

# **TALKING TO YOUR SCHOOL**

## ***Useful information for parents with enquiries, concerns or complaints***

Your State school acknowledges the concerns of parents and welcomes any questions you have. Your School Council is committed to responding promptly and helpfully to your enquiries, concerns, complaints, suggestions and compliments.

Our policy on Disputes and Complaints is available from your school or via e-mail [asciv@asciv.org.au](mailto:asciv@asciv.org.au)

### **Introduction**

The relationship between the home and the school plays a very important part in a child's education. We cannot overestimate the critical role parents play in successful learning: parents contribute much to their child's development and are among the most important influences on the way in which the child approaches learning.

Teachers are responsible for the more formal aspects of children's learning and successful teaching builds on the home experiences of the child. This is most effective where there is an active partnership with parents.

Two-way communication is a critical factor in the partnership between parents and the school. Where a partnership exists, it is easier for parents to feel confident about the teaching and learning that takes place in the classroom and to solve problems.

### **What might you talk to your school about?**

Issues particular to your child such as attitude, progress, attendance, participation, social and emotional matters.

Learning environment, quality of teaching, homework, general student behaviour, pastoral care, policies and procedures and conduct of staff.

Access to support services such as student services; visiting teachers for students with disabilities; specialist facilities; education centers; programs for students experiencing difficulties with learning, for gifted and talents students or instrumental music.

### **How your school may communicate with you:**

- Written reports or portfolios on student progress
  
- Notes, surveys, annual reports and regular information through newsletters
  
- Parent-teacher interviews, parent information booklets, parent information sessions.
  
- Assemblies, special events, celebrations and displays of students' work
  
- You are welcome to talk to your child's teacher whenever you need to. It is best to make an appointment to talk with the teacher, to avoid disrupting the learning programme.

### **Information that is available from the school:**

- Information on DE&T policies
- Council policies and approaches to homework, behaviour management, excursions, dress codes, charges and contributions
- Course details
- Information about participation in the School Council, Parents' Associations

### **What can you do if you have a problem?**

Seeking information as early as possible can solve many problems. If you have any questions or concerns about your child's progress, the homework set or the assessment procedures, contact the class teacher. The best way to do this is to contact the school office to arrange a mutually convenient time for a telephone conversation or meeting.

Interpreters are available to assist parents in communicating with their school. Please contact your school if you would like the assistance of an interpreter. You can have a friend or the School Council President present during any discussion.

Parents have the opportunity for greater involvement in the school through the School Council and the Parents' Association.

### **When you have a problem:**

Try to identify the problem clearly before going to the school. If there is more than one problem, list them to ensure that the extent of the problem is clear to the school.

Decide whether the problem is a concern, a query or a complaint. This will help in finding a solution.

Make an appointment to talk with the teacher. This can be arranged through the school office. If your concern is about the conduct of a staff member, you may prefer to discuss the matter with a year level co-ordinator, assistant principal or the principal.

Try to stay calm. Even if you don't feel it, being calm will help you get your concerns across more clearly than if you are upset or angry.

### **Procedures for making complaints**

At all stages, staff will work with you to work out an agreed plan of action and timeline.

If you need assistance in resolving a concern or complaint, staff will help you:

- Obtain information about school policies and procedures
- Make enquiries about student programs, performance and behaviour
- Clarify a problem and register a concern with the school
- Direct letters or enquiry or complaint

## **Steps for parents**

### **School level resolution**

#### **Stage 1: Discussion with staff member**

Contact the class teachers or other relevant staff member to discuss your complaint. This is best done by making an appointment through the school office. The staff will work with you to resolve the problem.

#### **Stage 2: Review or investigation at the school level**

Contact the principal who will work with you and the staff member to resolve the problem. You may wish to formalize your complaint. To do this, you may write to the Principal who will acknowledge the complaint with a written reply as soon as possible, even if a resolution is not available at this stage.

The Principal will consider the issues and identify what action is to be taken and by when, and will clarify the process if a formal complaint is to proceed. The Principal may seek the support of the Regional Director or other relevant Regional staff.

This action and timeline will be confirmed with you in writing.

You should be aware that when a complaint is made in writing about the performance of an individual staff member, that staff member will receive documentation of the substance of the complaint.

### **District level resolution**

#### **Stage 3: District resolution**

If resolution is not reached at the school level, contact the Regional Director at your Regional education office for assistance in resolving the issues. This will involve an independent review of the situation and may include mediation.

The Regional Directors can be contacted through your Regional Department of Education and Training office. Numbers are:

### **Central resolution**

#### **Stage 4: Formal Complaints**

In those exceptional circumstances where a formal process is required, the complaint can be forwarded to:

Deputy Secretary  
Department of Education and Training  
33 St Andrews Place, Melbourne