

# Managing Complaints Policy

## Rationale

Schools are required to establish a policy and procedures to address parents'/guardians' complaints in consultation with the school community. This policy and procedures will be consistent with the Department of Education and Training (DET) regulations.

## Purpose

The school's approach to addressing complaints is based on the Brentwood values and seeks to:

- provide a safe and supportive learning environment for students
- build relationships between students, parents/guardians and staff
- provide a safe working environment for staff.

The complaints covered by this policy and associated procedures include issues related to:

- general issues of student behaviour that are contrary to the school's Student Engagement Policy
- incidents of bullying or harassment
- learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
- student grouping
- communication with parents/guardians
- school fees and payments
- general administrative issues
- other school-related matters except as detailed below.

This policy and associated procedures do not cover matters for which there are existing rights of review or appeal, as detailed in the Victorian Government Schools' Advisory Guide published by DET. Those matters include:

- student discipline 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 incidents
- criminal matters.

## Guidelines

The school expects a person making a complaint to:

- do so promptly, as soon as possible after the issue arises
- provide complete and factual information about the complaint
- 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
- recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced.

The school will address complaints received from parents/guardians:

- courteously
- efficiently
- fairly
- promptly or within the timeline mutually agreed with the complainant
- in accordance with due process, principles of natural justice and DET's regulatory framework.

### **Making complaints**

In the first instance, a complainant should telephone or write to:

- the relevant Student Manager, Head of School or Head of Faculty for student related matters
- an Assistant Principal for issues relating to school policy, school management, or staff members
- the Principal for very complex issues.

### **Help with making 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 school representative addressing the complaint is aware of their intention and is in agreement.

### **Managing parent/guardian complaints information**

The school should consider recording the following details of all complaints received, even if the complaint appears to be minor:

- name and contact details (with permission) of the person making a complaint
- the date the complaint was made
- the form in which the complaint was received (such as face-to-face, by telephone, in writing)
- a brief description of the complaint
- details of the school representative responding to the complaint
- action taken on the complaint
- the outcome of action taken on the complaint
- any recommendations for future improvement in the school's policy or procedures.

However, in the first instance, when the complaint is easily resolved in a telephone call, a brief note in an Assistant Principal/ Head of School/ Student Manager/ Head of Faculty/ teacher diary, recording the issue and the resolution may be all that is required.

## **Addressing complaints**

The school will make every effort to resolve complaints before involving other levels of DET.

- The school will determine whether a complaint should be managed through the school's complaints process, or through other complaints processes of DET.
- All complaints will be noted and acted on promptly by the school representative who receives the complaint.
- The school will acknowledge all written complaints by telephone or in writing, and will provide the complainant with a timeline for investigating the complaint.
- The school's representative will investigate all complaints and will provide a response to the complainant.
- Concerns and complaints about general school matters (such as the timing of events, school policies and facilities) will be addressed by an Assistant Principal or a relevant staff member.
- The school will make every attempt to resolve a complaint as quickly as possible. If the complaint involves many students and a range of issues, the school will need sufficient time to investigate and resolve the matter.
- Should the complaint involve complex issues, the school might need to take advice from the DET North-Eastern Victorian Metropolitan Regional Office which may take more time. The school will tell the complainant the new timeline for addressing the complaint and the reasons for any delay/s.
- In all cases, the school will try to resolve a complaint within 20 school days.

## **Remedies**

If a complaint is substantiated in whole or part, the school will offer an appropriate remedy. At its 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)
- the refund of a monetary amount previously paid.

The school will implement the remedy as soon as practicable.

## **Referral of complaints**

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint they should contact the college Principal.

If a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome determined by the college Principal, they should contact the DET North-Eastern Victoria Regional Office by telephone or in writing.

North-Eastern Victoria Regional Office  
Level 3, 295 Springvale Road, Glen Waverley 3150  
Telephone: 8392 9300

The officer from the region will ask the complainant for a complete and factual account in writing of the complaint, and the complainant's opinion as to why the school did not resolve the matter to their satisfaction.

### **Referral of Complaints - International Students**

- In the first instance, a complainant should lodge their complaint in writing to the International Student Coordinator and the Principal Class Officer.
- The International Student Coordinator and the Principal Class Officer will then investigate the claim.
- If the claim is shown to be valid then action is taken with the other party(s) to attempt to resolve the situation.
- All parties are then brought together for final resolution of the problem.
- If a resolution is not possible, alternatives are investigated for a positive outcome. This may involve the International Education Division of the Department of Education and Training.
- Parents of International Students are informed at all stages of the complaints process and translations of documents provided if needed.

### **Communicating to parents/guardians and the school community**

The college will make information about procedures for addressing complaints readily available to parents and the school community, in clear and easy-to-understand language and, where appropriate, in a range of community languages and formats that are accessible to everyone so that no-one is disadvantaged.

The school's Managing Complaints policy will be published on the school's website. The complaints process will follow the '*Addressing Parents' Concerns and Complaints Effectively*' policy and guidelines of the DET.

The school will:

- brief all members of staff about its procedures to address complaints
- provide staff with training and support appropriate to their responsibilities under the procedures
- ensure staff who manage complaints are informed of their obligation to adhere to the Victorian public sector values outlined in the Public Administration Act 2004.

### **Monitoring the Managing Complaints Policy**

The college will monitor parent/guardian complaints and consider issues raised through the complaints process, and any other relevant information from the parent opinion survey, when undertaking a review of the school's policies, procedures and operations.

The school will review its information about complaints made over time to:

- identify common or recurring issues that may need addressing
- assess the effectiveness of these and other procedures and whether they are being followed
- use information provided to the school through the parent opinion survey on the views of parents/guardians.

The school council will regularly review its policy and procedures to effectively address parent/guardian complaints as part of its cyclic policy and procedures review schedule.