

# COMPLAINTS POLICY

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide an outline of the complaints process at Blackwood Special Schools Outdoor Education Centre so that families 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 regarding our school are managed in a timely, effective, fair and respectful manner.

## SCOPE

This policy relates to complaints brought by families, students or members of our school community and applies to all matters relating to our school. In some limited instances, we may need to refer the complainant to another Department of Education and Training process where there are different mechanisms in place to review certain decisions, for example, expulsion appeals.

## POLICY

Blackwood 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 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.

### **Preparation for raising a concern or complaint**

Blackwood encourages families or members of the community who may wish to submit a complaint to:

- carefully consider the issues you wish to discuss
- remember you may not have all the relevant facts about the issue being raised
- think about how the issue could be resolved
- be informed by checking the policies and guidelines set by the Department and Blackwood

## Complaints process

Blackwood is always happy to discuss with families and community members any concerns that they may have. Concerns in the first instance should be directed to the classroom teacher. Where possible, school staff will work with you to ensure that your concerns are appropriately addressed.

Where concerns cannot be resolved in this way, families or community members may wish to make a formal complaint to the principal.

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 before working towards a resolution. The following process will apply:

1. **Complaint received:** Please either email, telephone or arrange a meeting through the principal to outline your complaint so that we can fully understand what the issues are.
2. **Information gathering:** Depending on the issues raised in the complaint, the principal 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 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 should you wish to take further action. 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:** Blackwood will acknowledge receipt of your complaint as soon as possible (usually within 48 hours) and will seek to resolve complaints in a timely manner. Depending on the complexity of the complaint, we 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, Blackwood will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

## Resolution

Where appropriate, Blackwood 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, Blackwood 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 [sevr@edumail.vic.gov](mailto:sevr@edumail.vic.gov).

Blackwood may also refer a complaint to the South East Regional SEIL if we believe that we have done all we can to address the complaint.

## **REVIEW PERIOD**

This policy was last updated on July 2020 and is scheduled for review on July 2021