

Monbulk College

Policy:	Parent Complaints
Date Ratified:	June 2009
Date of last Review:	July 2016

BASIC BELIEFS:

Monbulk College believes that:

- concerns and complaints are best addressed by students, parents, teachers, principals and support staff working in partnership
- parents and guardians have the right to raise concerns and air complaints
- concerns and complaints are best addressed at the school level
- in addressing complaints and concerns, all relevant points of view should be considered and each party has rights and responsibilities that must be balanced
- parents/guardians who wish to raise a concern or complaint, should be respectful and raise their concern through the following means:
 - in writing
 - by phone
 - by appointmentin a timely fashion
- complaints should be raised with principal class and year levels team leaders

AIMS:

Monbulk College aims:

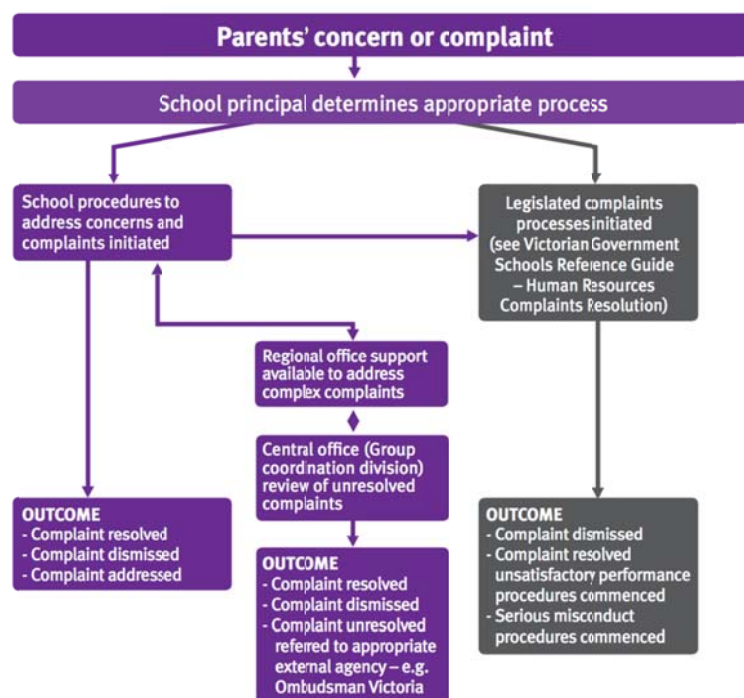
- to resolve complaints fairly, efficiently, impartially, promptly and in accordance with DET legislative and regulatory framework; including:
 - Education and Training Reform Act 2006
 - Education and Training Reform Regulations 2007
 - Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
 - Information Privacy Act 2000
 - Wrongs Act 1958
- address complaints in line with DET's 2006 Dignity and Respect Statement to provide a supportive working environment for staff when dealing with parent concerns and complaints
that when addressing complaints and concerns, all parties will:
 - maintain confidentiality,
 - acknowledge when complaints and concerns are made
 - acknowledge their common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties,
 - deal with all matters respectfully and professionally at all times
 - act in good faith, show respect and understanding of each other's point of view;
 - recognise all parties have rights and responsibilities; and
 - address concerns promptly, within agreed time lines and due process

IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES:

The following definitions are taken from DET 'Addressing parents' concerns and complaints effectively: policy and guides

- **'parent'** in relation o a child, includes a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for the child under the Family Law Act 1957
- a **'concern'** is an issue of interest which is raised informally in order to improve or change a situation.

- a **‘complaint’** is an expression of grievance or resentment where the complainant is seeking redress or justice.
- It is the principal’s responsibility to provide a healthy and positive school environment that is free from discrimination and harassment.
- The principal is required to use local complaints resolution procedures, where appropriate, for resolving complaints in relation to issues that fall within the school’s area of responsibility. All cases of serious misconduct – sexual offences, criminal charges, or other serious incidents – must instead be referred to the DET for advice.
- Concerns and complaints may include:
 - General issues of student behaviour that are contrary to the school’s code of conduct
 - Incidents of bullying or harassment in the classroom or school grounds
 - Learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
 - Communication with parents
 - School fees and payments
 - General administrative issues
 - Any other school-related matters, except:
 - Where there are Departmental procedures for which there are existing rights of review or appeal as detailed in the Victorian Government Schools Reference Guide; including:
 - Student discipline involving expulsions
 - Complaints about employee conduct or performance and complaints should be dealt with by performance management, grievance resolution and/or disciplinary action
 - Student critical incident matters
 - Other criminal matters
- At the initial instance, complaints should be raised and handled with at the College level, and include a process as decided by the Principal.



Raising Concerns or Complaints

The complainant should telephone, visit or write to:

- the student's teacher or home group teacher about learning issues and incidents that happened in their class or group
- the year level team leader if students from several classes are involved or a member of the principal class about issues relating to staff members or complex student issues
- the principal about issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members, or very complex student issues.

If unsure the complainant should contact a member of the Principal class

Managing parent concerns and complaints information

The school should record 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.

Remedies

Some types of remedies the school would consider if it accepts a concern or complaint is justified might be:

- 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.

The school will implement the remedy as soon as practicable.

- A complainant may at any stage choose to take their complaint directly to an external agency such as the Merit Protection Boards, Victorian Equal Opportunity Commission, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, a union of which they are a member, or the Ombudsman.
- Complaints, ensuing procedures and outcomes are required to be fully documented and confidential. Complaints will be addressed in accordance with due process and within the Departments regulatory framework.
- The principal may choose to respond to a complaint through an informal process in cases where the complaint is minor, the complainant wishes the matter to be dealt with informally or the complaint has arisen from lack of or unclear communication.

- Formal processes will be used when informal processes haven't been successful, a complainant seeks a formal process, or the principal believes the complaint warrants formal investigation.
- All staff must observe the code of conduct for the Victorian Institute of Teaching profession.
- The school will communicate the outcomes of concerns and complaints to all parties involved, taking into account privacy requirements.
- If the school is unable to resolve a complaint, the regional office can be contacted for support.
- If in the instance, a complainant uses threatening or violent behaviour, the Occupational Violence Policy (www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/hrweb/ohs/other/DETpub.htm) should be followed.

Communication and training

The school 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 via the college website with a link to DET reference material.

The school will regularly review it's complaints policy and procedures, seeking feedback from the school community.

The school will:

- brief all members of staff (including volunteers) about its procedures to address concerns and complaints
- provide staff with (or provide access to) training and support appropriate to their responsibilities under the procedures

ensure staff who manage complaints demonstrate the personal attributes outlined in the *Good Practice Guide: Ombudsman Victoria's guide to complaint handling for Victorian public sector agencies*.

Appendices

1. DET 2006 Dignity & Respect Statement

References

- DET Information: Parent Complaints - <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/contact/parentcomplainbrochure.pdf>
- Parent Complaints - <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/community/pages/parentcomplaints.aspx>
- Addressing parents' concerns and complaints effectively - https://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/commrel/contacts/POLICY_AND_GUIDE_S_Addressing_parents_concerns.pdf
- <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/complainschool.aspx>

Approved By	School Council
Approval Authority (Signature & Date)	<i>M J Uren</i> 3/8/16
Responsible for Review	Assistant Principal – Policy and Planning Sub-Committee
Next Review Date	April 2020 (4 years)

DET 2006 Dignity and Respect Statement

The Department is committed to providing safe and supportive work environments where diversity is valued and everyone is treated with respect, fairness and dignity.

Discrimination, sexual and other forms of harassment, bullying, violence and threatening behaviour are unacceptable.

All employees, students, parents and visitors in schools and other Departmental workplaces are expected to act accordingly.

The Department (which includes schools) and school councils, will act to ensure that the safety, security, health and wellbeing of all employees, students, parents and visitors in schools and other Departmental workplaces are protected.