

COMPLAINTS POLICY

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide an outline of the complaints process at Armstrong Creek School so that parents 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 Armstrong Creek School are managed in a timely, effective, fair and respectful manner
- ensure that high standards of conduct are maintained by staff, students and parents at all times, and that complaints are managed and resolved fairly, efficiently, promptly and in accordance with relative legislation.

SCOPE

This policy relates to complaints brought by parents, carers, 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

Armstrong Creek School 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.

The procedures in this policy cover concerns and complaints about:

- General issues of student behaviour which conflict with the school's code of conduct
- Incidents of bullying or harassment in the Learning Community or the school yard
- Learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
- Communication with parents
- School charges and payments
- General administrative issues

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.

The school expects a person raising a concern or complaint to:

- do so promptly, as soon as possible after the issue occurs
- contact relevant staff at an appropriate time and not when they are supervising/instructing students
- provide complete and factual information about the concern or complaint
- do not take second hand information or gossip as fact
- refrain from approaching children in relation to concern or complaint
- refrain from conducting their own investigation, this is the role of the school
- contain discussions between the school and the individuals involved and not to be aired on social media
- act in a civil, respectful and socially acceptable manner at all times, meetings or discussions that become abusive and disrespectful will be dismissed and alternative appropriate arrangements made
- understand that a common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties

Armstrong Creek School prides itself on clear, consultative and open communication. (See the Parent Engagement Strategy). While we accept our responsibility to consult and to communicate both clearly and effectively with the community, community members also have an obligation to read notices and newsletters, to attend briefings and to seek clarification when required. There may however, still be times when members of the community disagree or are confused about the things that we are doing. It is essential that the established process as outlined below is followed to resolve grievances.

Preparation for raising a concern or complaint

Armstrong Creek School encourages parents, carers or members of the community who may wish to submit a complaint to:

- carefully consider the issues you would like to discuss
- remember you may not have all the facts relating to the issues that you want to raise
- think about how the matter could be resolved
- be informed by checking the policies and guidelines set by the Department and Armstrong Creek School (see “Further Information and Resources” section below).

Complaints process

Armstrong Creek School is always happy to discuss with parents/carers and community members any concerns that they may have. Concerns in the first instance should be directed to

- The student’s Home Group teacher about learning issues and incidents that happened in their Learning Community or during outside play
- The Leading Teachers about issues relating to students, staff members or ongoing issues that have not been resolved by the Home Group teacher.
- The Assistant Principals about issues relating complex student issues beyond the Home Group or Leading Teachers ability to resolve.
- The Principal about issues relating to school policy, school management or very complex student issues beyond the Assistant Principal’s ability to resolve.

Where possible, school staff will work with you to ensure that your concerns are appropriately addressed.

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 and will then convene a resolution meeting with the aim of resolving the complaint together. The following process will apply:

- 1. Complaint received:** Please either email, telephone or arrange a meeting through the front office with the Assistant Principal or Principal, to outline your complaint so that we can fully understand what the issues are. We can discuss your complaint in a way that is convenient for you, whether in writing, in person or over the phone.
- 2. Information gathering:** Depending on the issues raised in the complaint, the Principal, Assistant Principal or nominee 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 or Assistant 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 in the event you would like to take further action about it. 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:** Armstrong Creek School will acknowledge receipt of your complaint as soon as possible (usually within two school days) and will seek to resolve complaints in a timely manner. Depending on the complexity of the complaint, Armstrong Creek School 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, Armstrong Creek School will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.
- 5.** Armstrong Creek School keeps a written record of serious, substantial or unusual complaints that require resolution actions and document all steps taken to achieve agreement.

Resolution

Where appropriate, Armstrong Creek School 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, Armstrong Creek School 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 Western Region by contacting *1300 333 23*.

Armstrong Creek School may also refer a complaint to South Western Region if we believe that we have done all we can to address the complaint.

For more information about the Department's *Parent Complaints* policy, including the role of the Regional Office, please see: [Parent Complaints policy](#).

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Student Engagement and Inclusion Policy

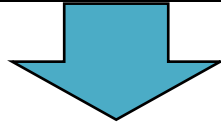
Bullying Prevention Policy

REVIEW PERIOD

This policy was last updated in October 2020 and is scheduled for review in October 2023

Raising Complaints Process

Before raising concerns or complaints	<p>Be clear about the issues you want to discuss. Focus on the facts and the things that affect your child. Remember you may not have all the facts yet. Think about how the matter could be resolved. You can ask the school for a copy of their Complaints Policy. Be realistic about what the school can do.</p>
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Raising concerns or complaints	<p>The school uses COMPASS as the main communication system. The complainant should telephone, visit or write to:</p>
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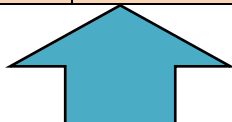
The student's Home Group teacher	<p>Contact the student's Home Group teacher about learning issues and incidents that happened in their Learning Community or during outside play.</p>
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<p>The Leading Teacher <u>Prep to Grade 2:</u> Krystina Simpson <u>Grades 3 and 4:</u> Claire Govan <u>Grades 5 and 6:</u> Kate Lachmund <u>Secondary School Students:</u> Alison Balchan <i>Contact: 5218 5100</i></p>	<p>Contact the the Leading Teachers about issues relating to students, staff members or ongoing issues that have not been resolved by the Home Group teacher.</p>
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<p>The Assistant Principal <u>Prep to Grade 2:</u> Kathryn Sier <u>Grade 3- 6:</u> Dehlia Dawson Contact: 5218 5100</p>	<p>Contact the the Assistant Principals about issues relating complex student issues beyond the Home Group or Leading Teachers ability to resolve.</p>
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<p>The Principal Evan Savage <i>armstrong.creek.school@edumail.vic.gov.au</i></p>	<p>Contact the the Principal about issues relating to school policy, school management or very complex student issues beyond the Leading Teachers or Assistant Principals ability to resolve.</p>
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<p>Regional Office South Western Region, Regional Office: <i>Contact: 1300 333 232</i></p>	<p>Where complaints are unresolved complainants may contact the Regional Office. The Department staff member will help record the complaint and explain the steps they will take.</p>
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Working through a complaint	<p>Listen to each other's views. Work towards a solution. Be cooperative, respectful and kind. Respect people's privacy and keep things confidential.</p>
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