

Philosophical Basis

Rangeview Primary School and the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) recognise that involving parents in their child's education is critical to children's development and learning and as such both encourage the development of strong family-school partnerships. They also recognise that in all partnerships there will be times when there are disagreements and issues of concern that will need to be resolved.

This policy provides the Rangeview Primary School community with a procedure for dealing with parent concerns and complaints. The policy is based on our values of building relationships between students, staff and parents and of creating a safe and supportive learning and working environment for all students and staff.

It is expected that all parties involved in parent concerns/complaints will act respectfully and in good faith, in a calm and courteous manner, maintaining appropriate confidentiality of the matter and recognising the rights and responsibilities of all parties. The Rangeview community values should be adhered to at all times.

It is school policy that complaints made by parents will in no way adversely affect their children.

Guidelines

1. Concerns and complaints covered by this procedure

1.1 This policy applies to parent concerns and complaints regarding any aspect of the care and/or education of their children whilst at Rangeview Primary School. In accordance with DEECD guidelines, this policy does not apply to:

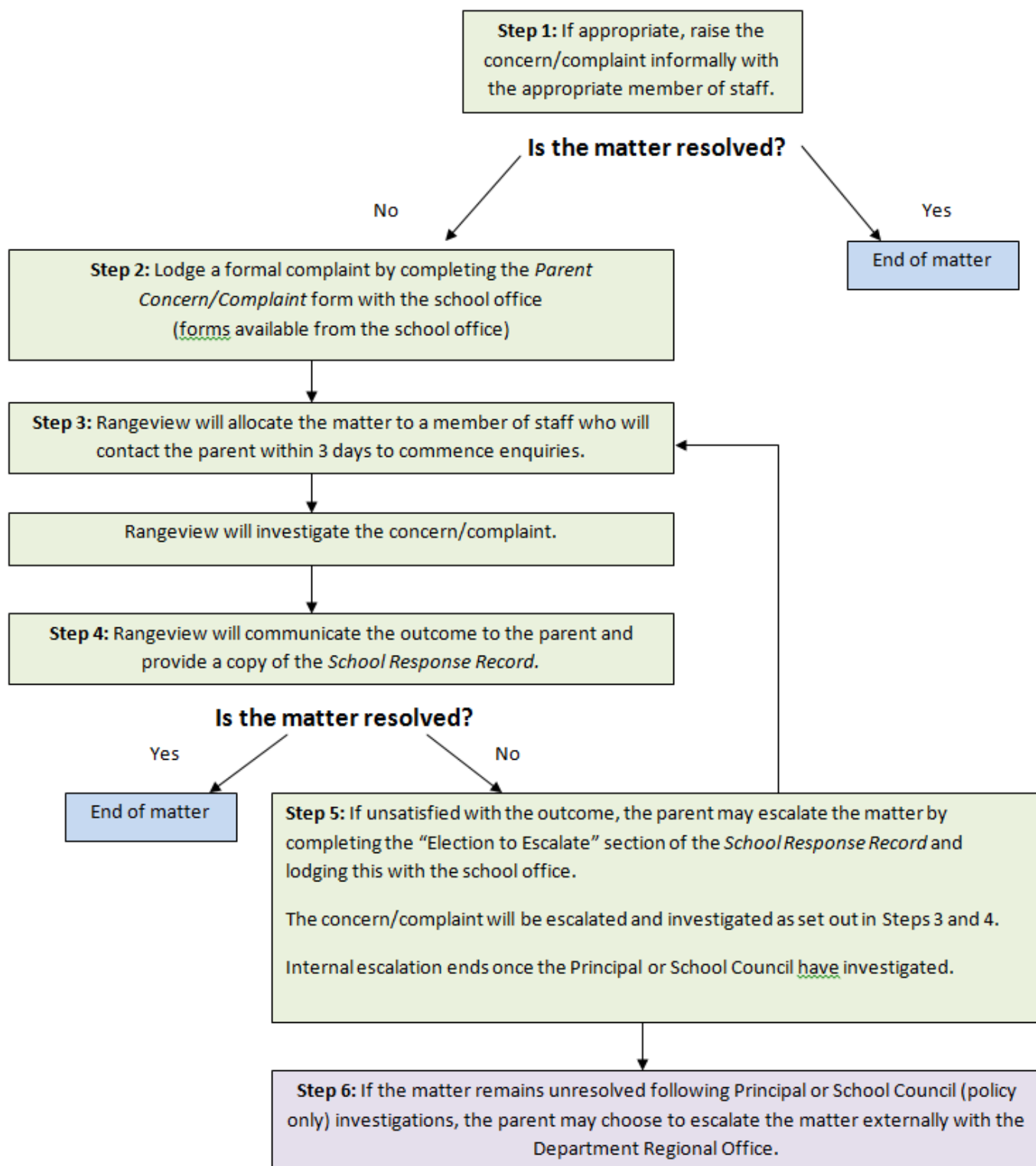
- matters about which there are existing legislated rights of review or appeal. These include:
 - student expulsions
 - complaints about staff conduct which if upheld would constitute misconduct
 - matters involving allegations of sexual assault (student critical incident matters)
 - other criminal matters, and
- concerns or complaints where a parent has employed and paid another party to represent them, such as a solicitor. In these situations, the concern or complaint must be referred to the Department's Legal Services Branch.

1.2 If the School receives a parent concern/complaint that relates to one of these matters, the School will advise the parent of the applicable review and appeal processes.

2. Ownership and scope

2.1 Rangeview will develop its procedures to address concerns and complaints in collaboration with parents and the school community.

3. The parent concern/complaint procedure:



3.1 Step 1 - informal resolution

Rangeview Primary School is committed to open and frequent communication between staff and parents. Parents are therefore encouraged (but not required) to attempt to resolve issue/s informally where appropriate, by raising the matter with the relevant member of staff at an appropriate time and location. An appointment can be made through the school office. Phone 98746381.

Confidential, detailed or complicated issues should not be raised with staff when they are responsible for the supervision of students. For such matters, a mutually convenient meeting time and location should be arranged.

3.2 Step 2 – Lodge formal concern/complaint

If informal resolution is not successful or is not appropriate, a parent may lodge the issue as a formal concern/complaint under this policy by completing a Parent Concern/Complaint Form (see Attachment 1) and lodging it with the School Office or the Assistant Principal.

Parent Concern/Complaint Forms are available from the School Office.

For further information about the difference between a formal and informal concern/complaint and about what matters may not be appropriate for informal resolution see the Further Information section at the end of this policy.

3.3 Step 3 – School to address the concern/complaint

Upon receiving a formal concern/complaint Rangeview will allocate the concern/complaint to a staff member for enquiry and response. Unless a parent has specifically requested otherwise, wherever appropriate, concerns/complaints will be allocated as follows:

IF THE ISSUE RELATES TO.....	THEN IT WILL BE ALLOCATED TO THE FOLLOWING...
Student learning issues or incidents that occurred within the class	Student's class/specialist teacher
Issues or incidents that affect more than one class across the year level	Year level co-ordinator
Serious, complex or cross school issues	Principal or Assistant Principal
Issues concerning School Policy	School Council

Where a concern/complaint relates to more than one type of issue, the School will determine who the concern/complaint is best allocated to.

Within 3 school days of lodgement, the staff member allocated the concern/complaint will contact the parent to:

- 1) acknowledge receipt of the concern/complaint,
- 2) inform the parent that they will be enquiring into the concern/complaint,
- 3) make a time to discuss the concern/complaint with the parent, and
- 4) provide the parent with a timeframe for the enquiry and response.

All attempts will be made to enquire into and respond to concern/complaints as promptly as possible. Parents should be aware that complex matters and those that are allocated to School Council (who meet on average once a month) will require longer response periods. If there is a delay in responding to a concern/complaint beyond the timeframe communicated, the parent will be notified.

3.4 Step 4 – Rangeview to communicate outcome to parent

Once the enquiries are completed, Rangeview will:

- 1) communicate the outcome to the parent with as much detail as is possible, taking into account any relevant privacy requirements; and
- 2) provide the parent with a copy of the completed School Response Record (Attachment B) outlining the enquiries made and the outcome.

If a concern/complaint is substantiated in whole or part, as part of the outcome Rangeview will offer an appropriate remedy. For example, depending on the circumstances, Rangeview might offer:

- a. an explanation or further information about the issue
- b. mediation, counselling or other support
- c. an apology, expression of regret or admission of fault
- d. to change its decision
- e. to change its policies, procedures or practices
- f. to cancel a debt or offer a refund.

Rangeview will implement the remedy as soon as practicable.

3.5 Step 5 –Internal escalation of unresolved matters

If the parent is not satisfied with the outcome they may escalate the matter by completing the “Election to Escalate” section of the School Response Record and lodging this with the school office.

Unless the parent has specifically requested otherwise, wherever appropriate, Rangeview will escalate concerns/complaints as follows for further enquiry:

IF THE EARLIER ENQUIRY WAS CONDUCTED BY	THEN IT WILL BE ESCALATED TO ...
Student’s class/specialist teacher	Year level co-ordinator, Assistant Principal or Principal
Year level co-ordinator	Assistant Principal or Principal
Assistant Principal	Principal

Principal or School Council (for policy matters)	No further internal escalation. Parent may elect to escalate the matter externally.
--	---

An internally escalated concern/complaint will be investigated in accordance with the steps set out in **Step 3- School to address the concern/complaint.**

A parent may continue to escalate an unresolved concern/complaint internally until it has been investigated by the Principal or School Council.

3.6 Step 6– External Escalation of unresolved matters

If the matter remains unresolved following Principal or School Council investigation, the parent may choose to escalate the matter externally with:

**Department Regional Office
9265 2400**

RESOLVED UNRESOLVED

√ ↓

**Central Office (Deputy Secretary, Office for Government School Education)
9637 2000**

RESOLVED UNRESOLVED

√ ↓

If the complaint remains unresolved after all DEECD’s processes have been implemented, the Deputy Secretary may refer the complainant to an external agency, such as Ombudsman Victoria, for investigation.

4. Monitoring and reporting concerns and complaints

4.1 Rangeview will maintain a system to record and monitor concerns/complaints and their resolution.

4.2 At least annually, Rangeview will:

- monitor formal parent concerns/complaints lodged under this policy and data from the Parent Opinion Survey to identify common and recurring themes that may need addressing; and
- report the following data about formal concerns/complaints received to School Council:
 - a) the number of concerns/complaints received

- b) the types of concerns/complaints received (as indicated on the complaint form)
- c) the number of concerns/complaints that were escalated internally and externally;
- d) the average length of time taken to respond to a concern/complaint; and
- e) any changes to school practices or procedures that arose as a result of the concerns/complaints received.

4.3 School Council will use this information to assess the effectiveness of Rangeview's policies and procedures and identify common or recurring issues that may need addressing via policy or procedure changes.

5. Review

School Council will review its policy and procedures to effectively address parent concerns and complaints as part of its cyclic policy and procedure review.

6. Further information:

What is the difference between a formal and an informal complaint?

Once a concern/complaint is lodged as a formal complaint, it will be addressed using the steps set out in this policy. Amongst other things, that means:

1. a formal record will be made of the concern/complaint,
2. the parent lodging the complaint will receive a written copy of the School Response Record; and
3. the nature of the concern/complaint will be reported to School Council as part of Rangeview's annual reporting and therefore form part of the data upon which School Council assesses the effectiveness of Rangeview's policies and procedures.

What sort of matters may not be suitable for informal resolution?

The following are examples of matters which may not be suitable for informal resolution:

1. serious matters,
2. where a formal record should be kept of the issue and/or its resolution
3. where a recurring issue or theme is involved (the nature of formal concerns/complaints are monitored by Rangeview so that any required policy or practice changes can be implemented)
4. where attempts to resolve the matter informally have been unsuccessful, or
5. if it would be more appropriate for an independent staff member to be involved in investigating the concern/complaint.

Can I make an anonymous formal complaint?

Anonymous concern/complaint forms will be accepted however it may not be possible to fully enquire into the matters raised without sufficient detail. The Principal will determine the extent to which an anonymous concern/complaint will be investigated. Where the concern/complaint is about the Principal, the decision to investigate the complaint shall be referred to and made by the Regional Director.

What support is available?

Parents and staff members may bring an advocate/support person (other than a paid representative) to any meeting held to discuss the concern/complaint. If a support person is attending a meeting, the parent/School should communicate this information prior to the meeting.

In attempting to resolve concerns/complaints, the parties may make use of any of the services provided to it by the Department of Education, including assistance from the Regional Office and/or the mediation services provided by the Dispute Settlement Centre Victoria.

Who will see my Parent Concern/Complaint Form?

Parent Concern/Complaint forms will be treated confidentially and will only be provided to people who are:

1. involved in enquiring into the issues raised; or
2. required to respond to/provide information relating to the issues raised.

If you have concerns about this issue, please contact the Principal.

Will all formal complaints be actioned?

Whilst Rangeview is committed to treating all concerns and complaints seriously, the Principal may decide to take no action on a concern/complaint if in their opinion, the concern/complaint:

1. would require an unjustifiable use of resources to investigate having regard to the nature of the issues raised;
2. is not made in good faith,
3. is an attempt to re-open an issue that has already been fully investigated, or
4. is the result of unreasonable complainant behaviour (that is, behaviour that is significantly outside the expectations of co-operation, courtesy and respect or is orientated towards conflict. For example, complaints including personal abuse or material clearly intended to intimidate). In circumstances involving unreasonable complainant behaviour, the Principal will develop a plan to address the complainant and their interaction with the school in accordance with DEECD policy.

Where can I get further information regarding parent concern/complaints?

Further information regarding the issues covered in this policy is available from the Principal or Assistant Principal or from the DEECD parent complaints website at:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/complainschool.aspx>

Advice about raising a concern of making a complaint is also available from Parents Victoria – 9380 2158.

7. Date of Policy and Date of Review

Policy developed in November 2012

Policy to be reviewed in 2014



PARENT/CONCERN/COMPLAINT FORM

This form should be used by parents/guardians to lodge a formal concern/complaint under Rangeview’s Raising & Addressing Parent/Guardian Concerns and Complaints Policy. Copies of the Policy are available from the school office. You may request assistance from any member of staff to complete this form.

PERSONAL DETAILS

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Best Contact Number: _____

Student/s Name & Grade: _____

Please note that whilst anonymous concerns/complaints will be accepted, they may not be able to be fully investigated without sufficient detail.

CONCERN / COMPLAINT DETAILS

TYPE: (Please tick one or more)

<input type="checkbox"/> Friendship	<input type="checkbox"/> Playground Incident	<input type="checkbox"/> Homework
<input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum	<input type="checkbox"/> Classroom Incident	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff performance/ Conduct
<input type="checkbox"/> Sporting Teams	<input type="checkbox"/> Camps / Excursions	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> Policy-Name of Policy _____		

Please provide a description of the issue including all relevant information (add extra sheets if required):

Have you attempted to raise/resolve the matter informally? If so, please provide details:

Outcome Sought – In your opinion how do you think this issue could be resolved?

Date: **Signature:**

Thank you. Rangeview Primary School treats all concerns and complaints seriously. This matter will be allocated to a staff member who will contact you within three school days of lodgement of this form. Please see the Policy for further information. If you have any concerns about any aspect of the Policy or procedure, please contact the Principal or Assistant Principal.



Office Use Only
Date Form Lodged
..... / / 20.....
Matter Number
.....

SCHOOL RESPONSE RECORD

This form is to be used by Rangeview Primary School to respond to formal concerns/complaints lodged under Rangeview’s Raising & Addressing Parent Concerns & Complaints Policy.

COMPLAINT DETAILS:

Complaint Lodged By: _____
Complaint Lodgement Date: _____
Allocated to (staff member): _____
Brief Summary of Concern/Complaint:

ENQUIRIES MADE:

Discussion/s with Complainant on: _____
Other Enquiries: _____

OUTCOME:

School Response to concern/complaint: _____

Any action to be taken as result of outcome: _____

Action to be taken by (insert date & responsible person) _____

Outcome communicated to parent/s on: _____

Please continue over page

PARENT SECTION:

I have received a copy of this School Response Record
My concern/complaint has been resolved to my satisfaction

OR

My concern/complaint has NOT been resolved and I elect to escalate this
matter for further review (see the Policy for further information about escalation)

Date: **Parent Signature:**

Allocated Staff Member Signature:

END OF POLICY