

## PARENT/CARER COMPLAINTS POLICY



### Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact the School by telephoning 03 9376 1622.

### 1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide an outline of the complaints process at Mount Alexander College so that students, parents/carers and members of the community are informed of how they can raise complaints or concerns about issues arising at our school; and
- ensure that all complaints and concerns regarding Mount Alexander College 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 students, parents/carers, or members of our school community and applies to all matters relating to our school.

In some limited instances, we may need to refer a complainant to another policy or area if there are different processes in place to manage the issue including:

- Complaints and concerns relating to fraud and corruption will be managed in accordance with the Department of Education and Training's (DET) Fraud and Corruption Policy;
- Criminal matters will be referred to Victorian Police;
- Legal claims will be referred to the Department of Education and Training's Legal Division; and
- Complaints and concerns relating to child abuse will be managed in accordance with the school's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures.

### 4. POLICY

Mount Alexander College welcomes feedback, both positive and negative, and is committed to continuous improvement. We value open communication with families and are committed to understanding complaints and addressing them appropriately. We recognise that the complaints process provides an important opportunity for reflection and learning.

The school values and encourages open and positive relationships with the school community. We understand 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 schools and the Department may be subject to legal constraints on their ability to act or disclose information in some circumstances.

### ***Complaints and concerns process for students***

Mount Alexander College acknowledges that issues or concerns can cause stress or worry for students and impact their wellbeing and learning. Mount Alexander College encourages students to raise issues or concerns as they arise so that we can work together to resolve them.

Students with a concern or complaint can raise them with a trusted adult at school, for example, with their Mentor Teacher, Heads of House or Wellbeing staff. This person will take their concern or complaint seriously and will explain the steps that can be taken to try to resolve the issue and support them.

Students can also ask their parent/carer or another trusted adult outside of the school, to talk to us about the issue instead. Information about our parent/carer complaints and concerns process is outlined further below. The parent/carer process also applies to students who are mature minors, refer to the DET's Mature Minors and Decision Making Policy.

Other ways that a student can raise a concern or complaint with us includes:

- talking to a member of the student leadership team representative council about their concern and any suggestions they have for resolving it;
- participating in our Attitudes to School Survey; and
- participating in our student forums held every term.

Further information and resources to support students to raise issues or concerns are available at:

- [Report Racism Hotline](#) (call 1800 722 476) – this hotline enables students to report concerns relating to racism or religious discrimination
- [Reach Out](#)
- [Headspace](#)
- [Kids Helpline](#) (call 1800 55 1800)
- [Victorian Aboriginal Education Association](#) (VAEAI)

### ***Complaints and concerns process for parents/carers and community members***

#### Preparation for raising a concern or complaint

Mount Alexander College 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 Mount Alexander College (see "Further Information and Resources" section below).

#### Support person

Parents/carers or members of the community are welcome to have a support person to assist them in raising a complaint or concern with the school. They must advise the school if they wish to have a support person to assist them, and provide their name, contact details, and their relationship to the complainant.

#### Raising a concern

Mount Alexander College 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.

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

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.

Where possible, school staff will work with you to ensure that concerns are appropriately addressed.

### Making a formal complaint

If you 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:

1. **Complaint received:** either email or telephone the appropriate person to outline your complaint so that the school can fully understand what the issues are. The school can discuss your complaint in a way that is convenient for you, whether in writing, in person or via the telephone.
2. **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.
3. **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 with the complainant to produce a written summary of the complaint in the event they would like to take further action about it. In some circumstances, the Principal may determine that a resolution meeting would not be appropriate. In this situation, a response to the complainant will be provided in writing.
4. **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, Mount Alexander College may need some time to gather enough information to fully understand the circumstances of your complaint. We will endeavour to complete any necessary information gathering and hold a resolution meeting where appropriate within 10 working days of the complaint being raised. In situations where further time is required, Mount Alexander College will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

Note that unreasonable conduct (e.g. vexatious complaints) may need to be managed differently to the procedures in this policy.

### Resolution

Where appropriate, Mount Alexander College 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; and
- other actions consistent with school values that are intended to support the student, parent and school relationship, engagement, and participation in the school community.

### Escalation

If you are not satisfied that your complaint has been resolved by the school, or if your complaint is about the principal and you 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 Silvana Sena on 03 7005 1839

Mount Alexander College may also refer a complaint to Department of Education and Training South Western Region if we believe that we have done all we can to address the complaint.

For more information about the Department's parent complaints process, including the role of the Regional Office, please see: Raise a complaint or concern about your school.

### Record keeping and other requirements

To meet Department and legal requirements, the school must keep written records of:

- Serious, substantial or unusual complaints; and
- Complaints relating to the Child Information Sharing Scheme and Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme, to meet regulatory requirements - refer to Child and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes for further information.

The school also follows Department of Education policy to ensure that record-keeping, reporting, privacy and employment law obligations are met when responding to complaints or concerns.

## 5. COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our school's website
- Included in staff induction processes
- Included in our staff handbook/manual
- Discussed at student forums/through communication tools
- Made available in hard copy from school administration upon request

## 6. FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

The DET's website:

- Parent Complaints Policy and Resources  
<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/complaints/policy>
- Raise a complaint or concern about your school  
<https://www.vic.gov.au/raise-complaint-or-concern-about-your-school>
- Report racism or religious discrimination in schools  
<https://www.vic.gov.au/report-racism-or-religious-discrimination-schools>
- Mature Minors and Decision Making Policy  
<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/mature-minors-and-decision-making/policy>
- Fraud and Corruption Policy  
<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/fraud-and-corruption-control/policy>

Other resources:

- Report Racism Hotline (call 1800 722 476) – this hotline enables students to report concerns relating to racism or religious discrimination  
<https://www.vic.gov.au/report-racism-or-religious-discrimination-schools>
- Reach Out  
<https://au.reachout.com/>
- Headspace  
<https://headspace.org.au/>
- Kids Helpline - call 1800 55 1800  
<https://kidshelpline.com.au/>
- Victorian Aboriginal Education Association (VAEAI)  
<https://www.vaeai.org.au/>

## 7. REVIEW CYCLE AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed:	August 2022
Consultation:	Principal Class, Leadership Team, School Council
Approved by:	Principal - Dani Angelico – August 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 2022
Next scheduled review date:	August 2024 Note: the mandatory review cycle is 2 years.