



## Ouyen P12 College Parent Complaint Policy

Help for non-English speakers.

If you need help to understand this policy, please contact Ouyen P-12 College on (03) 5092 1182 or alternatively at [Ouyen.p12@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:Ouyen.p12@education.vic.gov.au)

### **Purpose:**

#### **Ouyen P-12 College Values are:**

Endeavour

- Respect
- Integrity
- Community

Our school seeks to provide a positive, harmonious and productive environment and these values provide the framework within which high standards of conduct are maintained between staff, parents and students at all times. Within this framework it is the school's desire and responsibility to manage and resolve parent complaints fairly, efficiently and properly and in accordance with relative legislation.

### **Guidelines:**

#### **Concerns and Complaints:**

These procedures cover concerns and complaints about:

- general issues of student behaviour that are contrary to the school's student engagement policy
- incidents of 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 matter

The school will develop its procedures to address concerns and complaints in collaboration with parents and the school community.

#### **Expectations of person raising the concern or complaint:**

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 the difference, rather than judge and blame
- recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced

#### **Raising concerns or complaints:**

The complainant should telephone, visit or write to:

- the student's teacher about learning issues and incidents that happened in their class or group
- the year level coordinator if students from several classes are involved
- the Principal about issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members or very complex student issues

**Help with raising concerns or complaints:**

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 might be a member of **School Council** 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 a difficulty coming to an agreement.

The school will ensure that the complainant is aware of these supports.

A complainant who wishes to use these support services should ensure the person addressing the concern or complaint is aware of their intention and is in agreement.

**Managing parent concerns and complaints information:**

It is important that all complaints, ensuing procedures and outcomes are fully documented as below.

- name and contact details (with permission) of the person with a concern or complaint
- the date the concern was expressed or complaint made
- 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 or action taken on the concern or complaint
- any recommendations for future improvement in the school's policy or procedures.
- a parents' complaint register will be held in the Principal's Office for parent concerns or complaints made at that level.

**Addressing concerns or complaints:**

All the concerns or complaints will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and professional respect at all times.

The school will make every effort to resolve concerns and complaints before involving other levels of the Department. However, should the complaint involve complex issues, the school might need to take advice from the Department's Regional Office. This may take more time. Therefore the school will tell the complainant the new timeline for addressing the complaint and the reason for any delays.

- In all cases the school will try to resolve the concern or complaint promptly. If the complaint involves many students and a range of issues the school will need more time to investigate and resolve it.
- Concerns or complaints about general classroom matters should be referred to the relevant classroom teacher or relevant staff member. Concerns and complaints about general school matters, including policies, facilities, staffing etc and unresolved matters previously dealt with at a classroom level should be referred to the Principal.

- The Principal will determine whether a concern or complaint should be managed through the school's concerns and complaints procedure or through other complaint processes of the Department.
- All complaints will be acted on promptly by the staff member who receives the complaint. • The school will acknowledge all complaints made and provide the complainant with a timeline for investigating the complaint.
- Where a complaint is referred to the Principal, the Principal may choose to respond to a complaint through an informal process in cases where the complaint is minor, the complainant wishes the matter to be dealt with informally or the complaint has arisen from a lack of or unclear communication.
- Formal processes will be used when informal processes haven't been successful, a complainant seeks a formal process, or the Principal believes the complaint warrants formal investigation.  
Full details regarding formal complaint resolution procedures are contained with the Department of Education "Local Complaints Resolution Procedures" handbook (<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/pcschoolinformation.htm>), and contain the following steps.

### **The Formal Process involves:-**

1. Investigating the complaint through formal interviews, written statements, conveying the details of the complaint to the respondent in writing and providing the opportunity for a written response.
2. Dismissing or accepting the complaint. Acceptance may involve a range of appropriate remedies offered at the school's discretion as listed further in this document.
3. Preparation of a detailed confidential report.
4. Monitoring of the situation.

### **Remedies:**

If a concern or complaint is substantiated in whole or part, the school will offer an appropriate remedy. 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
- to change its policies, procedures or practices

The school will implement the remedy as soon as practicable.

### **Referral of concerns or complaints:**

If a person with a concern or complaint is not satisfied with the outcome determined by the school, they should contact the Loddon Mallee Regional Office.

- The regional community liaison officer 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 Department'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.

### **Communication and training:**

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.

The information will include:

- how a person can make a complaint
- the person's responsibilities
- information to be provided by the person
- who the person should contact and their contact details
- the process and timeframes for managing complaints.

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

- published on the school's website
- printed in the school newsletter

### **Training and support:**

The school will:

- 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*.

### **Monitoring the parent complaints policy:**

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.

### **The school will review its information about complaints made over time to:**

- identify common or recurring issues that may need addressing
- 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.

### **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 North-Western Victoria Region by contacting: [nwvr@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:nwvr@education.vic.gov.au) or 1300 338 691.

Ouyen P-12 College may also refer a complaint to North-Western Victoria 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](#).

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's [Fraud and Corruption Policy](#)
- Criminal matters will be referred to Victorian Police
- Legal claims will be referred to the Department's Legal Division
- Complaints and concerns relating to child abuse will be managed in accordance with our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures

## **Record keeping and other requirements**

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

- Serious, substantial or unusual complaints
- 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

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

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

Ouyen P-12 College acknowledges that issues or concerns can cause stress or worry for students and impact their wellbeing and learning. Ouyen P-12 College encourages our 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 their teacher or a member of the leadership team. This person will take your concern or complaint seriously and will explain to you what steps we can take to try to resolve the issue and support you.

You can also ask your 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: [Mature Minors and Decision Making](#).

Other ways you can raise a concern or complaint with us include:

- talking to a member of the student representative council about your concern and any suggestions you have for resolving it
- participating in our Attitudes to School Survey (for Grades 4-6)
- 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)
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## **FURTHER INFORMATION and resources**

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies on the Department's Policy and Advisory Library (PAL):

- [Complaints - Parents](#)
- The Department's parents' website:
- [Raise a complaint or concern about your school](#)
- [Report racism or religious discrimination in schools](#)

**This policy was last updated by the Felice Cua, Principal in March 2023 and is scheduled for review in 3 years**