

PARENT/CARER COMPLAINTS POLICY

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide an outline of the complaints process at Mount Alexander College (the School) so that Parents/Carers and members of the community are informed of how they can raise complaints or concerns about issues arising at the School; and
- ensure that all complaints regarding the School are managed in a timely, effective, fair and respectful manner.

2. DEFINITIONS

- **Complaint** - is an expression of dissatisfaction, either written or verbal, with an action taken, decision made or service provided, or the failure to provide a service, take action or make a decision at a school.

3. SCOPE

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

4. POLICY

The School welcomes feedback, both positive and negative, and is committed to continuous improvement. It values open communication with its student families and is committed to understanding complaints and addressing them appropriately. The School recognises that the complaints process provides an important opportunity for its reflection and learning.

The School values and encourages open and positive relationships with its community. It understands that it is in the best interests of students for there to be a trusting relationship between families and the School.

When addressing a complaint, it is expected that all parties will:

- be considerate of each other's views and respect each other's role;
- be focused on resolution of the complaint, with the interests of the student involved at the centre;
- act in good faith and cooperation;
- behave with respect and courtesy;
- respect the privacy and confidentiality of those involved, as appropriate;
- operate within and seek reasonable resolutions that comply with any applicable legislation and DET policy; and
- recognise that the School and the DET may be subject to legal constraints on their ability to act or disclose information in some circumstances.

Preparation for raising a concern or complaint

The School encourages Parents/Carers or members of the community who may wish to submit a complaint to:

- carefully consider the issues they would like to discuss;
- remember they may not have all the facts relating to the issues that they want to raise;
- think about how the matter could be resolved; and
- be informed by checking the policies and guidelines set by the DET and the School (see the "Further Information and Resources" section below).

Complaints process

The School is always happy to discuss with Parents/Carers and community members any concerns that they may have. Concerns regarding classwork, assessment and classroom curriculum should be directed to the student's classroom teacher and the Head of House. Concerns regarding wellbeing, overall academic progress and student behaviour should be directed to the Head of House and Leading Teacher Student Engagement and Wellbeing. Where possible, school staff will work with the Parents/Carers to ensure their concerns are appropriately addressed.

Where concerns cannot be resolved in this way, Parents/Carers or community members may wish to make a formal complaint to the Principal or Assistant Principal. Concerns regarding staff conduct and performance should also be directed to the Principal or Assistant Principal.

Parents/ carers can either email or telephone the College and their concerns will be directed to the relevant person.

If a Parent/Carer or community member would like to make a formal complaint, in most cases, depending on the nature of the complaint raised, the School will first seek to understand the issues and will then convene a resolution meeting with the aim of resolving the complaint together.

The following process will apply:

- a) **Complaint received:** the relevant school person will acknowledge the concern by either emailing them or telephoning the Parent/Carer. The School can then discuss the complaint in a way that is convenient, whether in writing, meeting in person or via the telephone.
- b) **Information gathering:** depending on the issues raised in the complaint, the Principal, Assistant Principal or relevant school contact may need to gather further information to properly understand the situation. This process may also involve speaking to others to obtain details about the situation or the concerns raised.
- c) **Response:** Where possible, a resolution meeting will be arranged with the relevant school contact to discuss the complaint with the objective of reaching a resolution satisfactory to all parties. If after the resolution meeting the School is unable to resolve the complaint, it will work the complainant to produce a written summary of the complaint in the event they would like to take further action. In some circumstances, the Principal may determine that a resolution meeting would not be appropriate. In this situation, a response to the complaint will be provided in writing.
- d) **Timelines:** The School will acknowledge receipt of your complaint as soon as possible (usually within two school days) and will seek to resolve complaints in a timely manner. Depending on the complexity of the complaint, the School may need some time to gather enough information to fully understand the circumstances of your complaint. The School will endeavour to complete any necessary information gathering and hold a resolution meeting where appropriate within 10 school days of the complaint being raised. In situations where further time is required, the School will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

Resolution

Where appropriate, the School may seek to resolve a complaint by:

- an apology or expression of regret;
- a change of decision;
- a change of policy, procedure or practice;
- offering the opportunity for student counselling or other support; or
- other actions consistent with the School's values that are intended to support the student, Parents/Carers and school relationship, engagement, and participation in the School community.

In some circumstances, the School may also ask you to attend a meeting with an independent third party, or participate in a mediation with an accredited mediator to assist in the resolution of the dispute.

Escalation

If you are not satisfied that your complaint has been resolved by the school, or if your complaint is about the Principal and the Parent/Carer or community member do not want to raise it directly with them, then the complaint should be referred to the Department of Education and Training South Western Region by contacting Western Melbourne Area Manager John Dainutis on 03 7005 1839.

The School may also refer a complaint to Department of Education and Training South Western Region if it believes that it has done all it can to address the complaint.

See the DET's Parent Complaints policy, for more information including the role of the DET Regional Office.

5. FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- DET Parent Complaints Policy and Resources
<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/complaints/policy>

6. REVIEW CYCLE

This policy is based on the DET Complaints Policy Template dated April 2019. It was last approved by School Council on September 14th, 2021 and is scheduled for review in 2024.