

## Complaints Policy

### POLICY STATEMENT

Daylesford Dharma School is committed to ensuring that student, parent/carer, staff, volunteer and other school community member complaints are dealt with in an efficient, effective and responsive way which reflects the school's [5 Precepts](#), being :

- Deep Listening and Loving Speech
- Generosity and Honesty
- Body Responsibility
- Mindful Consumption
- Reverence for all Life

The School acknowledges that students, parents/carers, staff, volunteers and other school community members have the right to raise a complaint, and to engage in a clear and transparent process for handling the complaint.

### BACKGROUND

Daylesford Dharma School wishes to foster within our school community the understanding that peace is not about the absence of conflict, but how we resolve our conflicts.

The School recognises that the essential elements of effective complaints handling are characterised as follows:

- The need to be fair through impartiality and openness.
- That the process is transparent and held in confidentiality.
- That complaints need to be dealt with promptly and courteously.
- That the process is to be accessible to the School community with awareness of, and access to the processes and procedures.
- The response to the complainant should be clear and informative by defining the problem and identifying the specific requests and agreed strategies.

### The School recognises:

- Conflict and misunderstanding are a normal part of life.
- We use the conflict resolution framework of Nonviolent Communication to handle complaints with all members of the school community.
- Effective handling of complaints can strengthen our school community.
- Efficient and timely handling of complaints can support student learning and school community stability and growth.

## DEFINITIONS

Complaint - any concern raised by a student, parent/carer, staff, volunteer and other school community member about the School's services or operations.

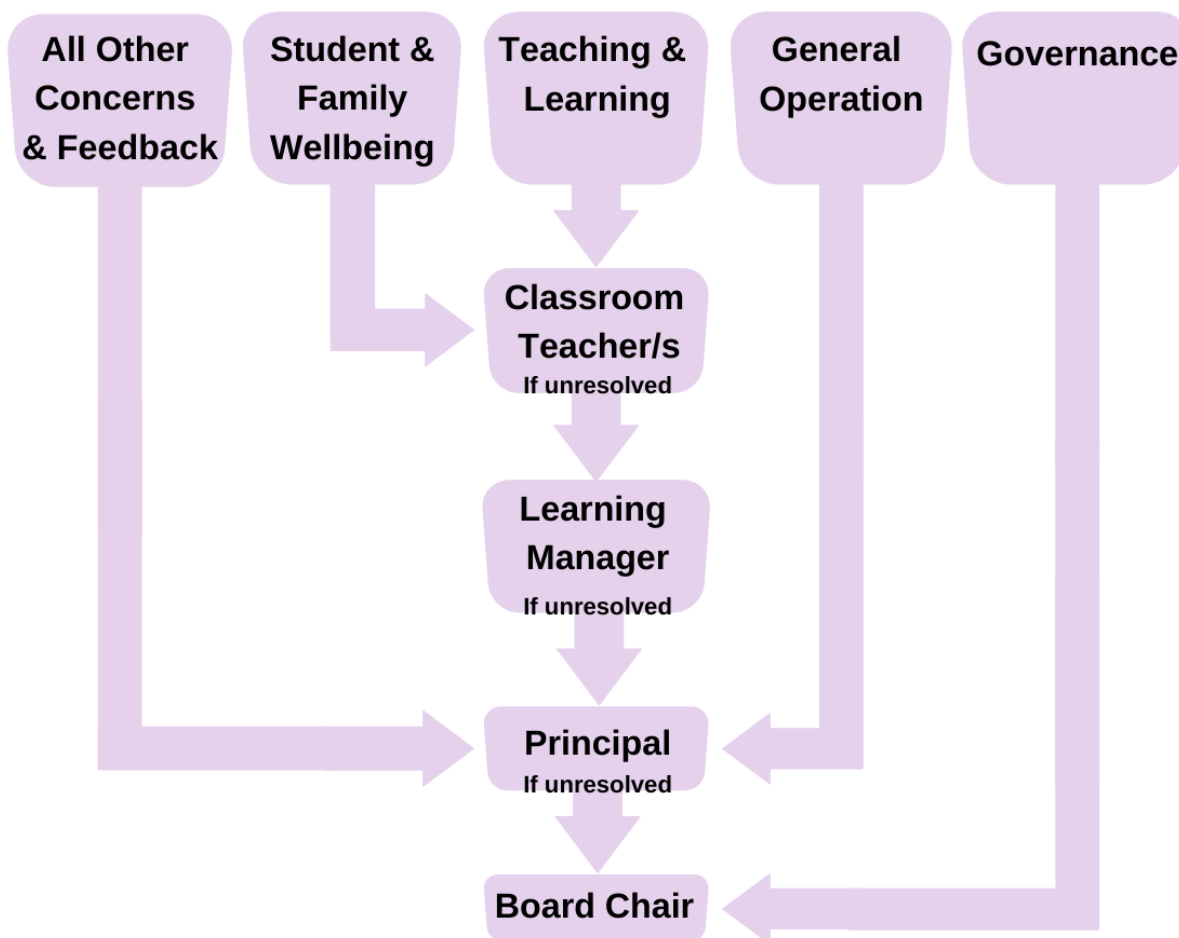
The Five Precepts - the school's ethical and moral framework that guides behaviour to develop the mind and character, to support self understanding and community harmony.

## PROCEDURE

### **Training and expectations:**

1. The School is committed to regularly providing Nonviolent Communication (NVC) conflict resolution training to its community. In Term 2 of each year, the students develop these language skills as a curriculum strand focus.
2. All students, parents, staff, volunteers and other school community members are expected to act in accordance with the School's 5 Precepts.
3. The school discourages the discussion of important concerns through informal conversations but prefers that the complaint procedure is confidential. Complaints are confidential and a matter between those concerned and those involved in handling the process.

**Concerns and Feedback communication pathways:**



**Step 1 Informal or Minor Complaints:**

For informal or minor complaints, the school requests that there is an attempt to resolve the issue informally and mindfully. Often, a telephone call, email contact, or a meeting with the person relevant to the issue, can clarify matters to the point where mutual understanding can be established.

A call to the school office on 5348 3112 can guide you to the best person to discuss your concern with or to arrange a meeting.

## Step 2 Formal Complaints

- 2.1 The process of a formal complaints procedure is confidential, and any complaints or appeals are a matter between the parties concerned and those directly involved in the complaints handling process.
- 2.2 The complainant needs to notify the School in writing that a formal complaint is being lodged, giving the nature and details of the complaint or appeal.
- 2.3 Written complaints or appeals are to be lodged with the Principal of the school at 90 Daylesford-Trentham Road Daylesford VIC 3460 or to [confidential@dharmaschool.com.au](mailto:confidential@dharmaschool.com.au). The Principal will be advised of the complaint.
- 2.4 A complainant can be accompanied and assisted by a support person at all relevant meetings and will be notified in advance of the meeting.
- 2.5 Once a decision has been made regarding the complaint or appeal, the complainant will be informed in writing of the outcome and the reasons for the outcome.
- 2.6 Any complainant not satisfied with a decision regarding a complaint may appeal to the Principal.

## Step 3 Appeal Process

- 3.1 The School's appeal process for unresolved complaints is referred to the Daylesford Dharma School Board of Governance. We expect that a sincere attempt is made to resolve an issue within the School before making an appeal.
- 3.2 The Board of Governance may engage the services of an independent Nonviolent communication conflict resolution mediator to guide and support the appeal process. The complainant will be informed in writing of the outcome of the appeal mediation process with this documentation kept on file.

## General

- While parents will often raise issues on behalf of their children, there are other issues which students may choose to raise on their own behalf, and which are best raised by them.
- Anonymous complaints might not be pursued.
- It is the School's policy and commitment that complaints made by parents will not adversely affect their children.
- The School will make appropriate systemic recording of complaints, processes and their outcomes.
- The School will commence assessment of the complaint or appeal within ten working days and finalise the outcome as soon as practical.

## **Student complaints**

Student complaints are dealt with as a normal part of the positive learning framework in the school.

### **Informal Opportunities:**

**Sharing Circles** - The sharing circle model creates an opportunity for teachers and students to hear and deeply listen to the thoughts, feelings and perspectives within the group situation. The notion of speaking while everyone listens respectfully is a powerful modality and at times the only help we need and often, the only one we will accept. This weekly opportunity provides a supportive place for discussion, and problem solving and planning. It is a non-judgmental place where children feel safe to be heard to air their concerns and complaints, and can learn to be active participants in a shared and collaborative community.

**Behaviour modelling** - Teachers and the senior students are expected to model the precepts to guide students as they develop their understanding of the community expectations, rights and responsibilities, that create a harmonious community.

Nonviolent communication (NVC) language modelling is expected of all staff who are trained in the NVC framework to enable student familiarity and experience, that develops the self-confidence to express peaceful and clear communication.

### **Formal Opportunities:**

**Peace Table process** - This is a focus meeting and a conceptual framework for airing a complaint or concern and establishing harmony in the School. It provides opportunity and experience for deep listening and clear communication where the Nonviolent communication process can be explored and experienced for skills building in the resolution of conflict. All focus meeting processes are recorded in the appropriate templates and stored securely as evidence of student development.

**Formal Complaint** - The opportunity for knowing how to formally make a complaint is provided to students through the class community learning expectations agreement that is developed within each classroom by the students. Additionally, the Inquiry learning strand of Social Harmony provides age appropriate investigation and experience of procedural fairness including the 'hearing rule' and the 'right to an unbiased decision', with pathways in the school for airing a complaint being explained. When a student engages in a formal complaint process, it may be appropriate for the student to choose to be supported by an older student or a staff member.

### **RELATED POLICIES:**

#### **Linked Policies:**

Student Engagement Policy  
Bullying and Cyber Bullying Policy  
Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy

#### **Review Date:**

March 2023