Raising Concerns and Complaints Policy

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<th>Date Implemented</th>
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<td>References</td>
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Addressing parents’ concerns and complaints effectively: policy and guides DEECORD 2009
School Policy and Guidelines DEECD 2014
Good Practice Guide: Ombudsman Victoria’s guide to complaint handling for Victorian public sector agencies.
• 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.
Concerns and complaints must be addressed in line with the Department’s 2006 Dignity and Respect Statement.
Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct
www.vit.vic.edu.au
Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees
www.ssa.vic.gov.au

RATIONALE
Seymour College values positive relationships between students, parents and staff and is committed to providing a safe and supportive learning environment. The College’s value of respect is central to providing a safe and supportive environment and the expectation is that all students, parents, staff and community members will be treated, and treat others, with respect. The College’s focus will be on the best interests of the student in all cases.
AIMS
This policy explains types of concerns and complaints covered and the procedures to be followed to resolve concerns and complaints received by the College.

The policy includes information on:
- The types of complaint covered by this policy
- How a person can make a complaint
- The person’s responsibilities and required information to be provided by the person
- Who to contact within the school to register a concern or complaint
- The process and timeframes for managing complaints

GUIDELINES

Communication:
The college will publish this policy, including information on how to raise a concern or complaint, on the College website and in the newsletter. Further, copies of the policy will be made available from the general office and through the College mobile device app.

Concerns and Complaints covered by this policy include:
This policy deals with dissatisfaction requiring resolution by the school, such as:

- issues of student behaviour which is contrary to the school’s code of conduct
- incidents of bullying or harassment taking place at school
- learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
- the school’s communication channels with parents
- school fees and payments, or other administrative issues

This policy does not cover matters covered by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Developments existing rights of review or appeal. It does not therefore cover matters such as:

- student discipline matters involving expulsions
- complaints about DEECD employee conduct which should be dealt with by performance management, grievance resolution or disciplinary action
- complaints by DEECD employees about their employment
- student critical incidents such as criminal matters
**Monitoring the parent complaints policy:**
The College Council will receive feedback on the policy and procedures from the Principal and Principal Class members.
The school will monitor parent concerns and complaints and consider issues raised through the parent complaints process, and any other relevant information from the parent opinion survey, when undertaking a review of the school’s policies, procedures and operations.
The school council will regularly review its policy and procedures to effectively address parent concerns and complaints as part of its cyclic policy and procedures review schedule.

The school will review its information about 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.

Due to confidentiality, feedback will not include specific details of complainants and those involved in the complaint.

**Expectations:**
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 and value difference, 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 with the person with the concern or complaint
- in accordance with due process, principles of natural justice and the Department’s regulatory framework.

**Raising a Concern or Complaint:**
In the first instance, a complaint or expression of concern should be made to the school.

The complainant should telephone, visit or write to:
- the student’s teacher or Campus Manager about learning issues and incidents that happened in their class or group
- the year level coordinator or Campus Manager if students from several classes are involved
- 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, call the office on 57711300.
If you are not sure who to contact the office staff will assist you by directing your enquiry to the relevant staff member.

**Help with raising concerns and complaints:**
Resources are available to students, parents, teachers and support staff involved in addressing a concern or complaint.
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 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 the person addressing the concern or complaint is aware of their intention and is in agreement.

**Managing parent concerns and complaints information:**

The College will record the following details of all complaints received:

- 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 will be all that is required.

**Addressing concerns or complaints:**

The school will determine whether a concern or complaint should be managed through the school’s own processes, or through the complaints processes of the Department. The school will make every effort to resolve issues before involving other levels of the Department.

The school will give a complainant a copy of its complaints procedures.

All complaints will be noted and acted on promptly by the staff member who receives the complaint. The school will acknowledge all complaints made in writing. It will provide the complainant with a timeline for investigating the complaint. Should the complaint involve complex issues, the school may need to take advice from the Department’s regional office; this may take more time. The school will keep the complainant informed of the nature of any such delays. In all cases, the school will endeavour to resolve a complex concern or complaint within 20 school days.

The Assistant Principal will investigate all complaints and will provide a response to the complainant. 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.

**Remedies:**

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

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

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
- an acknowledgement of each other’s perspective and agreement on ways to manage differences
- an apology or expression of regret
• an admission of fault
• a change of decision
• a change of policy, procedure or practice
• agreement on what constitutes acceptable behaviour
• an undertaking that unacceptable behaviour will change
• the waiving of debt related to school fees and payments
• a refund of parent payments
• the provision of counselling or other support.

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 Department’s North Eastern Regional Office on 8392 9300.
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 Department’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 and will ask the complainant to outline their view on the course of action required to resolve the 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:
• 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
• 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.
Concerns and complaints management process overview:

**EXPECTATIONS**
- This policy will be reviewed as part of the College’s review cycle.

1. This policy will be made available on the College’s website.

2. This policy was ratified by College Council on 10/09/2014