



EDGARS CREEK

Secondary College

MANAGING COMPLAINTS POLICY

Rationale:

- Our school has both a desire and a responsibility to ensure that high standards of conduct are maintained by staff and students at all times, and that complaints are managed and resolved fairly, efficiently, promptly and in accordance with relative legislation and DET requirements.
- We value ongoing communication with parents/guardians; we strive to understand, address and respond in a professional manner to concerns expressed by parents. The school also expects that any concerns that parents have will be raised in a courteous and respectful manner. At Edgars Creek Secondary College, we value and encourage open and positive relationships with parents, guardians and families

Aims:

- Provide a harmonious, positive and productive school environment.
- Recognise a student or parent's right to raise concerns about an issue at the College.
- Recognise that in managing complaints from parents, all parties will be honest, fair, respectful and understanding of each other's point of view and perceptions.
- Provide a protocol and process for responding to complaints in a timely manner.
- Communicate the common goal of achieving an outcome acceptable to all parties, in good faith and in a calm and courteous manner.
- Resolve complaints fairly, efficiently, promptly and in accordance with relative legislation.

This policy does not cover matters for which there are existing rights of review or appeal, such as:

- Student discipline matters involving expulsions; complaints about employee conduct; performance and complaints that should be dealt with by performance management; grievance resolution or disciplinary action; student critical incident matters or any criminal matters.

Nor does this policy cover all cases of serious misconduct – sexual offences, criminal charges, or other serious incidents – these must instead be referred to the Department of Education Conduct and Ethics Branch.

Implementation:

This policy is based on guidelines provided by DET located at the following website: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/spag/community/policyparentsc concerns.pdf>

- It is the principal's responsibility to provide a healthy and positive school environment that is free from discrimination and harassment. In doing so, principals must ensure that all students, staff and parents are aware of their rights and responsibilities.
- 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.
- Parents are strongly encouraged to raise any issues at the school level first. However a parent may at any time take a complaint to DET. If parents remain unsatisfied, a complaint in writing using the Department's Parent Complaint Form can be made to Central Office.
- It is important that all complaints, ensuing procedures and outcomes are fully documented.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

Parents/Guardians

Edgars Creek Secondary College encourages relationships of responsibility and respect amongst members of the school community. The complaint process can be a difficult emotional process for all parties. The school asks that parents/guardians consider the following principles when making a complaint.

The school expects a person raising a concern or complaint to:

- Do so promptly, as soon as possible after the issue/incident occurs.
- Provide complete and factual information about the concern or complaint.
- Maintain and respect the privacy and confidentiality of 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 difference in values, rather than judge and blame.
- Acknowledge that the common goal is to achieve an outcome that is acceptable to all parties.
- Recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced.
- Acknowledge the relevant College values as they relate to the complaint.

Parents may bring a support person, such as an unpaid advocate or friend, to meetings with the Principal or Assistant Principal. Anyone bringing an outsider to a meeting should give prior notice to the other party first.

School

In all its activities and communications, the school attempts to build trust and a sense of belonging to a wider community. Edgars Creek Secondary College is committed to:

- Listening respectfully to the perspective of complainants
- Making reasonable attempts to investigate and resolve complaints quickly and clearly. Initial response should occur within 24 hours but not longer than 48 hours.
- Maintaining communication with all parties about the progress of resolution.
- Providing a safe and supportive environment where everyone is treated with respect, fairness and dignity.
- Ensuring the safety, security, health and wellbeing of all community members.

The School will address complaints as follows:

- In a fair, professional, courteous and respectful manner.
- In accordance with due process, the principles of natural justice and relevant regulatory frameworks

School officers may call upon the expertise or input of others such as specialist staff, staff from the Department, etc. in their meetings with parents. Anyone bringing an outsider to a meeting should give prior notice to the other party first.

School Administration

The school will maintain a register of complaints and record the following details of all complaints received in writing:

- Name and contact details of the person with a complaint.
- The date the concern was expressed or complaint made.
- A brief description of the complaint.
- Details of the school officer responding to the complaint.
- Action taken on the complaint.
- The outcome of action taken on the complaint.
- Any recommendations for future improvement in the school's policy or procedures.

Stage 1: Informal resolution process:

Parents are encouraged to access our support and feedback processes at all times, with the correct person. This will ensure quick response and no double handling.

In the first instance the complainant should telephone, email or write to:

- The student's teacher about learning issues and incidents that may have happened in their class.
- The Student's Tutor teacher or Year Level Coordinator if it is a concern about behaviour or wellbeing
- An Assistant Principal about issues relating to other 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 who to contact please refer to the college's Parent Communication Protocol on the school website and Compass.

If a face to face meeting is required:

- Parents/guardians must make an appointment time to meet with school staff.
- Parents/guardians must sign in at the college office before the scheduled meeting time.
- Parents/guardians must not approach a staff member directly without making an appointment time.

Stage two: Formal Resolution Process:

Parents who are dissatisfied with the outcome of an informal discussion, with an administration, teaching, or support staff member, or the timeframe for resolution should next approach the Principal or Assistant principal with their concerns. Concerns may be raised via telephone, in writing or by making an appointment for a face to face meeting.

School Leadership involvement:

- The Principal or Assistant Principal will then respond to the complaint within a week. Some record of the meeting should be kept in the form of email or diary note. The school leader will alert the parent to the existence of this complaints policy.
- If the Principal or Assistant Principal undertakes to pursue certain investigations and discussions or follow up action from the meeting, she/he will advise the parent of a proposed time frame. The Principal and Assistant Principal may conduct their own investigations by talking with relevant parties if they believe the matter can be resolved informally.
- Where a complaint is more complex, the Principal may confer with or draw on the resources of DET.
- The Principal will provide regular and timely feedback to the parent or facilitate action as appropriate to the complaint.
- This aspect of the formal resolution should usually take no more than 20 working days.
- The Principal may not always be able to provide details of action to parents, especially where practices of staff management or industrial matters are concerned.
- Where necessary, if a complaint isn't resolvable at the local level, the Principal will advise the parent of other steps available to the parent including mediation, counselling, advocacy/support or the progressing of a complaint to the region, DET central, or another authority e.g. Merit Protection Board, Human Rights Commission.

DET Regional Office:

- Where a parent is dissatisfied with the response of the Principal in relation to any matter, she/he may then take the complaint to the Department of Education and Training Regional Office. Complaints may be made over the telephone to the North Western Victorian Region on (03). Complaints may also be made in writing to the Regional Director Email: nwvr@edumail.vic.gov.au
- Where the parent is dissatisfied with the outcome of the school council process, she/he may then take the complaint to the Department of Education and Training Regional Office. Complaints may be made over the telephone to the South Eastern Victorian Region on (03) 8765 5600. Complaints may also be made in writing to the Regional Director Email: nwvr@edumail.vic.gov.au

DET Central Office:

- **If the complaint cannot be resolved by the complainant, school and regional office working together, parents may request that the regional office refer it to the DET's Group Coordination Division OR parents can lodge a complaint themselves using the Department's Parent Complaint Form.**

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/contact/parentcomplaintform.pdf>

Reference: [Parent Complaints – Government Schools](#)

This policy was last ratified by School Council on: _____ June 2018_

