



# Complaints Policy

## **1. Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide an outline of the complaints process at our school so that students, parents/carers and members of the community are informed of how they can raise complaints or concerns about issues arising at our school
- ensure that all complaints and concerns regarding our school are managed in a timely, effective, fair and respectful manner.

## **2. Scope**

2.1 This policy relates to complaints brought by students, parents, carers, or members of our school community and applies to all matters relating to our school.

2.2 In some limited instances, we may need to refer a complainant to another policy or area if there are different processes in place to manage the issue including:

- Complaints and concerns relating to fraud and corruption will be managed in accordance with the department's [Fraud and Corruption Policy](#)
- Criminal matters will be referred to Victoria Police
- Legal claims will be referred to the Department's Legal Division
- Complaints and concerns relating to child abuse will be managed in accordance with our Child Abuse (including grooming) – Identification and Response Policy and Procedures.

## **3. Policy**

3.1 Our school 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 school community. We understand that it is in the best interests of students for there to be a trusting relationship between families and our school.

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

- actively listen to one another, be considerate of each other's views and respect each other's role
- be resolution focused and attempt to preserve working relationships
- act co-operatively and in good faith
- behave with respect and courtesy
- be inclusive, considerate, and respect the cultural safety of all people, including Aboriginal people, and the human rights of all parties including but not limited to disability, age, race, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, and marital status
- consider communication needs and preferences
- ensure that complainants and students related to complainants are not victimised for making a complaint or asserting their rights
- respect the privacy and confidentiality of those involved unless permitted or required to share information by law



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- operate within, and seek reasonable resolutions that comply with, all applicable legislation and department policies.

## 3.2 Complaints and concerns process for students

Our school acknowledges that issues or concerns can cause stress or worry for students and impact their wellbeing and learning. We encourage our students to raise issues or concerns as they arise so that we can work together to resolve them.

Students with a concern or complaint can raise them with a trusted adult at school, for example, their Home Group Teacher, Coordinator, Student Wellbeing Team, a Leading Teacher or a Principal. This person will take your concern or complaint seriously and will explain to you what steps we can take to try to resolve the issue and support you.

You can also ask your parent, carer or another trusted adult outside of the school, to talk to us about the issue instead. Information about our parent/carer complaints and concerns process is outlined further below. The parent/carer process also applies to students who are mature minors, refer to: [Mature Minors and Decision Making](#).

Further information and resources to support students to raise issues or concerns are available at:

- [Report Racism Hotline](#) (call 1800 722 476) – this hotline enables students to report concerns relating to racism or religious discrimination
- [Reach Out](#)
- [Headspace](#)
- [Kids Helpline](#) (call 1800 55 1800)
- [Victorian Aboriginal Education Association](#) (VAEAI)

## 3.3 Complaints and concerns process for parents, carers and community members

### 3.3.1 Preparation for raising a concern or complaint

Victoria University Secondary College encourages parents, carers or members of the community who may wish to submit a complaint 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 Department and Victoria University Secondary College (see “Further Information and Resources” section below).

### 3.3.2 Support Person

You are welcome to have a support person to assist you in raising a complaint or concern with our school. Please advise us if you wish to have a support person to assist you, and provide their name, contact details, and their relationship to you.

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### 3.3.3 Complaints process

Victoria University Secondary College is always happy to discuss with parents/carers and community members any concerns that they may have. Concerns in the first instance should be directed to the Year Level Co-ordinator. Where possible, school staff will work with parents/carers to ensure that their concerns are appropriately addressed. Concerns or complaints which are deemed urgent by the school will be treated as such.

Where concerns cannot be resolved in this way, parents or community members may wish to make a formal complaint to the Middle/Senior School Leaders, noting that formal complaints should be directed to a member of the school's leadership team.

Parents/carers may refer to the *DET Quick Reference Guide for Parent Complaints* (Appendix 2) for further information. Our school also offers [interpreting and translation services](#) to parents and carers who have limited or no English language skills to assist in communicating their concerns, or they may use the National Translating and Interpreting Service by calling 131 450.

If a person would like to make a formal complaint, in most cases, depending on the nature of the complaint raised, our school 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:

- A. Complaint received:** Please either email, telephone or arrange a meeting through the administration office with School Leader at your child's campus, 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.
- B. Information gathering:** Depending on the issues raised in the complaint, the School Leader 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.
- C. Response:** Where possible, a resolution meeting will be arranged with the School Leader or Campus Principal to discuss the complaint with the objective of reaching a resolution satisfactory to all parties. In some circumstances, the Principal may determine that a resolution meeting is not appropriate. In this situation, a response to the complaint will be provided in writing.

In some instances, the school may suggest mediation, conciliation or other alternative methods of resolving the complaint based on the complexity and urgency of issues raised in the complaint.

- D. Timelines:** Victoria University Secondary 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, Victoria University Secondary College may need some time to gather enough information to fully understand the circumstances of your complaint.

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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, Victoria University Secondary College will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

## 3.3.4 Resolution

Where appropriate, Victoria University Secondary 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 school values that are intended to support the student, parent and school relationship, engagement and participation in the school community.

## 3.3.5 Escalation

If you are not satisfied that your complaint has been resolved by the school, 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 West Regional Office by phone on [1800 338 663](tel:1800338663), via the [Enquiries form](#) or by email at [enquiries@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@education.vic.gov.au).

Victoria University Secondary College may also refer a complaint to the South West Regional Office if we believe that we have done all we can to address the complaint.

For more information about the Department's complaints process, including the role of the Regional Office, please see: [Make a complaint about your school](#).

## 3.3.6 Record keeping and other requirements

To meet Department and legal requirements, our school must keep written records of:

- Serious, substantial or unusual complaints
- Complaints relating to the Child Information Sharing Scheme and Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme, to meet regulatory requirements - refer to [Child and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes](#) for further information

Our school also follows Department policy to ensure that record-keeping, reporting, privacy and employment law obligations are met when responding to complaints or concerns.

## 4. Communication

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our school website
- Included in staff induction processes and on Sharepoint for all staff to access
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request.



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## 5. Further Information and Resources

The following department policies and resources are relevant to this Complaints Policy:

- [Complaint resolution](#)
- [Make a complaint about your school](#)
- [Report racism or religious discrimination in schools](#)
- [Report sexual abuse if you're a current or former student](#)

The following school policies are also relevant to this Complaints Policy:

- VUSC Statement of Values and School Philosophy

## 6. Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years as required by Department of Education legislation and guidelines.