Concerns & Complaints Policy

Purpose:	To enable the School to provide a consistent and equitable response to a concern or complaint raised by a Parent/Guardian.
Scope:	Parents/Guardians of students enrolled at Fitra Community School (Fitra), students, staff and the general community
Implemented by:	Principal
Approved by:	Fitra Board
Effective Date:	May 2024
Review Date:	December 2024

Raising a Complaint or Grievance

Concerns or complaints can be raised by Parents/Guardians of students enrolled at the School, students or a member of the general community about any aspect of the school's operations.

The following is a guide on the appropriate person to contact depending on the issue at hand.

About What / Issue	Who to Contact
Classroom activities, class curriculum, friendship issues, Excursions / Camps	Relevant Teacher
Complex Student issues, Student Welfare, Child Safety, School Curriculum, Classroom Staff, School Policy, School Management, Fees, Enrolment & General matters	Principal
Principal, Appeal decisions to expel a Student	Board of Directors

How:

Adults

The Principal and teachers are generally present in the car park during pick and drop off times. If the concern or complaint is a relatively simple matter that may be able to be resolved in a quick conversation the complainant is encouraged to raise it with the relevant person at that time.

If the concern or complaint is of a more serious nature and will require time to consider and resolve the complainant may either submit the concern or complaint via email to admin@fitra.vic.edu.au or contact admin requesting an appointment with the relevant person.

If in the course of a car park conversation the relevant person forms the view that the complaint or concern being raised cannot be resolved quickly, the relevant person may request that the complainant lodge the concern or complaint via email to admin@fitra.vic.edu.au or contact admin requesting an appointment bet set-up.

Children

Children are afforded multiple channels through which to voice their opinions, raise concerns or make complaints. These include:

- At whole school morning meetings
- At whole school closing circle
- Through building strong relationships between teachers and students and emphasising that teachers are there to address student questions or concerns.
- Through their buddies. Younger students are paired with older students and are encouraged to seek their older buddies out if they have a specific concerns.
- Submitting a question / concern in the 'Ask Uncle Adel' Jar. Such questions and concerns can be submitted anonymously if required.

Complainants are asked to:

- Raise their concern/complaint as soon as possible after the issue occurs
- Provide detailed factual information, which may be asked for in writing
- Maintain and respect everyone's privacy and confidentiality
- Be calm, courteous, honest and sincere

- Recognise everyone has rights and responsibilities that must be balanced
- Respect and understand each other's point of view; value difference rather than judge and blame
- Realise we need to achieve an outcome acceptable to everyone involved
- If raising the concern or complaint formally, do so in writing

Addressing Concerns and Complaints

The School's response will be prompt, courteous, efficient, fair, be cognisant of cultural safety and will follow the principles of procedural fairness outlined in this Policy.

The following process will be followed in response to the receipt of a concern or complaint:

- All complaints whether received in person, by telephone or email , will be entered into the Compass school management system and acted on promptly by the staff member who receives the complaint.
- The staff member who receives the complaint will determine the appropriate person to respond to the complaint based on the table above and notify that person about the receipt of the complaint (the **Complaint Manager**).
- The Complaint Manager will advise the complainant of the estimated timeline for investigating the complaint as soon as possible after being notified about the complaint. Such advice will be verbal if practicable or otherwise in writing.
- The Complaint Manager will make every attempt to provide a response to a concern or complaint within 20 business days. However, if a complaint involves many students and/or complex issues, the School will need more time to investigate the issues. The Complaint Manager will inform the complainant either verbally or in writing (whichever is appropriate and convenient in the circumstances) about the new estimated timeline for providing a response to the complaint and the reasons for any delays.

- Upon thorough investigation, further discussion and clarification with all parties involved, the Complaint Manager will provide a response to the concern or complainant. If the complaint is raised formally or the nature of the complaint warrants a written response the response will be provided in writing. The response will state the outcome of the investigation and the School's proposed remedy. Where a concern or complaint is justified, possible remedies that the School may suggest include:
    - An explanation or further information
    - Mediation, counselling or other support (appropriate avenues for which shall be determined having regard to the nature of the concern or complaint)

- An apology, expression of regret or admission of fault
- Change a decision
- Change policies, procedures or practices

- If the response is accepted by the complainant, the concern or complaint will be considered resolved. If not accepted, the concern or complaint can be escalated as noted below at the complainant's election.

Escalation of Unresolved Concerns or Complaints

If a concern or complaint is not satisfactorily resolved with the Complaint Manager, it will be escalated as follows:

- Unresolved issues where a Teacher was acting as Complaint Manager will be referred to the Principal.

- Unresolved issues where the Principal was acting as Complaint Manager will be referred to the Board of Directors, who will appoint a Director to act as Complaint Manager.

If after referral to the Board of Directors you believe your concern or complaint has still not been satisfactorily resolved, then you can contact the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT), Victorian Registration & Qualifications Authority (VRQA) or any other relevant statutory body who may be able to advise you of your options going forward.

Procedural Fairness

Procedural fairness and transparency should be maintained at all times to:

- Protect the rights, interests and expectations of the participants in the investigation
- Enhance the credibility of the investigation process
- Rely on the investigation when making decisions
- Defend decisions in a court or tribunal.

In order to maintain procedural fairness the Complaint Manager should ensure that:

- The respondent is aware of all the allegations made against them in sufficient detail
- The respondent is allowed a reasonable opportunity and adequate time to respond to each of the allegations
- An investigation is carried out in a reasonable timeframe
- The Complaint Manager is independent and has no personal interest or bias in the matter being investigated

- Participants are given the opportunity to have a support person in the interviews pertaining to the investigation
- Participants are required to maintain confidentiality and sign a confidentiality agreement
- Participants are given the opportunity to respond to any contradictory evidence
- The Complaint Manager makes reasonable and diligent enquiries to ensure that there is sufficient evidence before making findings
- The Complaint Manager is impartial and does not have a vested interest in the outcome of the investigation. Any potential conflicts of interest should be disclosed.

Communication

This policy will be made accessible to Parents/Guardians, Staff and the School community through the Compass school management system. It will also be provided to complainants upon receipt of a formal concern or complaint.

Privacy Statement

The School respects the confidentiality and privacy of all complainants. The School undertakes to handle all personal information provided as part of the complaint in accordance with its Privacy Policy. Information provided as part of the complaint that is not personal information will be treated as confidential and only disclosed to the extent that it is necessary to investigate and resolve the complaint.

Related Policies

- Behaviour Management Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Child Safety Policy