



Complaints & Concerns, Parent/Carer Policy (Including College Specific Procedures)

Latest DET Update: June 2019
First Developed in this Format: October 2019

This policy relates to complaints brought by parents, carers, students or members of our college community and applies to all matters relating to our college. In some limited instances, we may need to refer the complainant to another Department of Education and Training process where there are different mechanisms in place to review certain decisions, for example, expulsion appeals.

Policy |

Bayside P-12 College 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 college community. We understand that it is in the best interests of students for there to be a trusting relationship between families and our college.

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

- be considerate of each other's views and respect each other's role
- be focused on resolution of the complaint, with the interests of the student involved at the centre
- act in good faith and cooperation
- behave with respect and courtesy
- respect the privacy and confidentiality of those involved, as appropriate
- operate within and seek reasonable resolutions that comply with any applicable legislation and DET policy.
- recognise that the College and DET may be subject to legal constraints on their ability to act or disclose information in some circumstances.

Purpose |

The primary purpose of the complaint process

- is to resolve complaints with a focus on student wellbeing and to support students to remain engaged in learning.
- to provide an outline of the complaints process so that parents and members of the community are informed of how they can raise complaints or concerns about issues arising at our college
- to ensure the college responds to parent concerns and complaints in an effective and timely manner.
- to ensure the college complies with DET policy and guidelines in relation to parent complaints and concerns.



Definition |

- A concern is an area of interest because of its importance and effect which is raised informally.
- A complaint is an expression of grievance or resentment where the complainant is seeking redress or justice.

Preparation for raising a concern or complaint |

Parents/carers or members of the community who may wish to submit a complaint are encouraged 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 DET (see “Further Information and Resources” section below).

Complaint process |

The college is always happy to discuss with parents/carers any concerns that they may have. Concerns in the first instance should be directed to the Pastoral Care teacher. Where possible, college staff will work with you to ensure that your concerns are appropriately addressed.

Where concerns cannot be resolved in this way, parents/carers may wish to make a formal complaint.

If a formal complaint is to be made, in most cases, depending on the nature of the complaint raised, our college 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:

Complaint received:

- via either email/Compass, telephone or arrange a meeting through the general office to campus AP or Principal, to outline your complaint so that we can fully understand what the issues are. We can discuss your complaint in a way that is convenient for you, whether in writing, in person or over the phone.

Information gathering:

- Depending on the issues raised in the complaint, the college representative may need to gather further information to properly understand the situation. This process may also involve speaking to others to obtain details about the situation or the concerns raised.

Response:

- Where possible, a resolution meeting will be arranged with the the appropriate person 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



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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.

Timelines:

- The College will acknowledge receipt of your complaint as soon as possible (usually within two school days) and will seek to resolve complaints in a timely manner. Depending on the complexity of the complaint, we may need some time to gather enough information to fully understand the circumstances of your complaint. We will endeavour to complete any necessary information gathering and hold a resolution meeting where appropriate within 10 working days of the complaint being raised. In situations where further time is required, we will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

Resolution:

- Where appropriate, The College may seek to resolve a complaint by:
 - an apology or expression of regret
 - a change of decision
 - a change of policy, procedure or practice
 - offering the opportunity for student counselling or other support
 - other actions consistent with college values that are intended to support the student, parent and college relationship, engagement, and participation in the college community.
- In some circumstances, the College 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.

Escalation:

- If you are not satisfied that your complaint has been resolved by the college, or if your complaint is about the Principal and you do not want to raise it directly with them, then the complaint should be referred to the South Western Victoria Region by contacting 1300 333 232 (swvr@edumail.vic.gov.au)

Bayside P-12 College may also refer a complaint to South Western Victoria Region if we believe that we have done all we can to address the complaint.

For more information about the DET's *Parent Complaints* policy, including the role of the Regional Office, please see: [Parent complaints policy](#).



College Specific Procedures |

A college level policy has been developed and approved by the Bayside P-12 College Council

Rationale |

To support the resolution of complaints in a manner that enables students, families, the college and the community to maintain a positive relationship and active engagement in education.

This policy does not apply to matters about which there are existing rights (and processes for) review and appeal, such as matters relating to serious employee misconduct, student critical incidents and criminal activities.

Complaints are an important way for the community to provide information and feedback to a college.

When addressing parent/guardian concerns or complaints, DET and its schools must:

- abide by relevant regulatory and legislative frameworks
- maintain confidentiality
- balance the rights and responsibilities of all parties
- ensure all parties are aware of their right to advocacy
- act in a manner that seeks to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties

Implementation |

- The college will differentiate between a concern and a complaint.
- Parents/carers will be regularly informed of the college's procedures about how to make a complaint.
- The Principal will ensure that parents are aware of their right to advocacy when communicating the issues involved in their complaint and in negotiating an outcome.
- The college will endeavour to build positive relationships with parents/carers and the college community.
- As the college wishes to prevent the complainant from having to repeat the complaint over and over, the first person the he/she deals with will:
 - listen to the complainant carefully and with an open mind
 - treat them with respect and courtesy, take them seriously and let them have their say
 - make it clear that the complaint will be taken seriously
 - explain the procedures for resolving complaints
 - state what can be done, not what cannot be done
 - ask the complainant if the matter is a complaint or a concern
 - take notes
 - if the complaint involves complex issues which are difficult to understand on first hearing, ask the complainant to put the complaint in writing
 - check the facts to make sure they are clear and beyond doubt
 - make a mutually convenient time to meet, if a further meeting is required
 - give the complainant their name and ensure the complainant's name is known and used
 - summarise the first contact and especially the action the complainant can expect e.g. "Thank you for the information. We have agreed that you and the Principal will meet on ... The issues you'd like to discuss are



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- In addressing complaints and concerns, the college will:
 - maintain the confidentiality of all parties, in line with DET policy and legislative requirements
 - acknowledge that their common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
 - act in good faith and in a calm and courteous manner
 - endeavour not to apportion blame
 - recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced
 - have a strategy for recognising a stalemate
 - act courteously, fairly, efficiently, promptly and in accordance with DET's policy and guidelines and the legislative framework
- If the complaint cannot be resolved by the complainant, college and Regional Office working together, the complainant may refer the complaint to the Deputy Secretary, Office for Government School Education, as per advice provided on DET's parent complaints website.
- If international students are enrolled, the college will maintain an international student's enrolment (to comply with student visa conditions) and appropriate student welfare support arrangements until the relevant complaints or appeals process is resolved. For further information, see: ISP Quality Standards and School Resources - International Student Program Quality Standards for Schools, Quality Standard 8 - Complaints and appeals.

Monitoring and review of the of the policy |

- This policy will be reviewed as part of the college's three-year review cycle or if guidelines change (latest DET update mid-June 2019).
- Refer to VGS – [Parent Complaint Policy](#)

Further Information and resources|

- **Parentline**
 - Parentline is a confidential and anonymous phone counselling service for parents of children and young people in Victoria. Parentline offers counselling, information and support around a range of parenting issues.
 - Phone 13 22 89 or visit the [Parentline website](#) for further information.
- **Resources for schools**
 - For resources to assist preventing and resolving complaints, and mediation, see: Conflict resolution in schools (login required).
 - The [Complaints Policy](#) and [Parent Dispute Policy](#) template is available in the School Policy Templates Portal (login required).
 - The Employee Conduct Branch can provide principals with advice and support in addressing allegations about employee conduct or work performance.

Date of approval by College Council | 20/11/2019

Review scheduled for October 2022