

# Creating Respectful and Safe School Communities

## FAQs for Parents

### What is the responsibility of my school/Principal to keep my child safe?

Schools and parents share a responsibility to ensuring respectful and safe school environments.

Principals and school leaders have legal and professional responsibility to ensure schools are safe. These responsibilities are underpinned by Occupational Health and Safety legislation as well as the Education and Training Reform Act and the contractual and professional obligations and standards of the Victorian teaching profession.

### What is the Statement of Values?

The Statement of Values has been created to outline the shared expectations, roles and responsibilities of principals, teachers, parents, students, community members and the Department in maintaining respectful and safe schools.

Schools are being encouraged by DET to adapt the Statement of Values to appropriately reflect their school community.

### What can I do if I do not feel I am being treated with care and respect by school staff?

The Statement of Values encompasses the mutual responsibility of school staff and parents treat each other with respect. Having a positive school culture that is welcoming for parents is at the core of every school educational mission. Every staff member and member of the school community has a positive role to play in that mission. As a parent, you have a right to raise your concerns and speak to the Principal about any concerns you may have.

### I want to change the way the teacher/principal and I relate but am not sure about what to say or do differently?

Changing adult behaviour or a relationship is not easy however, experienced principals report that it works best where all parties decide on specific actions that they can try. A good starting point for a trusting relationship is to make clear how you wish to be spoken to. This might be as simple as asking to be greeted by your first name. Defining the scope of the discussion and setting boundaries can work too. For example, making clear you not only want to talk about the problem you are experiencing but also what you would like to see change is more likely to result in a positive solution and a productive working relationship.

### If the relationship between myself and the Principal breaks down can I choose an advocate to speak on my behalf to the Principal?

Yes, you will need to inform the Principal that this is your wish and provide him or her with the reasons for your decision and the details of the person who is your advocate.

### Where can I obtain information on the Statement of Values and further advice and assistance?

For more information on your school's Statement of Values, please contact your school directly.

For further advice and assistance you may wish to contact your region's Community Liaison Officer. Regional contact details are available online at

[www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/regions.aspx](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/regions.aspx)

### How are my principal and school being supported to implement the Statement of Values?

An online toolkit, 'Creating Respectful and Safe School Communities', has been made available to school staff on the Department's internal website. The toolkit promotes a staged response to preventing conflict between parents



and school staff. The toolkit also provides resources and support at each step of the staged response, including interventions and sanctions, where parents become persistently abusive or threatening and the safety of school community members is at risk. In addition, training is also being provided to Principals on effectively building positive, productive relationships.

### What is a Parent and Principal Agreement?

The Parent and Principal Agreement provides clear information about what constitutes unreasonable behaviour, and the potential consequences. It is expected that a Parent and Principal Agreement will help to create a school that is safe and orderly, where everyone is empowered to participate and learn.

### When could a Parent and Principal Agreement be used?

A Parent and Principal Agreement could be used in instances where a principal has already taken steps to address unreasonable behaviour and these have been unsuccessful, or the parent's behaviour becomes threatening.

### Do I have to sign a Parent and Principal Agreement?

The Parent and Principal Agreement works most effectively when all parties are committed to upholding goals. Schools are not required to utilise the Agreement however they may choose to do so in situations where the relationship between the school and the parent is becoming difficult to manage.

### When is a complaint considered resolved?

A complaint is considered to be resolved when the parent and the school and/or regional office and/or central office agree on an appropriate response or remedy.

Possible responses and remedies include:

- An explanation
- An acknowledgement of each other's perspective and agreement on ways to manage differences
- An apology or expression of regret
- An admission of fault
- A change of decision
- A change of policy, procedure or practice

- Agreement on what constitutes acceptable behaviour
- An undertaking that unacceptable behaviour will change

### What if I am still unsatisfied with an outcome, or the way the teacher/principal and I relate?

If you do not feel a satisfactory outcome has been reached, you may contact your region's Community Liaison Officer to help facilitate a more positive relationship. Regional contact details are available online at [www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/regions.aspx](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/regions.aspx)

As a final resort, a parent may bring forward a complaint against the school. More information about the Parent Complaints process, please see [www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/complainschool.aspx](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/complainschool.aspx)

