandatory Reporting Policy
- Child Abduction Response Plan
- Child Safe Environment Policies, Procedures and Implementation Plans
- Racial Discrimination Policy
- **10. Review:**

This policy will be reviewed annually.

- Use ccyp.wa.gov.au website's reference table to assess that the policy remains child friendly.



11. References:

www.ccyp.wa.gov.au

Humanrights.gov.au

<https://www.schoolgovernance.net.au/news/complaints-handling-and-the-national-principles-for-child-safe-organisations>

Child safe organisations – WA guidelines

The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations 15 incorporate the ten standards recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in December 2017, but cover all forms of child abuse. They were developed by the Australian Human Rights Commission and endorsed by all members of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in February 2019.

Version History		
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07/19	1 created	Board BG
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