

## Definitions

Bullying – Targeted, repeated behaviour

CPS – Coatesville Primary School

DET – Department of Education and Training

Harassment - aggressive pressure or intimidation.

Principal Nominee – a member of the leadership team.

## Purpose

To provide an outline of the complaints process at CPS so that students, parents, carers and members of the community are informed as to how they can raise complaints or concerns about issues arising at our school

To ensure that all complaints and concerns regarding Coatesville Primary School are managed in a timely, effective, fair and respectful manner.

## Scope

This policy relates to complaints brought by students, parents, carers, or members of our school community and applies to all matters relating to our school.

In some limited instances, we may need to refer a complainant to another policy or area if there are different processes in place to manage the issue including:

- Complaints and concerns relating to fraud and corruption will be managed in accordance with the department's Fraud and Corruption Policy
- Criminal matters will be referred to Victorian Police
- Legal claims will be referred to the Department's Legal Division
- Complaints and concerns relating to child abuse will be managed in accordance with our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures

## Policy

Coatesville Primary 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.

When addressing a complaint, it is expected that all parties will:

- be considerate of each others' views and respect each others' 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 DET policy
- recognise that schools and DET may be subject to legal constraints on their ability to act or disclose information in some circumstances.

### **Complaints and concerns process for students**

CPS acknowledges that issues or concerns can cause stress or worry for students and impact their wellbeing and learning. CPS encourages our students to raise issues or concerns as they arise so that we can work together to resolve them.

Students with a concern or complaint can raise them with a trusted adult at school, for example, with their teacher, Assistant Principal, office staff or Principal. This person will take concerns or complaints seriously and will explain what steps we can take to try to resolve the issue and provide support.

Students can also ask parents, carers or another trusted adult outside of the school, to talk about the issue instead. Information about parent/carer complaints and concerns process is outlined further below. The parent/carer process also applies to students who are mature minors, refer to: Mature Minors and Decision Making.

Other ways students can raise a concern or complaint include, but is not limited to:

- talking to a member of the student representative council about a concern and any suggestions for resolving it
- participating in the Attitudes to School Survey (for Grades 4-6)
- writing a note

Further information and resources to support students to raise issues or concerns are available at:

Reach Out <https://au.reachout.com/>

Headspace <https://headspace.org.au/>

Kids Helpline (call 1800 55 1800) <https://kidshelpline.com.au/>

Lifeline 13 11 44

Victorian Aboriginal Education Association (VAEI) <https://www.vaeai.org.au/>

Report Racism Hotline (call 1800 722 476) – this hotline enables students to report concerns relating to racism or religious discrimination

### **Complaints and concern process for parents, carers and community members**

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

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

- carefully consider the issues they 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 DET and Coatesville Primary School

#### *Support person*

Parents, carers and students welcome to have a support person to assist them in raising a complaint or concern with our school. Please advise if you wish to have a support person to assist, and provide their name, contact details, and their relationship.

### *Raising a Concern*

Coatesville Primary 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 your child's teacher. Where possible, school staff will work with parents/carers to ensure concerns are appropriately addressed.

### *Making a complaint*

Where concerns cannot be resolved in this way, parents or community members may wish to make a formal complaint to the school Principal or Assistant 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 and will then convene a meeting with the aim of resolving the complaint together. The following process will apply:

- *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.
- *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.
- *Response:* Where possible, a meeting will be arranged 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 to produce a written summary of the complaint in the event further action is required. 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.
- *Timelines:* Coatesville Primary School will acknowledge receipt of complaints as soon as possible (usually within two working days) and will seek to resolve complaints in a timely manner. Depending on the complexity of the complaint, Coatesville Primary School may need some time to gather enough information to fully understand the circumstances of the 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, Coatesville Primary School will consult and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

### *Resolution*

Where appropriate, CPS 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; and/or
- other actions consistent with school values and DET policies that are intended to support the student, parent and school relationship, engagement, and participation in the school community.

In some circumstances, Coatesville Primary School may also ask 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 not satisfied the complaint has been resolved by the school, or if the complaint is about the Principal and you do not want to raise it directly with them, then the complaint should be referred to the Department of Education.

CPS may also refer a complaint to DET.

For more information about the Department's parent complaints process, including the role of the Regional Office, please see: [Raise a complaint or concern about your school](#).

### **Record keeping and other requirements**

To meet Department and legal requirements, our school must keep written records of:

- Serious, substantial or unusual complaints
- Complaints relating to the Child Information Sharing Scheme and Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme, to meet regulatory requirements - refer to Child and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes for further information

CPS also follows Department policy to ensure that record-keeping, reporting, privacy and employment law obligations are met when responding to complaints or concerns.

### **Communication**

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on school website
- Included in staff induction processes
- Included in our staff handbook/manual
- Included in transition and enrolment packs
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions
- Included in student diaries for senior students so that it is easily accessible to parents, carers and students
- Annual reference in school newsletter
- Discussed at student forums/through communication tools
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

### **[Further Information and Resources](#)**

Child Safety Policy

Child Safety Code of Conduct

Complaints Parents – DET Website

Bullying and Harassment Policy

Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Inclusion Policy

### **[Evaluation](#)**

This policy will be reviewed every three years as part of the school's regular policy review cycle.

# PROTECT

**Everyone has the right to be safe and be protected from abuse.**

No one should behave in a way that makes you feel unsafe or afraid, including anyone in your family, anyone at school or anywhere else in the community.

Tell a teacher or any adult at your school if you feel unsafe.



**It's everyone's responsibility.**

Adults at school must listen and respond to concerns about child abuse.

If you suspect abuse of any child or young person, you have a responsibility to report it, even if you are not sure.

**Further information & resources**

[www.education.vic.gov.au/protect](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/protect)

