

Roles and Responsibilities – Complaints Handling

Role of MACS Regional Offices

MACS Regional Offices will generally not respond to a complaint and/or become involved when:

- issues have not been raised with the school first
- the school is continuing to address the issues in the complaint
- issues raised are the responsibility of the school (e.g. school uniform, canteen duty, school parking)
- issues raised should be able to be resolved at the school level.

The role of MACS Regional Offices is to:

- provide advice and support to schools when they are responding to complaints
- provide advice to Complainants when they are seeking to make a complaint about a school
- record complaints received from the community
- manage and investigate the complaints that relate to the minimum standards for schools when referred from the VRQA to CECV. This will include:
 - working with the school following the complaint to monitor rectifications if required
 - communicating the outcome of complaint investigations to the CECV to enable reporting back to the VRQA
- provide data about the number and nature of complaints received about schools within the region that relate to the minimum standards for schools to the MACS Executive Director and the CECV on a quarterly basis in the manner prescribed.

Responsibilities of MACS Regional Offices

The MACS Regional General Manager is responsible for responding to, or escalating, complaints when:

- a Complainant is not satisfied that a matter has been addressed in accordance with the school's complaint-handling policies, procedures and processes
- a Complainant is not satisfied that an acceptable resolution has been reached
- the subject matter of the complaint relates to policy outside the responsibility or management of the school
- the subject of the complaint is the Principal of a school
- a school requests assistance to resolve a complaint
- a complaint is referred by the school regulator, the VRQA, to the CECV
- a complaint is received by the Commission for Children and Young People, the Victorian Institute of Teachers or the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority.

Actions to be taken following receipt of a complaint at the MACS Regional Office

Following receipt of a complaint, the MACS Regional General Manager (or delegate) will:

- record the complaint in the agreed data management system to ensure the complaint can be tracked
- acknowledge receipt of a complaint as soon as possible in writing, within two business days, ensuring the Complainant is aware of MACS complaint-handling procedures
- advise the Complainant that a record of their complaint is being maintained and provide a timeframe, generally 10 business days, after which a preliminary determination will be provided
- provide the Complainant with a case number that should be used for all further communication
- inform the Principal of the school of the receipt of the complaint and provide an opportunity for the Principal to respond to the issues raised
- where it is considered appropriate, provide the Complainant with an opportunity to respond to the Principal's response to the matters raised prior to making a decision about the complaint, or contact the Complainant for more information to help assess the issues or allegations if required
- seek to review school documentation relevant to the complaint such as school policies, procedures, guidelines, records of communication, minutes of meetings or student data
- advise and/or seek permission from the Complainant if any sensitive or medical information provided will need to be shared with others in order to resolve the matter
- where necessary, seek advice from appropriate business units within MACS and/or external agencies to determine how a complaint may be reviewed and whether other avenues of appeal/redress exist
- assess the complaint, which may result in undertaking one or more of the following procedures and processes to help resolve it:
 - allow more time for resolution at the school
 - provide assistance to reach a resolution through regional support
 - arrange for an independent investigation
- advise the Complainant of any delays that occur in the region's ability to respond within the set timeframe and provide a new timeframe for the resolution
- where necessary, actively support a Complainant with special needs through the complaint procedures and processes
- notify the Complainant of the outcome of the complaint inquiry in writing
- provide the Principal of the school with the outcome of the MACS Regional Office's assessment of the complaint in writing
- ensure all relevant material and a record of the outcome of the complaint are entered in the agreed system database
- complete documentation of the complaint investigation required by the CECV
- ensure records of anonymous complaints are retained in the approved database to enable identification of trends or potential problems
- if a complaint is serious or not resolved after the involvement of the MACS Regional General Manager, refer the complaint to the MACS Executive Director (or the delegate of the MACS Executive Director)
- provide data about the number and nature of complaints received about schools within the region that relate to the minimum standards for schools to the MACS Executive Director and CECV on a quarterly basis.

Possible outcomes of a complaint to the MACS Regional Office

The MACS Regional Office assessment or escalation to the MACS Executive Director (or the delegate of the MACS Executive Director) may result in advice or direction provided to the Principal of a MACS school for action. The advice or direction could include providing the Complainant with:

- an apology or expression of regret
- formal communication of a change of decision, policy, procedure or practice
- the provision of counselling or other support
- an explanation of:
 - how the decision taken is consistent with the MACS Policies and Procedures Framework and school policy
 - how the decision taken is supported by an external agency that specialises in the area under consideration
 - how the school's policies are consistent with the requirements of the minimum standards for schools
 - how the MACS Policies and Procedures Framework and school policies, procedures and guidelines are reflected in and supportive of the decision.

Role of MACS Executive Director

The MACS Executive Director (or the delegate of the MACS Executive Director) is responsible for:

- final determination of the appropriate outcome of a complaint escalated to the MACS Executive Director in accordance with this Framework
- communication of the outcome of complaint investigations that relate to the minimum standards for schools to the CECV to enable reporting to the VRQA.

Role of MACS Board

The MACS Board is responsible for:

- overseeing the policy, procedures and processes for Principals of MACS schools to meet all obligations as required by law and regulations, as well as internal policy
- ensuring information concerning the complaints resolution procedures and processes is readily available for Complainants and regional staff
- ensuring training in relation to the management of complaints is available to school and regional staff
- ensuring provision of specialist advice and support to schools and the regions when dealing with complaints of a very serious nature in the complaint-handling procedures and processes associated with these complaints.

The MACS Board will generally not respond to a complaint and/or become involved when:

- issues have not been raised with the school or Regional Office
- the Regional Office, the Director of the applicable MACS unit or the Executive Director are continuing to address the issues in the complaint
- the complaint is received anonymously.

The MACS Board will oversee the policy, procedures and processes of managing complaints made in relation to MACS schools.