



Swinburne Senior Secondary College

Concerns and complaints policy

Policy Statement

SSSC responds to concerns and complaints in an effective and timely manner in order to provide a safe and supportive learning environment; build relationships between students, parents and staff; and provide a safe working environment for staff, students and visitors.

Guidelines

This policy covers procedures regarding concerns and complaints about:

- issues of student behaviour that are contrary to the student engagement and wellbeing policy including incidents of bullying, cyber-bullying or harassment
- learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
- communication with parents
- school fees and payments
- general administrative issues
- any other school-related matters except as detailed below.

When addressing parent/guardian concerns or complaints, the school:

- abides by relevant regulatory and legislative frameworks
- maintains confidentiality
- balances the rights and responsibilities of all parties
- ensures all parties are aware of their right to advocacy
- acts in a manner that seeks to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties.

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
- with due privacy and confidentiality
- in accordance with due process, principles of natural justice and the DET's regulatory framework.

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 and complaints that should be dealt with by performance management, grievance resolution or disciplinary action

- complaints by the Department of Education Training's (DET) employees related to their employment
- student critical incident matters
- criminal matters.

Implementation

In the first instance, a complaint should be made to the school. The complainant should telephone, visit or write to:

- the student's teacher or mentor teacher about learning issues and incidents that happened in their class or group
- the year level 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.

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.

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 acknowledge, in writing, all complaints received and provide the complainant a copy of its Concerns and Complaints Policy. It will provide the complainant with a timeline for investigating the complaint. In all cases, the school will try to resolve a concern or complaint within 20 school days.

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. 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 effort to resolve concerns and complaints before involving other levels of the DET. If the issues is complex and advice from DET is required, the school will tell the complainant the new timeline for addressing the complaint and the reasons for any delays.

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.

When a 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.

If a concern or complaint is substantiated in whole or part, the school will offer an appropriate remedy as soon as practical. 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
- to change its decision
- recommendations to prevent a recurrence of the issue. This may involve a change of policies, procedures or practices
- to cancel a debt (such as for school payments)
- a fee refund.

If a person with a concern or complaint is not satisfied with the outcome determined by the school, the complainant should be advised to contact the relevant Regional Office, contact details are available at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/regions.aspx> . 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 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.

The school's procedures for addressing concerns and complaints will be:

- published on the school’s website (Policies)
- printed in the school newsletter at the beginning of each year

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
- 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.

Links and Information

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/community/pages/parentcomplaints.aspx>

For more information, see <https://www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au/Complaints/Complaint-Handling-Guide>

Evaluation and Review

This policy is for review every three years. The school will review its information about complaints made over time to:

- identify common or recurring issues that may need to be addressed
- 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.

Certification

This policy was adopted at the School Council meeting held at

_____ on the _____ day of _____

Principal

School Council President

Endorsed by School Council and effective as of: (insert date)