

Background

Auburn High School's approach to handling concerns and complaints is based on our values of:

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

This policy relates to complaints brought by **parents, carers, students or members of our school community and applies to all matters relating to our school. In some limited instances, we may need to refer the complainant to another Department of Education and Training process where there are different mechanisms in place to review certain decisions, for example, expulsion appeals.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

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

Scope

These procedures cover concerns and complaints about:

- general issues of student behaviour that are contrary to the school's Code of Conduct
- incidents of bullying or harassment in the classroom or the school grounds
- learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
- communication with parents and homestay hosts
- disagreements or disputes that may occur between the student, parents and the homestay hosts
- 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
- complaints that should be dealt with by performance management, grievance resolution or disciplinary action
- complaints by the Department of Education and Training (DET) employees related to their employment

- student critical incident matters
- criminal matters.

Implementation

The school expects a person raising a concern or complaint 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, and in a calm and courteous manner
- show respect and understanding of each other's point of view rather than judge and blame
- recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced.

The school will address any concerns and complaints received from parents:

- courteously
- efficiently
- fairly
- promptly, or within the timeline agreed to with the person lodging the concern or complaint
- with due privacy and confidentiality
- in accordance with due process, principles of natural justice and the DET's regulatory framework.

Procedures

Raising Concerns and Complaints

In the first instance, a complaint should be made to the school.

The complainant should telephone, or email or write to:

- the student's teacher or tutor group teacher about learning issues and incidents that happened in their class or group
- the sub-school manager if students from several classes are involved
- the Principal or the Assistant Principal **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.

For contact details for any staff member, refer to the school's Compass portal or call the office on (03) 9822 3247

If you are not sure who to contact, contact the Assistant Principal on (03) 9822 3247.

Help With Raising Concerns and Complaints

Complainants can seek the services of an advocate when they feel they are unable to express their concern or complaint 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.

The school will ensure that the complainant is aware of these supports. A complainant who wishes to use these support services should ensure their chosen advocate is duly notified and in agreement to participate in the concerns and complaints process.

Managing Parent Concerns and Complaints information

The school will 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 regarding concerns and complaints

However, in the first instance, when the concern or 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 and Complaints

The school will make every effort to resolve concerns and complaints before involving other levels of the DET.

The *Concerns and Complaints Policy* is freely available via the school website.

The school 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 DET.

All concerns and complaints will be noted and acted on promptly by the staff member who receives the concerns or complaints.

The school will acknowledge, in writing, all concerns and complaints received. It will provide the complainant with a timeline for investigating the concerns or complaints.

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.

The school will make every attempt to resolve a concern or complaint as quickly as possible. If the complaint involves many students and a range of issues, the school will need more time to investigate and resolve it.

Should the concerns or complaints involve complex issues, the school might need to take advice from the DET's regional office which may take more time. The school will inform the complainant of the new timeline for addressing the concerns or complaints and the reasons for any delays. In all cases, the school will try to resolve a concern or complaint within 20 school days.

Remedies

If a concern or complaint is substantiated in whole or part, the school will offer an appropriate remedy. For example, at its discretion and depending on the circumstances, the school might offer:

- an explanation or further information about the issue
- mediation, counselling or other support
- an apology, expression of regret or admission of fault
- a change to its decision

- recommendations to prevent a recurrence of the issue. This may involve a change of policies, procedures or practices
- cancellation of a debt (such as for school payments)
- a fee refund.

The school will implement the remedy as soon as is practicable.

Referral of Concerns and Complaints

If a person with a concern or complaint is not satisfied with the outcome determined by the school, they should contact the DET's North Eastern Victorian Regional Office on (03) 9265 2400. The complainant should be advised of this right.

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 the school did not resolve it to their satisfaction.

If the complaint cannot be resolved by the complainant, school and regional office working together, the regional office may refer it to the DET'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 the school and regional office did not resolve it to their satisfaction. They will also ask the complainant to outline their view on the course of action required to resolve the concern or 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

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 and, where appropriate, in a range of community languages and formats that are accessible to everyone so that no-one is disadvantaged.

The information will include:

- how a complainant can communicate a concern or complaint
- the complainant's rights and responsibilities
- details outlining documentation required of the complainant
- which school personnel to contact and their contact details
- the process and timeframes for managing concerns or complaints

The school's procedures for addressing concerns and complaints will be published on the school's website (Policies).

The school will:

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

Monitoring the Parent Concerns and Complaints Policy

As part of the school's overriding approach to addressing concerns and complaints, it will also draw and monitor parent input raised through the parent complaints process, and the Parent Opinion Survey, when undertaking a review of the school's policies, procedures and operations.

The school will review its information about concerns and complaints made over time to:

- identify common or recurring issues that may need addressing
- assess the effectiveness of these and other procedures and whether they are being followed
- use information provided to the school through the Parent Opinion Survey on the views of parents.

For more information about the Department's *Parent Complaints Policy*, including the role of the Regional Office, please see [Parent Complaints Policy](#).

Review period

This policy was last approved by School Council In June 2019 and is scheduled for review in June 2022.

Note

**Parents are parents and/or guardians of students and can include persons appointed as “guardians” pursuant to the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Victoria)*, including homestay hosts for international students.