



## Addressing Parent Complaints Policy

### **Rationale:**

Officer Secondary College encourages all members of the school community to attempt to resolve complaints and concerns efficiently and fairly through communication with school personnel. This policy is developed in accordance with Departmental policy, *Addressing parents' complaints and concerns effectively: policy and guides, to address parent concerns and complaints.*

### **Aim:**

When addressing parent/guardian concerns or complaints, Officer Secondary College 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:**

These procedures cover concerns and complaints about:

- General issues of student behaviour that are contrary to the Officer Secondary College's code of conduct
- Incidents of bullying or harassment in the classroom or the school yard
- Learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
- Communication with parents
- School fees and payments
- General administrative issues
- Any other school-related matters except as detailed below.

These procedures do not cover matters for which there are existing rights of review or appeal, as detailed in the Victorian Government Schools Reference Guide.

Those matters include:

- Student discipline matters 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 the Department's employees related to their employment
- Student critical incident matters
- Other criminal matters.

Officer Secondary College expects a person raising a concern or complaint to:

- Do so promptly, as soon as possible after the issue occurs
- Refrain from using Social Media to denigrate the college on this, or any other, issue

- Provide complete and factual information about the concern or 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, rather than judge and blame
- Recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced.

Officer Secondary College will address any concerns and complaints received from parents:

- Courteously
- Efficiently
- Fairly
- Promptly, or within the timeline agreed with the person with the concern or complaint
- In accordance with due process, principles of natural justice and the Department's regulatory framework.

### **Raising concerns or complaints**

In the first instance, a complaint should be made to Officer Secondary College.

The complainant should telephone, visit or write to:

- The student's teacher or Learning Community Teacher about learning issues and incidents that happened in their class or group
- The Sub School Learning Culture Leader if students from several classes are involved
- The Assistant Principal about issues relating to staff members, complex student issues and curriculum
- The Principal about issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members or very complex student issues.

For contact details for any staff member, call the office on 5942 4000. If you are not sure who to contact, contact the Assistant Principal on 5942 4000.

### **Help with raising concerns or complaints**

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.

## **Managing parent concerns and complaints information**

Officer Secondary College consider records the following details of all complaints received, even if the complaint appears to be minor:

- Name and contact details (with permission) of the person with a concern or complaint
- The date the concern was expressed or complaint made
- The form in which the concern or complaint was received (such as face-to-face, by telephone, in writing, by email)
- A brief description of the concern or complaint
- Details of the school officer responding to the concern or complaint
- Action taken on the concern or complaint
- The outcome of action taken on the concern or 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 the school's/principal's/teacher's diary recording the issue and the resolution may be all that is required.

## **Addressing concerns or complaints**

Officer Secondary College will make every effort to resolve concerns and complaints before involving other levels of the Department.

- Officer Secondary College will give a complainant a copy of its complaints procedures.
- Officer Secondary College will determine whether a concern or complaint should be managed through the school's concerns and complaints process or through other complaints processes of the Department.
- All complaints will be noted and acted on promptly by the staff member who receives the complaint.
- Officer Secondary College will acknowledge all complaints made in writing. It will provide the complainant with a timeline for investigating the complaint.
- The assistant principal 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 the principal or a relevant staff member.
- Officer Secondary College will make every attempt to resolve a concern or complaint as quickly as possible. If your complaint involves many students and a range of issues, Officer Secondary College will need more time to investigate and resolve it.
- Should the complaint involve complex issues, Officer Secondary College might need to take advice from the Department's regional office which may take more time. Officer Secondary College will tell the complainant the new timeline for addressing the complaint and the reasons for any delays. In all cases, Officer Secondary College will try to resolve a concern or complaint within 20 school days.

## **Remedies**

If a concern or complaint is substantiated in whole or part, Officer Secondary College will offer an appropriate remedy. For example, at its discretion and depending on the circumstances, Officer Secondary College 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)
- A fee refund.

## **Referral of concerns or complaints**

If a person with a concern or complaint is not satisfied with the outcome determined by Officer Secondary College, they should contact the Department's appropriate regional office. The officer from the region will ask the complainant for a complete and factual account in writing of the concern or complaint and the complainant's opinion about why Officer Secondary College did not resolve it to their satisfaction.

If the complainant, school and regional office working together cannot resolve the complaint, the regional office may refer it to the Department's Group Coordination Division.

The Division will ask the complainant for a complete and factual account in writing of the concern or complaint and the complainant's opinion about why Officer Secondary College and regional office did not resolve it to their satisfaction and will ask the complainant to outline their view on the course of action required to resolve the complaint. Where the complainant is unable to provide a written account the officer from Group Coordination Division should act on the information provided.

## **Communication and training**

Officer Secondary College will make information about procedures for addressing concerns and 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.

Officer Secondary College's policy and procedures for addressing concerns and complaints will be published on the school's website

Officer Secondary College will brief all members of staff (including volunteers) about its procedures to address concerns and complaints annually

## **Monitoring the parent complaints policy**

Officer Secondary College will monitor parent concerns and complaints and consider issues raised through the parent 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 Officer Secondary College school council will regularly review its policy and procedures to effectively address parent concerns and complaints as part of its cyclic policy and procedures review schedule.

References:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/pages/complainschool.aspx>

[https://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/commrel/contacts/POLICY AND GUIDES Addressing parents concerns.pdf](https://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/commrel/contacts/POLICY_AND_GUIDES_Addressing_parents_concerns.pdf)

Endorsed by Officer Secondary College Council on 29/2/16.