Addressing Parent Concerns and Complaints
Policy

Our focus at Maryborough Education Centre is to always achieve the best outcomes for all students by:

- Providing a safe, caring and supportive learning environment for our students
- Building positive, supportive relationships between students, parents and staff and
- Providing a safe working environment for staff and volunteers.

Addressing parents’ concerns and complaints effectively
Concerns and complaints can be an important way for the community to provide information and feedback to our school. Complaints - as well as praise - provide valuable feedback about how well our school is meeting everyone’s needs. If you bring something to our attention, you are inviting us to enter into a problem-solving process to find a solution. All complaints will be considered confidential and in-line with the MEC Privacy Policy.

Concerns and Complaints Covered by the Procedures
These procedures cover concerns and complaints about general issues of student behaviour that are contrary to the Maryborough Education Centre Student Engagement Policy.

Guidelines
- Incidents of bullying or harassment in the classroom or the school yard
- Learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
- Communication with parents
- School requisites and payments
- General administrative issues
- Any other school-related matters except as detailed below.

These procedures do not cover matters for which there are existing rights of review or appeal, as detailed in the DET School Policy and Advisory Guide available at:


Those 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
- Complaints by DET employees related to their employment
- Student critical incident matters
- Other criminal matters.
Expectations
Maryborough Education Centre expects a person raising a concern or complaint to:
- Do so promptly, as soon as possible after the issue occurs
- Provide complete and factual information about the concern or complaint, preferably in writing
- 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 and 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.

Maryborough Education Centre will address any concerns and complaints received from parents:
- Courteously
- Efficiently
- Fairly
- Promptly, or within the timeline agreed with the person with the concern or complaint
- In accordance with due process, principals of natural justice and the Department of Education and Training's regulatory framework.

For more information regarding Department of Education and Training's Complaints Policy please go to:

Raising Concerns or Complaints
In the first instance, a complaint should be made to the school. The complainant should telephone, visit and/or write to:

- The student's teacher about learning issues and incidents that happened in their class or group
- The student's year level coordinator about an issue that is broader than that which occurs in a classroom
- One of the Assistant Principal's if students from several classes are involved
- The Principal about issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members or very complex student issues
- If you are not sure who to contact, contact the office on (03) 54617900 to inquire as to whom you should speak to.

Help with Raising Concerns or Complaints

- Personal support is most appropriate in situations where the complainant and others involved in the complaint process have emotional issues related to the complaint
- Complainants can seek the services of an advocate when they feel they are unable to express their concern clearly. An advocate can be a friend or someone who is available through an appropriate support organisation who does not receive a fee for service
- All parties involved in addressing a complaint may seek the services of a mediator when there is difficulty coming to an agreement.
• The school will ensure that the complainant is aware of these supports. A complainant who wishes to use these support services should ensure the person addressing the concern or complaint is aware of their intention and is in agreement.

Managing Parent Concerns and Complaints Information

• When the complaint is easily resolved in a telephone call, a brief note in the school SMtool program/Principal’s/teacher’s diary recording the issue and the resolution may be all that is required.
• With more complex/serious complaints the following details will be recorded:
  o Name and contact details of the person with a concern or complaint
  o The date the concern was expressed or complaint made
  o The form in which the concern or complaint was received (such as face-to-face, by telephone, in writing, by email)
  o A brief description of the concern or complaint
  o Any recommendations for future improvement in the school’s policy or procedures.

Addressing Concerns or Complaints

• Maryborough Education Centre will make every effort to resolve concerns and complaints before involving other levels of the Department of Education and Training. Our aim is to acknowledge receipt of your concern within two school days and respond after that.
• Maryborough Education Centre will give a complainant a copy of its concerns and complaints procedures.
• Maryborough Education Centre will determine whether a concern or complaint should be managed through the school’s concerns and complaints process or through other processes of the Department of Education and Training.
• All concerns and complaints will be noted and acted on promptly by the staff member who receives the complaint.
• The Principal, Assistant Principal or delegate will investigate all complaints and will provide a response to the complainant. This may be verbal or in writing depending upon what is agreed to by both parties.
• Concerns and complaints about general school matters (such as the timing of events, school policies and facilities) will be addressed by the Principal or a relevant staff member.
• Maryborough Education Centre will make every attempt to resolve a concern or complaint as quickly as possible. If a complaint involves many students and a range of issues, the school will need more time to investigate and resolve it.
• Should the complaint involve complex issues, Maryborough Education Centre might need to take advice from the Department of Education and Training Regional Office, which may take more time. The school will advise the complainant of the new timeline for addressing the complaint and the reasons for any delays. In all cases, the school will try to resolve a concern or complaint within twenty days.

Remedies

If a concern or complaint is substantiated in whole or part, Maryborough Education Centre will offer an appropriate remedy. For example, at the college’s discretion and depending on the circumstances, the school might offer:
  • An explanation or further information about the issue
• Mediation, counselling or other support
• An apology, expression of regret or admission of fault
• To change its decision
• To change its policies, procedures or practices
• To cancel a debt (such as for school payments)
• A fee refund
• The school will implement the remedy as soon as practicable.

Referral of Concerns or Complaints
• If a person with a concern or complaint is not satisfied with the outcome determined by the school or if at any stage in the process the parent/carer feels that they have been unfairly treated, they should contact the Department of Education and Training’s appropriate regional office.
• The officer from the region will ask the complainant for a complete and factual account in writing of the concern or complaint and the complainant’s opinion about why the school did not resolve it to their satisfaction.
• If the complaint cannot be resolved by the complainant, school and regional office working together, the regional office may refer it to the Department’s Group Coordination Division. The Division will ask the complainant for a complete and factual account in writing of the concern or complaint and complainant’s opinion about why the school and regional office did not resolve it to their satisfaction and will ask the complainant to outline their view on the course of action required to resolve the complaint. Where the complainant is unable to provide a written account the officer from Group Coordination Division should act on the information provided.

Communication and Training
Maryborough Education Centre’s procedures for addressing concerns and complaints will be:
• Published on the school’s website

Maryborough Education Centre will:
• Brief all members of staff (including volunteers) about its procedures to address concerns and complaints.
• Provide staff with (or provide access to) training and support appropriate to their responsibilities under the procedures.

Evaluation
• Maryborough Education Centre will monitor parent concerns and complaints and consider issues raised through the parent complaints process.
• Maryborough Education Centre will regularly review its procedures to effectively address parent concerns and complaints as part of its cyclic policy and procedures review schedule.

Principal includes the Principal and Assistant Principal.

Appendix A - Statement of Beliefs & Behaviours
Appendix B - Cares and Concerns Brochure
This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's 3 year review cycle.

Signed:

Paul Rumpff  
School Council President  

Date: 22-3-2017
Appendix B

At Maryborough Education Centre our Values are:

- Consistency
- Achievement
- Respect
- Enjoyment
- Inclusion
- Safety

Our focus at Maryborough Education Centre is to always achieve the best outcomes for all students by:

- Providing a safe, caring and supportive learning environment for our students.
- Building positive, supportive relationships between students, parents/caregivers and staff.

Maryborough Education Centre

Principal – Mr David Sutton
PO Box 171 Maryborough VIC 3465
(102-192 Baileysa Road)
Telephone: 03 5461 7500
Facsimile: 03 5461 3506
Email: maryborough.ec@edumail.vic.gov.au

MARYBOROUGH EDUCATION CENTRE

Learning for Life

CARES & CONCERNS

Learning for Life
WHY DO CONCERNS ARISE?

Schools are very busy places - there are lots of things that happen and there are many decisions made every day.

At the same time, the community is quite diverse, with many individuals or groups having vastly different opinions on how things should be done.

It is inevitable, therefore, that times will arise when some parents/caregivers agree with the school's actions while others disagree and wish to discuss the matter with the school.

We welcome such discussions and encourage parents/caregivers to raise issues so that they may be dealt with speedily and resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned.

Concerns, after all, are not a negative experience - so long as they are dealt with positively by everybody.

The following process for presenting and managing community, care or concerns has been developed by School Council in consultation with the community.

We believe it works well and it is the way we will manage all concerns at our school.

AGREED COMPLAINTS PROCESS

We ask that the following process be used to resolve care or concerns at our school.

STEP 1
Try and find out the facts before contacting the school. Many concerns are quickly resolved once the parent/caregiver is aware of all the facts.

STEP 2
Let the school know via email: maryborough.ec@edumail.vic.gov.au, details of the issue or make an appointment to let someone know that you have a concern.

STEP 3
We aim to investigate your concern in a timely manner and the most appropriate person will contact you to discuss the matter, or to organise a meeting.

STEP 4
If, however, you have concerns, make an appointment to discuss the issue with the Principal/Assistant Principal.

STEP 5
The Department of Education and Training can be contacted to help solve problems. They can be contacted on 03 8440 3111.

THINGS TO ALWAYS REMEMBER

Problems are best resolved using a positive attitude.

People need time to investigate and resolve many problems; a quick fix is not always possible or desirable.

Our school is committed to finding an outcome for all of the students.

It is important to see the issue from multiple viewpoints.

Not all disagreements can be resolved - sometimes we simply have to agree to disagree.

Opinions vary widely - disagreement is a natural part of life.

Everybody is doing what they believe is right, even if it's different to what we think.
Maryborough Education Centre recognises the importance of the partnership between schools and parents to support student learning, engagement and wellbeing. We share a commitment to, and a responsibility for, ensuring inclusive, safe and orderly environments for all members of our school community.

This Statement of Beliefs and Behaviours sets out our behavioural expectations of all members in this school community, including the principal, all school staff, parents/guardians, students and visitors. It recognises the diversity of individuals in our school community and addresses the shared responsibilities of all members in building safe and respectful school communities.

Discrimination, sexual and other forms of harassment, violence, aggression and threatening behaviour are unacceptable and will not be tolerated in this school.

Our Statement of Beliefs and Behaviours acknowledges that parents and school staff are strongly motivated to do their best for every child. Everyone has the right to differing opinions and views and to raise concerns, as long as we do so respectfully as a community working together.

RESPONSIBILITIES

AS PRINCIPALS AND SCHOOL LEADERS, WE WILL:
- Model positive behaviour to the school community consistent with the standards of our profession including confidentiality and privacy.
- Work collaboratively to create a school environment where respectful and safe conduct is expected of everyone.
- Believe in a manner consistent with the standards of our profession and meet core responsibilities to provide inclusive, safe and orderly environments.
- Plan, implement and monitor arrangements to ensure the care, safety, security and general wellbeing of all students in attendance at the school is protected.
- Identify and support students who are or may be at risk.
- Do our best to ensure every child achieves their personal and learning potential.
- Work with parents to understand their child's needs and, where necessary, adapt the learning environment accordingly.
- Respond appropriately when inclusive, safe or orderly behaviour is not demonstrated and implement appropriate investigations and sanctions when required.
- Make known to parents the school's communication and concerns procedures.
- Ask any person who is acting in an offensive or disorderly way to leave the school grounds.

AS STAFF, WE WILL:
- Model positive behaviour to the school community consistent with the standards of our profession including confidentiality and privacy.
- Proactively engage with parents about student outcomes.
- Work with parents to understand the needs of each student and, where necessary, adapt the learning environment accordingly.
- Work collaboratively with parents to improve learning and wellbeing outcomes for students with additional needs.
- Communicate with the principal and school leaders in the event we anticipate or face any unusual or challenging behaviours from parents.
- Treat all members of the school community with respect, irrespective of age, gender, identity, impairment, breastfeeding, lawful sexual activity, marital status, parental status, physical features, political belief or activity, pregnancy, race, religious belief or activity, sexual orientation, personal association (whether as a relative or otherwise) with a person who is identified by reference to any of the above attributes.

AS PARENTS, WE WILL:
- Model positive behaviour to our child and the school community.
- Ensure our child attends school on time, every day and the school is open for instruction.
- Take an interest in our child's school and learning.
- Work with the school to achieve the best outcomes for our child.
- Communicate constructively with the school and use agreed processes and protocols when raising concerns.
- Support school staff to maintain a safe learning environment for all students.
- Follow the school's communications and concerns procedures if there are concerns.
- Treat all school leaders, staff, students, and other members of the school community with respect, irrespective of age, gender, identity, impairment, breastfeeding, lawful sexual activity, marital status, parental status, physical features, political belief or activity, pregnancy, race, religious belief or activity, sexual orientation, personal association (whether as a relative or otherwise) with a person who is identified by reference to any of the above attributes.
AS STUDENTS, WE WILL:
- Model positive behaviour to the school community.
- Comply with and model school values.
- Behave in a safe and responsible manner.
- Actively participate in school including being prepared and punctual.
- Not disrupt the learning of others and make the most of our educational opportunities.
- Respect the school environment.
- Respect ourselves and all other members of the school community, irrespective of age, gender, sexual orientation, identity, race, impairment, breastfeeding, lawful sexual activity, marital status, parental status, physical features, political belief or activity, pregnancy, religious belief or activity, personal association (whether as a relative or otherwise) with a person who is identified by reference to any of the above attributes.

AS COMMUNITY MEMBERS, WE WILL:
- Model positive behaviour to the whole school community.
- Support school staff to maintain a safe and orderly learning environment for all students.
- Utilise the school's communications and concerns procedures to communicate with the school.
- Treat other members of the school community with respect, irrespective of age, gender, disability, impairment, breastfeeding, lawful sexual activity, marital status, parental status, physical features, political belief or activity, pregnancy, race, religious belief or activity, sexual orientation, personal association (whether as a relative or otherwise) with a person who is identified by reference to any of the above attributes.

THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING WILL:
- Provide support and advice to principals to enable them to manage and respond to challenging behaviour of students, parents/caregivers and staff.
- Provide practical guidance and resources to support schools to manage and respond to challenging behaviour of students, parents/caregivers and staff.
- Provide practical guidance and resources to support schools respond to and prevent bullying and promote cyber-safety and wellbeing.
- Provide access to evidence based resources and strategies to increase student safety, wellbeing and engagement.
- Provide schools with practical and legal support as required.
- Provide parents/caregivers with practical guidance and resources to resolve conflicts with the school.

CONSEQUENCES FOR FAILING TO UPHOLD THE STATEMENT OF BELIEFS

UNREASONABLE BEHAVIOURS
Behaviours that are considered inappropriate on and adjacent to school grounds or in relation to school business and that do not uphold the principles of this Statement of Beliefs and Behaviours include when a person:
- Is rude, aggressive or harasses others
- Sends rude, confronting or threatening letters, emails or text messages
- Is manipulative or threatening
- Speaks in an aggressive tone, either in person or over the telephone
- Makes sexist, racist or derogatory comments
- Inappropriately uses social media as a forum to raise complaints against the school
- Is physically intimidating, e.g., standing very close.

CONSEQUENCES
Principals are responsible for determining what constitutes reasonable and unreasonable behaviour.

Unreasonable behaviour and/or failure to uphold the principles of this Statement of Beliefs and Behaviours may lead to further investigation and the implementation of appropriate consequences. This may include:
- Utilising mediation and counselling services
- Alternative communication strategies being applied
- Formal notice preventing entry onto school premises or attendance at school activities. Written notice will follow any verbal notice given.
- An intervention order being sought
- Informing the police which may result in a charge of trespass or assault

By agreeing to meet specified standards of positive behaviour, everyone in our school community can be assured that they will be treated with fairness and respect. In turn, this will help to create a school that is safe and orderly, where everyone is empowered to participate and learn.