THE LAKES SOUTH MORANG P-9 SCHOOL
PARENT CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

Rationale:
The Lakes South Morang P -9 school has both a desire and a responsibility to ensure that high standards of communication and conduct are maintained by staff and students at all times, and that parent / guardian concerns or complaints are managed and resolved fairly, efficiently, promptly and in accordance with DET guidelines.

Aims:
The Lakes South Morang P-9 School works from a Values system and aims to address our values, Leadership, Respect, Learning and Teamwork when handling parent concerns and complaints. The Lakes approach to handling concerns and complaints is based on our intention;

- To provide a safe and supportive learning environment
- To build positive and genuine relationships between students, parents and staff
- To provide a safe working environment for all staff
- To resolve complaints fairly, efficiently, promptly and in accordance with DET guidelines.

Implementation:
The Lakes South Morang P – 9 School seeks to provide a positive, harmonious and productive environment. At times concerns and complaints may be raised. The types of concerns and complaints that these procedures cover are:

- General issues of student behaviour that do not support The Student Engagement Policy and procedures or the Consequences Flow Chart
- Incidents of bullying or harassment in the learning spaces or in the yard between 8.45 and 3.30 pm and out of hours sanctioned school activities
- Learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
- Communication with parents
- School fees and payments
- General administrative issues
- Other school related matters

These procedures do not cover matters for which there are existing rights of review or appeal as detailed in the Victorian Government Schools Reference Guide. These matters include:

- Student discipline matters involving expulsions
- Complaints about employee conduct or performance and complaints that should be dealt with by performance management, grievance resolution or disciplinary action representatives
- Complaints by the DET employees related to their employment
- Student critical incident matters
- Other criminal matters

It is the Principal’s responsibility to provide a healthy and positive school environment that is free from discrimination and harassment. In doing so, the Principal must ensure that all members of The Lakes community are aware of their rights and responsibilities. Procedures to address concerns and complaints have been developed in collaboration with parents and the school community. The following procedures have been developed:

- The Lakes Website www.thelakes.edu.au has a number of policies and procedures available for instant parent viewing
- The Lakes Newsletter regularly informs and updates parents of procedures or processes that have been developed in consultation with School Council
- The Lakes Student Engagement Policy supports the wellbeing of students within the community.
The Leadership model for addressing complaints or concerns

The Lakes Consequence Flow Chart

All cases of serious misconduct, sexual offences, criminal charges, or other serious incidents are referred to the DET Complaints and Investigations Unit, Emergency Management and / or local police

Concerns or complaints must follow the Leadership model. The person presenting the concern or issue should telephone, visit or write to make an appointment. A message can be left with the administration office on either campus and requests will be passed on immediately. The information below should provide a clear guide of who to contact depending on the situation:

- The student’s Teacher or Home Group Teacher for issues regarding student learning and minor incidents that occurred in the class or learning group
- The Student Manager for issues that involved a number of students in the year level
- The Leading Teacher for Student Engagement for issues that involve students across several classes or learning levels
- The Assistant Principal for issues relating to staff members or complex student issues
- The Principal for issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members or very complex student issues

Once a concern or complaint is made, the Principal or Principal’s representative will act to determine where unacceptable conduct is observed or brought to attention. The Lakes expects that a person raising a concern or complaint will:

- Do so promptly, as soon as possible after the issue occurs
- Provide complete and factual information about the issue
- 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, in a calm and courteous manner
- Show respect and understanding of each other’s point of view and value difference, rather than judge and blame
- Recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced

The Lakes will address any concerns and complaints received from parents:

- Courteously
- Efficiently
- Fairly
- Promptly, or within the timeline agreed with the person reporting an issue
- In accordance with due process

All concerns and complaints, ensuing procedures and outcomes will be fully documented. The Principal, or representative, may choose to respond to a concern or complaint through an informal process in cases where the issue is determined as minor, where the parent wishes the matter to be dealt with informally, or where the complaint has arisen from lack of or unclear communication. Formal processes will be used when informal processes haven’t been successful, where a parent seeks a formal process, or where the Principal believes the complaint warrants formal investigation. Full details regarding concerns and complaints can be found at [http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/pcschools.htm](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/pcschools.htm)

Any formal process involves:

- Investigating the complaint including formal interviews, written statements, conveying the details of the complaint to the respondent in writing providing the opportunity for a written response.
- Dismissing or accepting the complaint. Acceptance may involve the Complaints & Investigations Unit, verbal or written warnings, conciliation, or counselling etc.
- Preparation of a detailed confidential report.
- Monitoring of the situation.
Where emotional issues are related to the concern or complaint, personal support is welcomed. Parents are able to seek the support of a calm advocate where they feel they are unable to express themselves clearly. An advocate can be a friend or someone who is available to provide immediate and appropriate support who does not receive a fee for their service. Should there be a difficulty in addressing the issue; a mediator may be involved to support both parties in the discussion. Any parent who wishes to invite an advocate or request a mediator should ensure this person is aware of the concern or complaint before beginning the meeting.

In the first instance, when a concern is expressed a brief note may be made in a diary until a resolution is achieved. The Lakes will make every effort to resolve concerns or complaints before involving any other members of the DET and will make this decision based on the level of the concern. In the instance of a concern or complaint being lodged, regardless of the level of the issue, the information must be provided on the official “The Lakes Complaint Lodgement Form”

The Lakes will provide the parent with a copy of the Parent Complaints guide and direct parents to the school policy and procedures to ensure clarity. Copies of this handout are on display on the front counter of both Early Years and Middle Years offices. All concerns and complaints will be noted and acted up promptly by the staff member who receives the complaint. The Lakes will acknowledge all complaints made in writing and will provide the parent with a suitable timeline for investigating the issues. Should the concern or complaint involve a complex issue, The Lakes may need to seek advice from the DET Regional Office or the Legal Branch. In this situation, the parent will be informed of an increased timeline. In all cases, The Lakes will try to resolve a concern or complaint within 20 school days.

Once an issue has been resolved and the concern or complaint has been justified, a remedy will be implemented. Depending on the circumstance and the need for discretion, The Lakes might offer:

* An explanation for further information
* Mediation, counselling or other support
* An apology, expression of regret or an admission of fault
* To change a decision
* To review a policy, procedure or practice
* To cancel a debt
* To refund a fee

The Lakes would act upon the suitable remedy as soon as practicable. Should the chosen remedy be deemed to be unsatisfactory to the parent then the following options would be available:

* Parents may contact the Regional Office
* A letter including a copy of the complaint form can be sent to the Region outlining how The Lakes did not resolve the issue

**Evaluation**

The Lakes will monitor parent concerns and complaints and consider issues raised throughout this process. Relevant information will be collected and reviewed against the Parent Opinion Survey to support the ongoing development of school policies and procedures. The Lakes will review issues and identify any common or recurring issues that may need addressing, assess the effectiveness of these and other procedures and whether they are being followed or use information provided through the parent opinion survey.

* This policy will be reviewed as part of the school’s three-year review cycle

This policy has been endorsed by School Council 20/06/2017
The Lakes Complaint Lodgement Form

Personal Details
Title: _______ First Name: _____________________ Family Name: ______________________
Street address: __________________________________________________________________
Telephone: B/H_______________________ A/H ________________________
Email address: _____________________________________________________________

Student Details
First Name: ________________  Family Name: _________________________Year Level: ______

Who have you contacted about your complaint?
Class teacher ☐  Student Manager ☐  Student Engagement Leading Teacher ☐
Assistant Principal ☐  Principal ☐

Complaint Details:
Please provide the following – a description of the incident or problem/ relevant dates, places and times/ details of any phone conversations or meetings/ any explanations that you think are important. Add extra sheets if required and attach copies of relevant documents (if appropriate)

How do you think this issue could be resolved?

Complainant’s Signature & Date

Please place in an envelope addressed to either the Assistant Principal or Principal and hand to the office staff on either campus. Thank you
Parent Concerns or Complaints Process

Phone, visit or write to make an appointment

Student’s Home Group
Teacher - for minor incidents and/or classroom issues

Student Manager – for wider year level issues involving other students and/or programs

Student Wellbeing
Leading Teacher for sub school issues such as ongoing or serious issues between students

Resolved to this point, complete Complaint Lodgement Form

Student Wellbeing/Welfare Coordinator - for individual student welfare concerns

Assistant Principal – for issues related to staff members or complex student issues

Principal – for all issues previously unresolved relating to school policy, school management, staff members or complex student issues.