

Tallangatta Secondary College Policy Manual	STUDENT ENGAGEMENT & WELLBEING Managing Complaints and Concerns Policy	Council Meeting: May 2014
Information: 0260715000 Manager: Principal	Related Policies:	Reviewed: Nov 2016

Rationale:

TSC wishes to treat everyone with dignity and respect and encourages communication between parents, the community and the College. When issues of concern arise it is the fundamental belief of TSC that they be dealt with promptly, fairly and openly. TSC believes that in working together, the best solution and outcomes can be found for any problem.

This policy has been developed in consultation with the school community and school councillors in response to DET expectations following a review, in 2005, by the Ombudsman Victoria on the handling of parents' complaints and concerns.

Aim:

To ensure the school has in place a range of procedures for dealing with concerns and complaints. It should be recognised that parent complaints mostly relate to one of the following areas:

- the management of an incident between students at the school
- the educational (or other) progress of a student
- the development and implementation of school and general education policy.

School Values:

Tallangatta Secondary College's approach to handling concerns and complaints is based on our values

- Responsibility
- Effort
- Respect
- Empathy
- Integrity
- Teamwork

We also recognise the importance of:

- providing a safe and supportive learning environment for our students
- providing a safe working environment for staff
- building positive relationships between all stakeholders - students, parents, staff and the wider community

We have developed this policy and procedures to address concerns and complaints in collaboration with parents, school council and the wider school community

This policy and related procedures cover concerns and complaints relating to:

- general issues of student misbehaviour that are contrary to the schools code of conduct
- incidents of bullying or harassment in the classroom or school yard
- learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
- communication with parents and carers
- school fees and payments
- general administrative issues

It **does not cover** concerns and issues related to:

- student discipline involving expulsions
- complaints about employee conduct or performance that should be dealt with by performance management, grievance resolution or disciplinary action.
- complaints by employees relating to their employment
- student critical incident matters
- other criminal matters

Expectations:

Tallangatta Secondary College 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. This includes refraining from making comments on social media sites or in any other public forum.
- acknowledge that a common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
- act in good faith in a calm and courteous manner.
- show respect and understanding of each other's point of view and value differences rather than to judge and blame
- recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced

The school will address any concerns or complaints received by parents in the following manner:

- courteously
- efficiently
- fairly
- promptly, or within a timeline agreed upon by both parties
- in accordance with due process, principles of natural justice and the DET regulatory framework

Procedures for raising concern or complaint:

In the first instance, a complaint should be made directly to the school.

- A. The **complainant** should telephone, write to or visit:
 - the student's classroom teacher about specific subject issues
 - the student's home group teacher about general learning issues
 - the year level coordinator about general learning and / or schooling issues
 - a leading teacher or assistant principal about issues relating to complex student issues
 - the principal about issues relating to staff members, school policy, school management, or extremely complex student issues

- B. The **college** will manage and address complaints and concerns received by:
 1. Listening and recording details
 2. Investigating the complaint. The time required to investigate the complaint will depend on the complexity of the complaint.
 3. Taking action, if required, including recommendations for the future.

- C. Throughout the process, the **college** will:
 - record the details of all complaints received onto a template which includes, but is not limited to:
 1. the name and contact details (with permission) of person making complaint
 2. the date the complaint was expressed
 3. the form in which the complaint was received (eg: face to face, letter, telephone, email)
 4. a brief description of the complaint
 5. the action taken relating to the concern /complaint
 6. any recommendations for the future

When the complaint is easily resolved in a telephone call, briefer notes will be kept. In accordance with the DET guidelines the school will

- store all records of complaints received in a secure location within the school.
- make every effort to resolve concerns and complaints before involving other levels of DET.
- provide a complainant with a copy of the complaints procedure.
- determine whether a concern or complaint should be managed through the school's concerns and complaints process or through other complaints processes of DET.

If you are unsure of whom to contact, please telephone the principal on 0260 715000. The principal will then organise for an appointment to be made with the appropriate personnel.

Support available when raising a concern:

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 organisation who does not receive a fee. All parties involved in addressing a complaint may seek the services of a mediator when there is difficulty coming to an agreement.

Timeframe:

The school will make every effort to resolve a concern or complaint as quickly as possible. If a complaint involves a number of students and/or a range of issues, the school will require additional time to fully investigate and resolve the complaint. Should the complaint involve complex issues, the school may need to take advice from the DET regional office which may take additional time. The school will then inform the complainant of the adjusted time frame and any reasons for delay. In all cases the school will try to resolve a concern or complaint within twenty working days.

Remedies:

If a concern or complaint is substantiated in part or whole, the school will offer an appropriate remedy. This may include one of the following:

- 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 decision
- a change of policy, procedure or practice
- the cancellation of a debt or a refund

Referral of complaints or concerns:

1. If a person with a concern or complaint is not satisfied with the outcome determined by the school, they should contact the North Eastern Regional Office
2. The officer from the regional office will ask the complainant for a complete 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.

Communication:

The school will make information about procedures for addressing concerns and complaints available to parents and the school community, in clear and easy to understand language and, where appropriate, in a range of languages and formats easily accessible to everyone so that no-one is disadvantaged. This policy (including the related procedures) will be published on the school website.

Reporting procedures to School Council will include an indication of complaints received.

Training and Support for staff:

The school will:

- Brief all staff members about its procedures to address complaints and concerns
- Provide staff with training and support appropriate to their responsibilities under the procedures
- Ensure staff demonstrate the personal attributes outlined in the “Good practice guide: Ombudsman Victoria’s guide to complaint handling for Victorian public sector”

Policy review:

This policy will be reviewed every four years as part of the cyclic policy review process at Tallangatta Secondary College.