Heathcote Primary School

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact Heathcote Primary School's office.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide an outline of the complaints process at Heathcote Primary School so that students, parents, carers and members of the community are informed of how they can raise complaints or concerns about issues arising at our school
- ensure that all complaints and concerns regarding Heathcote 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 the manage the issue. For example:

- 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 Victoria Police
- Legal claims will be referred to the Department of Education'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

Heathcote 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.

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

- actively listen to one another, be considerate of each other's views, and respect each other's role
- be student focused
- be resolution focused and attempt to preserve working relationships
- act co-operatively and in good faith
- behave with respect and courtesy
- be inclusive, considerate, and respect the cultural safety of all people, including Aboriginal people, and the human rights of all parties including but not limited to disability, age, race, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, and marital status
- consider communication needs and preferences
- ensure that complainants and students related to complainants are not victimised for making a complaint or asserting their rights
- respect the privacy and confidentiality of those involved unless permitted or required to share information by law
- operate within, and seek reasonable resolutions that comply with, all applicable legislation and department policies.

Complaints and concerns process for students

Heathcote Primary School acknowledges that issues or concerns can cause stress or worry for students and impact their wellbeing and learning. Heathcote Primary School 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 classroom teacher, member of the wellbeing team, education support staff or a member of the leadership team. This person will take the concern or complaint seriously and will explain to the student what steps can be taken to try to resolve the issue and provide any support required.

Students can also ask their parent, carer or another trusted adult outside of the school, to talk to the school about the issue instead. Information about our 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 with us include:

- talking to a member of the Junior School Council (JSC) about their concern and any suggestions they have for resolving it
- writing a note for the anonymous student suggestions box in each classroom
- raising the concern at a class meeting using the classroom protocols

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

- Report Racism Hotline (call 1800 722 476) – this hotline enables students to report concerns relating to racism or religious discrimination
- Reach Out
- Headspace
- Kids Helpline (call 1800 55 1800)
- Victorian Aboriginal Education Association (VAEAI)

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Complaints and concerns process for parents, carers and community members

Preparation for raising a concern or complaint

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

- carefully consider the issues you 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 the department and Heathcote Primary School (see 'Further Information and Resources' section below).

Support person

A parent/carer raising a concern is welcome to have a support person to assist in raising a complaint or concern with our school. Please advise ahead of the meeting if there will support person to assist and provide their name and their relationship to you.

Raising a concern

Heathcote 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 the person listed in the school's communication pathway document on the school website and included as an Appendix with this policy. Where possible, school staff will work with you to ensure that your concerns are appropriately addressed.

Our school can arrange interpreting and translation services through the Department of Education to parents and carers who have limited English language skills to assist in communicating their concerns.

Making a complaint

Where concerns cannot be resolved in the above way, parents, carers or community members may wish to make a formal complaint to the 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 resolution meeting with the aim of resolving the complaint together. The following process will apply:

1. **Complaint received:** Please either email, telephone or arrange a meeting through the front office with the principal to outline your complaint so that we can fully understand the issue/s of concern. We can discuss your complaint in a way that is convenient for you, whether in writing, in person or over the phone.

2. **Timelines:** Heathcote Primary School will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within two school days and seek to resolve complaints within 15 school days. Depending on the complexity of the complaint, some complaints may take more than 15 school days. We will endeavour to complete any necessary information gathering and hold a resolution meeting where appropriate and required within 10 working days of the complaint being raised. In situations where further time is required, Heathcote Primary will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

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3. **Information gathering:** Depending on the issues raised in the complaint, the principal may need to gather further information to properly understand the situation. This process may also involve speaking to school and regional staff to obtain details about the situation or the concerns raised. In some instances, the leadership team may reach out to subject matter experts for advice. The school may also reach out to the complainant for further information or to clarify concerns.

4. **Response:** Where possible, a resolution meeting will be arranged with the principal 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 with you to produce a written summary of the complaint in the event you would like to take further action about it. 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.

   In some instances, the school in consultation with the region may suggest mediation, conciliation or other alternative methods of resolving the complaint based on the complexity and urgency of issues raised in the complaint.

Please note that unreasonable conduct (e.g. vexatious complaints) may need to be managed differently to the procedures in this policy.

Resolution

Where appropriate, Heathcote Primary School may seek to resolve a complaint by:

- an apology or expression of regret
- a change of decision
- a review of policy, procedure or practice
- a change of policy, procedure or practice
- offering the opportunity for student counselling or other support
- other actions consistent with school values that are intended to support the student, parent/carer and school relationship, engagement, and participation in the school community.

In some circumstances, Heathcote Primary School may also ask you 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.

In some instances, the resolution may include actions that must be taken by both the school and the complainant.

Escalation

If you are not satisfied that your complaint has been resolved by the school, or if your complaint is about the principal and you do not want to raise it directly with them, you may contact the department by phone on 1800 338 663, via the Enquiries form or by email at enquiries@education.vic.gov.au.

Heathcote Primary School may also refer a complaint to North West Region if we believe that we have done all we can to address the complaint.

For more information about the department's parent/carer complaints process, including the role of the regional office, please see: Make a complaint about your school

Review of complaints

Heathcote Primary School will consider whether complaints relating to child safety identify any causes or systemic child safety risks, and take steps to address those risks and continuously improve our child safety practices.

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.

Our school 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
- Included in transition and enrolment packs via a QR code to the policies section of the school website
- Annual reference in school newsletter
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

The following department policies and resources are relevant to this Complaints Policy:

- Complaint resolution
- Make a complaint about your school
- Report racism or religious discrimination in schools
- Report sexual abuse if you're a current or former student

The following school policies are also relevant to this Complaints Policy:

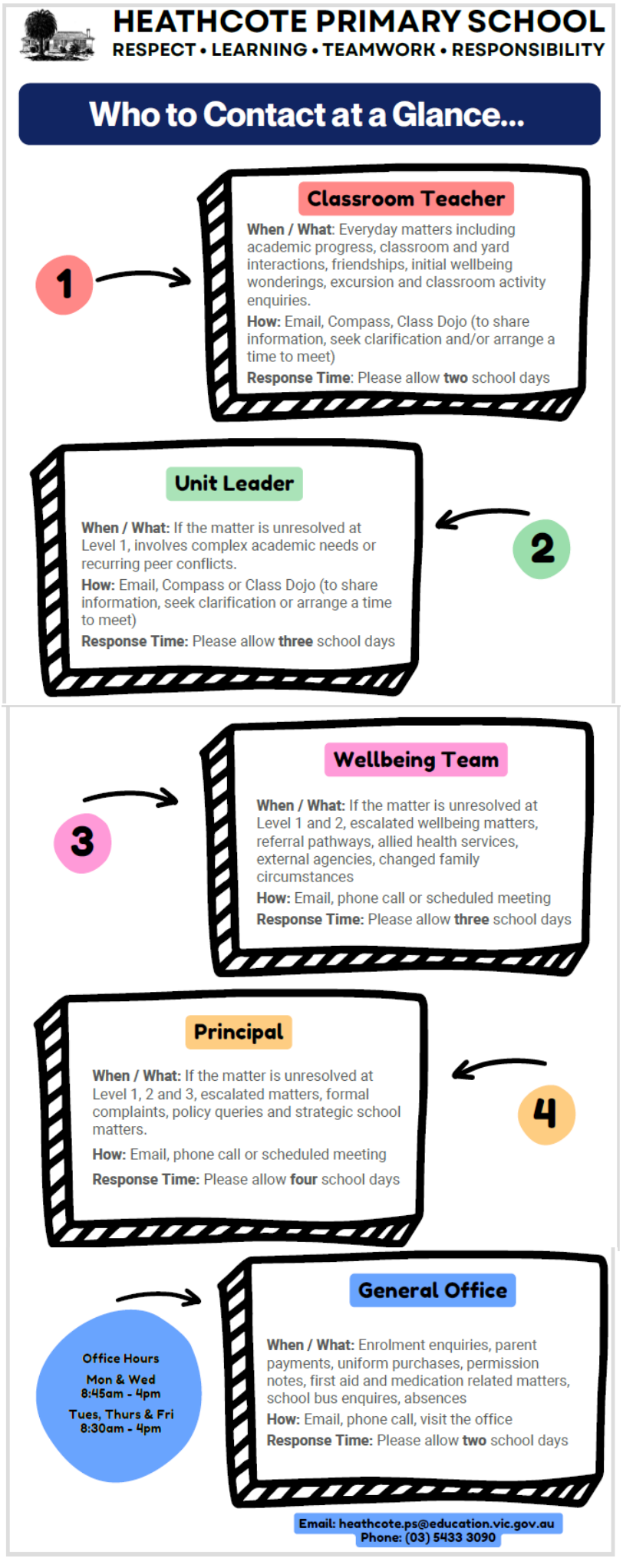
- Statement of Values and School Philosophy
- Communication with School Staff policies

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	September 2026
Consultation	School community via newsletter: Early Term 4, 2026 School Council consultation: 21/10/26 *consultation with the school community is required for this policy and recommended for school council*
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	By September 2028 [noting that the mandatory review cycle for this policy 2 years]

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Appendix 1: Heathcote Primary School Communication Pathway



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