

Grievances Policy

This document provides clear and transparent information to the School community about how concerns and complaints by parents and students about the School, staff conduct, or a student's education and/or wellbeing, can be made, will be managed, and will be resolved.

Concerns about child safety and reportable conduct will be addressed in accordance with the **Make a Report Procedure** (a copy of which is available on the School's website).

Guiding Principles

We believe that resolving legitimate concerns and complaints is an important way in which the School can support the academic care, education and wellbeing of its students, and by which parents and students can otherwise provide the School with feedback to enable future improvements.

Our aim is to ensure that complaints are handled objectively and with sensitivity. In doing so, we will seek to identify both the specific and (where applicable) systemic issues raised by a concern or complaint.

When raising a concern or complaint with the School, parents and students can expect to:

- Be treated with respect and courtesy.
- Have their concerns and complaints taken seriously, considered impartially, and dealt with on the merits.
- Have their concerns and complaints dealt with in a confidential and timely manner.
- Have access to appropriate and easily understandable information regarding the complaint resolution process being followed by the School.
- Be supported by the School during the concern or complaint handling process.
- Be kept informed of the progress and outcome of their concern or complaint.
- Not be victimised, or subjected to reprisal, for raising concerns or complaints in good faith.

In return, the School expects that parents and students will:

- Treat others (including staff) with respect and courtesy.

- Raise concerns as soon as possible after the event giving rise to the concern or complaint has occurred.
- Provide complete and factual information about the concern or complaint.
- Ask for assistance or further information as needed.
- Act in good faith to achieve a reasonable outcome.

Please note the processes outlined in this Policy are intended to be conciliatory, non-adversarial and non-legal.

Framework

The School's framework for dealing with concerns and complaints involves a three-step process, namely:

Stage 1 – A parent or student raises a concern

Stage 2 – A parent or student makes a complaint to the Principal

Stage 3 – A parent or student requests a review by the Board

Our aim is for the prompt resolution of concerns, ideally without there being a need for a formal complaint to be made.

Timeframes listed in this document are only a guide, and can vary due to the nature of the concern or complaint and surrounding circumstances. Where timeframes set out in this document cannot be met, the School will strive to communicate with the affected parties about the status of the complaint, and the steps taken (or to be taken) to progress a resolution.

Stage 1 – Raise the concern

At first instance, parents and students should raise their concerns directly with the School. The School must be aware of a concern about a student's education and/or wellbeing in order to resolve it, or otherwise take reasonable steps to protect its students from harm.

We believe that an issue is often best resolved closest to its source, and encourage parents to raise concerns with their child's classroom teacher in the first instance. However, depending on the severity of an issue, and whether the classroom teacher has a conflict of interest, parents and students may choose to go directly to a senior staff member (including a member of the Executive Leadership Team).

The School appreciates that creating and maintaining a child safe culture requires input from the entire School community. As such, the School is best able to provide a personalised and

student-centred approach to learning when parents and staff work directly and cohesively with one another, to resolve any issues or concerns and otherwise develop partnerships in the community.

Parents should consider the following prior to, and when raising a concern:

- Clearly identify the issue or problem prior to contacting the School.
- Identify the party or parties involved.
- Consider the outcome you are trying to achieve (while being realistic and open to other outcomes and solutions).
- Decide whether the issue or problem is in the nature of a concern, enquiry or grievance. This will help in finding a solution.
- If there is more than one issue or problem, write a list so that you are properly prepared.
- Make an appointment to meet with your child's teacher or other relevant staff member (counsellor, Head of Year) to discuss the concern - the best way to do this is to contact the School Administration via Reception to arrange a mutually convenient time for a telephone call or meeting. When contacting Reception, please identify yourself and your child, identify the person you would like to speak with, and provide a brief description of the issue you wish to speak about (for example 'homework' or 'wellbeing').
- Remain courteous and calm when conveying your concerns. The School is within its rights to terminate a conversation with a parent until such time that a courteous and calm conversation can continue.

Once a concern is raised, the School will record (either by way of an electronic file note or written correspondence) the details of the concerns including the name and contact details of the person raising the concern. The School's focus will be on understanding the nature of the problem, the party or parties involved and the nature of agreeable solutions.

Where a mutually agreed outcome is not possible, the staff member handling the concern will make a decision that aligns with the School's policies, procedures and legal obligations. This decision will be communicated in writing to the person who raised a concern, and the communication will be kept on the relevant student's (and if appropriate, staff member's) school file.

Stage 2 – Make a complaint

If you are not satisfied with the way your concern has been handled, you may choose to make a complaint to the Principal. If the complaint concerns the Principal, the complaint should be made to the Board (and addressed to the Chair), in which case the Chair will manage the process outlined below on the Board's behalf.

You may write to the Principal, who will then acknowledge receipt of the complaint as soon as practical (being usually within three (3) *business days*), or telephone the School to arrange a meeting with the Principal. Please note that if phoning to arrange a meeting, our administration team will take your details and endeavour to confirm a meeting time as soon as it is practicable to do so.

If you arrange to meet with the Principal, you may choose to have someone else present as a support person. The support person can be a relative or a friend, but please note that the role of a support person is to provide you with support and not to act as an advocate.

Complaints to the Principal, should ordinarily be made within one calendar month of the initial concern first being raised with the School.

When the Principal is dealing with a complaint, the School's objective is to achieve a resolution by:

- Clarifying the substance of the complaint, and the steps taken by the School to address the initial concern.
- Identifying whether the complaint raises an issue regarding a breach of the School's policies.
- Identifying whether the complaint raises an issue that would be more appropriately addressed under the School's Make a Report Procedure (a copy of which is available on the School's website).
- Communicating with the relevant parent(s), student(s) and staff in an attempt to resolve the issue by agreement (where practicable).
- Failing agreement, investigating the complaint and deciding appropriate outcomes in accordance with procedural fairness principles.

The Principal may seek the assistance of a third party, including an independent mediator or external investigator, to assist with this stage. The Principal may also delegate the management of the complaint to another senior staff member where the Principal considers it appropriate to do so. Following the investigation, the staff member handling the concern will communicate with the parent and relevant parties, to discuss the outcome and an appropriate course of action (if any).

The School will aim to resolve complaints within fifteen (15) *business days* where practicable.

Stage 3 – Requesting a review

If you are not satisfied that your complaint has been adequately resolved by the Principal, you may request a review. Requests for review should be made to the Board and addressed to the Chair.

Requests must be made in writing within ten (10) *business days* of the date the Principal communicated the outcome to you. The grounds for the review, and in particular any concerns with the way the relevant complaint was dealt with, must be clearly identified.

The Board may delegate all or parts of the review, including to the Chair, a sub-committee or independent investigator, however any ultimate decision will still be made by the Board.

For the avoidance of doubt, the Board will not delegate to the Principal a review of a decision he or she has already made. However, if the Board is satisfied that a complaint has not been properly raised with the Principal (and the Principal does not otherwise have a conflict of interest), it may refer the matter to the Principal to make an initial decision (noting that decision would then create a right to request a review).

The Board will aim to resolve requests for review within forty-five (45) *business days* where practicable.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

A complaint can be withdrawn by a parent or student at any stage during the processes outlined in this document. A complaint can only be withdrawn by the person who made the complaint to the School.

Ideally, all complaints should be retracted in writing, however a signed and dated notation on the original record of the complaint, stating it has been withdrawn verbally, can be made by the person at the School responsible for managing the complaint.

The School will notify affected parties if a complaint is withdrawn, where considered appropriate.

Anonymous Complaints and Concerns

The School is committed to dealing with concerns and complaints in accordance with the processes outlined in this document. The School respects in some cases, complainants would prefer to remain anonymous and not put a name to the concerns.

The School treats concerns about a student's education and/or wellbeing with the utmost importance, and will investigate concerns raised to the fullest extent practicable. However, anonymity can make it difficult for the School to effectively resolve concerns and complaints (particularly where the School is being asked to accept an anonymous source's version of events) and it is therefore not encouraged.

The School will maintain appropriate confidentiality, as outlined in this document, and protect the complainant's identity to the best of its ability.

Vexatious Concerns and Complaints

The School does not tolerate vexatious concerns and complaints.

Previously-addressed or Stale Concerns and Complaints

Concerns and complaints that have been previously addressed by the School, or which were not raised with the School within a reasonable period of time, will not be considered in the absence of highly relevant new information and/or evidence coming to light.

External Complaints

The School acknowledges that parents and students may also make a complaint to an external body, such as the Victorian Registration & Qualifications Authority, or take legal action if dissatisfied with the School.

However, the School encourages parents and students to raise any concerns and grievances in accordance with the procedures outlined in this document.

Confidentiality

Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained by the School at all times when dealing with a concern or complaint from a parent or student, with information only being provided to those who have a right or need to know.

Communication

This Policy is available to parents, students and the School community via the School's website.

This Policy is available to staff on Complispace. This Policy forms part of the School's induction program for incoming staff, and aspects of (and updates to) this Policy will be addressed in the School's professional development updates, bulletins and newsletters.

Authorisation and Evaluation

This Policy was authorised by the Principal and the Board in December 2020

The Principal is primarily responsible for monitoring the School's overall compliance with this Policy, which will be reviewed annually (and otherwise when required).