

PARENT/ CARERS COMPLAINTS POLICY

Definition

Complaint is an expression of concern or dissatisfaction with something the school has done or is doing

Southern Autistic School (SAS) Values

SAS's approach to handling concerns and complaints is based on our values of:

- Providing a safe and supportive learning environment;
- Building relationships between students, parents and staff;
- Providing a safe working environment for staff.
- Seeing complaints can be part of an improvement opportunity

Expectations

SAS expects a person raising a concern or complaint to:

- Do so promptly, as soon as possible after the issue occurs;
- Provide complete and factual information about the concern or complaint, preferably in writing;
- Maintain and respect the privacy and confidentiality of all parties;
- Acknowledge that a common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties;
- Act in good faith, and in a calm and courteous manner;
- Show respect and understanding of each other's point of view and value difference.
- Recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced.

SAS will address any concerns and complaints received from parents

- Courteously;
- Efficiently;
- Fairly;
- Promptly, or within the timeline agreed with the person with the concern or complaint;
- In accordance with due process, principals of natural justice and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's regulatory framework.

Raising Concerns or Complaints

In the first instance, a complaint should be made to the school. The complainant should telephone, visit and/or write to:

- The student's teacher about learning issues and incidents that happened in their class or group;
- Principal, if students from several classes are involved;
- The Principal about issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members.
- If you are not sure who to contact, contact the school on **9563 8139** or southern.autistic.sch@edumail.vic.gov.au

Help with raising concerns or complaints

- Personal support is most appropriate in situations where the complainant and others involved in the complaint process have emotional issues related to the complaint.
- Complainants can seek the services of an advocate when they feel they are unable to express their concern clearly. An advocate can be a friend or someone who is available through an appropriate support organisation who does not receive a fee for service.
- All parties involved in addressing a complaint may seek the services of a mediator when there is difficulty coming to an agreement.
- The school will ensure that the complainant is aware of these supports.

Managing parent concerns and complaints information

When the complaint is easily resolved in a telephone call, a brief note in the school's/principal's/teacher's diary recording the issue and the resolution may be all that is required. However with more complex/serious complaints the following details will be recorded:

- Name and contact details of the person with a concern or complaint;
- The date the concern was expressed or complaint made;
- The form in which the concern or complaint was received (such as face-to-face, by telephone, in writing, by email)
- A brief description of the concern or complaint; Any recommendations for future improvement in the school's policy or procedures.

Addressing concerns or complaints

SAS will make every effort to resolve concerns and complaints before involving other levels of the Department of Education and Training.

SAS will give a complainant a copy of its complaints procedures.

- SAS will determine whether a concern or complaint should be managed through the school's concerns and complaints process or through other complaints processes of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.
- All complaints will be noted and acted on promptly by the staff member who receives the complaint.
- The Principal or delegate will investigate all complaints and will provide a response to the complainant.
- Concerns and complaints about general school matters (such as the timing of events, school policies and facilities) will be addressed by the Principal or a relevant staff member.
- SAS will make every attempt to resolve a concern or complaint as quickly as possible.
- Should the complaint involve complex issues, SAS might need to take advice from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's Regional Office, which may take more time. The school will tell the complainant the new timeline for addressing the complaint and the reasons for any delays. In all cases, the school will try to resolve a concern or complaint within twenty days.

Remedies

If a concern or complaint is substantiated in whole or part, SAS will offer an appropriate remedy. For example, at its discretion and depending on the circumstances, the school might offer:

- An explanation or further information about the issue;
- Mediation, counselling or other support;
- An apology, expression of regret or admission of fault;
- To change its decision;
- To change its policies, procedures or practices;
- To cancel a debt (such as for school payments);
- A fee refund.

The school will implement the remedy as soon as practicable.

Referral of concerns or complaints

If a person with a concern or complaint is not satisfied with the outcome determined by the school, they should contact the Department of Education and Training, South East Victorian Regional Office

SAS's procedures for addressing concerns and complaints will be

- Published on the school's website;
- Given to a parent when their child enrolls;
- Printed in the Parent Information Book;

SAS will

- Brief all members of staff (including volunteers) about its procedures to address concerns and complaints.
- Provide staff with (or provide access to) training and support appropriate to their responsibilities under the procedures

Monitoring the parent complaints policy

- SAS will monitor parent concerns and complaints and consider issues raised through the parent complaints process.
- There will be an annual reporting to Council on the number and outcomes of complaints
- SAS's School Council will regularly review its policy and procedures to effectively address parent concerns and complaints as part of its cyclic policy and procedures review schedule.

Ratified

Review