



Ringwood Secondary College

Concerns and Complaints Policy

Version No: 2

Committee: Policy and Education

Date: June 2015

Rationale:

To ensure that there is an appropriate avenue for dealing with student and parent concerns and complaints about all aspects of learning and the learning environment at Ringwood Secondary College. In particular to support the values of the College in:

- providing a safe and supportive learning environment
- building a relationship between students, parents and staff
- providing a safe working environment for staff.

Aim:

To resolve concerns and complaints fairly, efficiently, promptly and in accordance with Department of Education and Training (DET) directives and appropriate legislation, so as to ensure a harmonious, positive and productive school environment.

Policy Coverage:

This policy is designed to cover any concerns and complaints about:

- the learning environment, including assessment and reporting of student learning
- student behaviour, including bullying and harassment
- communication with parents
- school fees and payments
- general administrative issues
- any other school-related matters except as detailed below

It does not include matters more appropriately dealt with by existing rights of review or appeal dealt with in the *Victorian Schools School Policy and Advisory Guide*, which includes

- (i) expulsion
- (ii) complaints about employee conduct or performance
- (iii) student critical incident matters
- (iv) criminal related matters

Implementation:

The school expects, in the first instance, any concerns should be raised with the school directly.

The complainant should telephone, visit or write to the:

- student's teacher about learning issues and incidents that happened in their classroom.
- Year level Community Coordinator if students from several classes are involved
- Assistant Principal about issues relating to staff members or complex student issues
- Principal about issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members or very complex student issues.

The school expects any person raising a concern to:

- Do so promptly as soon as possible after the issue occurs
- 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, in a calm and courteous manner
- Show respect and understanding of each other's point of view
- Recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities that must be balanced

The school will address any concerns or complaints received by parents in the following manner:

- courteously
- efficiently
- fairly
- promptly or within a timeframe agreed to between the parties;
- in accordance with due process, principles of natural justice and the Department's regulatory framework

Support available when raising a concern:

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 organisation who does not receive a fee.

All parties involved in addressing a complaint may seek the services of a mediator when there is difficulty coming to an agreement.

Managing and addressing complaints and concerns:

- The school will record all details of a complaint, including names, dates, the details of the complaint, and the action taken.
- The school will make every effort to resolve concerns and complaints before involving other levels of the Department.
- The school will make every effort to resolve a concern or complaint as quickly as possible. If the complaint is complex, it may require more time for investigation. Under these circumstances, the school may seek advice from the regional office or central office. This may require more time, but the Principal or nominee will keep the complainant informed.
- If a person with a complaint is not satisfied with the outcome determined by the school, they should contact the Department's regional office.

Resolution

If a concern or complaint is substantiated in whole or part, the school will offer an appropriate resolution. This may include one of the following:

- An explanation or further information about the issue
- Mediation, counselling or other support
- An apology, expression of regret or admission of fault
- A change of decision
- A change of policy, procedures or practice
- The cancellation of a debt or a refund

Anonymous Complaints

- In almost all circumstances a complainant should be identified; however, the College recognises that anonymity may be considered important in some circumstances for the complainant.
- Where a concern or complainant is anonymous full investigation of the complaint may not be possible.
- Anonymity raises issues of natural justice and accordingly outcomes must be considered from this perspective.

Communication of the Policy

The policy for addressing concerns and complaints will be published on the school's website and provided to the parent when their child enrolls.

Meanings

'Parent' includes a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for the child including parental responsibility under the *Family Law Act 1975* and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides.

'concern' means an issue of interest (because of its importance and effect) which is raised informally in order to improve or change a situation.

'complaint' is an expression of grievance or resentment where the complainant is seeking redress or justice.

Review

This policy will be reviewed on a 3 year cycle or more often if necessary due to changes in regulations or circumstances.

References:

[Addressing parents' concerns and complaints effectively: policy and guides](#)
[Department of Education – Parent Complaints Government Schools](#)