

PARENT COMPLAINTS & GRIEVANCE POLICY

Rationale

Western Port Secondary College's approach to handling concerns and complaints is based on our commitment to:

- Providing a safe and supportive learning environment for all students;
- Building relationships between students, parents and staff; and
- Providing a safe and supportive working environment for staff.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Recognise a student or parent's right to raise concerns about an issue at the College;
- Recognise the need to be fair to both the complainant and the person against whom a complaint is made;
- Provide a protocol for responding to complaints in a timely manner; and
- Record and review complaints on a regular basis to ensure responsiveness and an on-going commitment to the improvement of professional practice within the College. Concerns and complaints covered by the procedures

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 yard;
- Learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning;
- Communication with parents;
- School fees and payments;
- General administrative issues; and
- 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:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/wellbeing/engagement/default.htm>;

Complaints about employee conduct or performance and complaints that should be dealt with by performance management, grievance resolution or disciplinary action:

<http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/hrweb/workm/perform/default.htm>;

Complaints by the Department's employees related to their employment;

Student critical incident matters; and other criminal matters.

Parent procedures for raising concerns or complaints

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

- The Year Level Coordinator about issues or incidents involving breaches in behaviour or the Code of Conduct
- The Learning Level Leader about learning issues or incidents that happened at school;
- The Learning Level Leader or Assistant Principal about issues relating to staff members or more complex student matters; or
- The Principal about matters relating to school policy, student management, staff members or very complex student issues.
- If you are not sure who to contact, contact an Assistant Principal on 5979 1577.

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 acceptable to all parties; and
- Recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced. School procedures for addressing parental concerns or complaints

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

- Courteously;
- Efficiently;
- Fairly;
- Promptly, or within the time frame agreed with the person with the concern or complaint, and
- In accordance with due process, principles of natural justice and the Education Department's regulatory framework. 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 or complaint was made;
 - The form in which the concern or complaint was received;
 - 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 in response to the concern or complaint; and
 - Any recommendations for future improvement of the school's policy or procedures.

1. The school will make every effort to resolve concerns and complaints before involving other levels of the Education Department.
 2. 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 Department.
 3. The school will acknowledge all complaints and concerns by telephone or in writing and give the complainant a timeline for investigating the complaint. If the complaint involves many students or a range of issues, the school will need more time to investigate and resolve it.
 4. Should the complaint involve complex issues, the school might need to take advice from the Department's Regional office which may take more time. In all cases, the school will try to resolve a concern or complaint within 20 school days.
 5. If a concern or complaint is substantiated in whole or part, the school will offer an appropriate remedy which could include:
 - An explanation or further information about the issue;
 - Mediation, counselling or other support;
 - An apology, expression of regret or admission of fault;
 - A change of policy, procedures or practices;
 - A change of decision; and
 - A fee refund.
1. The school will implement the remedy as soon as practicable.
 2. If a person with a complaint is not satisfied with the outcome determined by the school, they should contact the South Eastern Metropolitan Regional office of the Education Department. The officer from the Regional office 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.
 3. If the complaint cannot be resolved by the complainant, the school and the regional officer working together, the regional office may refer it to the Education Department's Group Coordination Division.
 4. 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.
 5. The school will regularly review its policy and procedures to effectively address parent concerns and complaints a

Evaluation: *This policy will be reviewed as part of the College's review cycle.*

