



CONCERN & COMPLAINT POLICY

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Authorised by:

Principal

Approved by School Council: **16/5/18**

Date Created: 08/09/09

Last Updated: 1/5/18

Review Date: 2021

Page Number: 1 of 4

General Principle

Horsham College respects and values input from parents (and guardians), staff, students and members of the public in the development of its major policies.

This policy is designed to assist with addressing concerns and complaints and outlines processes that offer resolution to issues that may arise (as per DET guidelines). The College has a copy of DET parent complaints policy available to the Horsham College Community. This policy aims to inform parents/guardians on how issues can be raised with the College and the College's procedures in managing them.

In this policy:

- A concern is an issue of interest raised in order to improve or change a situation.
- A complaint is an expression of grievance or resentment where the complainant is seeking resolution.

This policy covers concerns and complaints about:

- General issues of student behaviour or learning
- Incidents of bullying or harassment
- Concerns regarding teaching practice or behaviour.
- Learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
- Communication with parents/guardians
- School fees and payments
- General administrative issues

Other relevant Policies include:

- Student Discipline – Suspension and Expulsion
- DET Employee's complaints
- Emergency Management procedures
- (<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/support/Pages/emergency.aspx>)

Definitions

For the purpose of this policy the following terms are defined as follows:

- a 'parent' includes: a person who has parental responsibility for 'major long term issues' as defined in the Family Law Act 1975 (Commonwealth)
- a person appointed as 'guardian' pursuant to the Children Youth and Families Act 2005 (Victoria)
- an informal carer with whom the child normally or regularly resides, and who has day-to-day care and control of the child
- a mature minor student an adult student

Guidelines for Raising a Concern or Complaint

Complainants are to be informed and advised of the following:

1. Before you approach the College:

- Be clear about the issue you want to discuss.
- Endeavour to provide evidence to validate your concern.

- Focus on things that genuinely affect the student.
 - Remain calm and remember that you may not have all the facts relating to the issue.
 - Think about what an acceptable outcome would be for you and/or the student.
 - Become informed – check department policies or guidelines where relevant.
2. To raise a concern or issue you should telephone, visit (with prior appointment), email (addresses available on the College's website) or write to:
 - The student's Homeroom Teacher about general issues.
 - The student's subject teacher about concerns or issues that occurred in their class or group.
 - The Year Level Coordinator (YLC) if students from several classes are involved.
 - The Assistant Principal (Middle or Senior Years) about issues relating to complex student issues or staff members (where appropriate these will be referred to the Principal).
 - The Principal about issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members or very complex student issues.
 - The Regional Director, South Western Victoria Region about issues relating to the Principal.
 3. If unable to access the College's website then call the Administration Office on (03) 5381 7100 for staff member contact details.
 4. You may bring a support person with you to meetings. The support person does not take part in the conversation unless there are communication difficulties.

Guidelines for Management of Concerns and Complaints

Complainants are to be informed about the following:

1. All issues will be treated confidentially.
2. The College will seek to deal with all issues in a timely manner following our parent complaints process.
3. Issues that are easily resolved by telephone will be noted in the appropriate staff member's online system (SEQTA), diary recording the issue and the resolution.
4. Issues that are unresolved in the first instance will be assigned to an appropriate leader with the following details passed on:
 - Name and contact details of complainant
 - Date when issue was first raised
 - A brief description of the issue
 - Action taken on the issue
5. Further investigations will be undertaken by the assigned leader seeking resolution.
6. It is expected that the complainant and the College will make every effort to resolve issues before involving other levels of the Department of Education and Training (DET).
7. Resolution of issues may result in recommendations for future improvement in the College's policy or procedures.

Unreasonable complainant conduct

All complaints should be considered in accordance with the school's complaint-handling procedures including when parent behaviour is thought to be unreasonable. While a decision maker considers a range of factors and views, they may at any point in the process outlined in this policy consider a parent's behaviour to be unreasonable. In these circumstances, it is appropriate for the decision maker to communicate the basis on which the conclusion was made to the parent in writing. The decision maker may also indicate an acceptable procedure for future communication with the parent about their complaint. The

Department considers behaviour to be unreasonable when:

- it is clearly and significantly outside the expectations of cooperation, courtesy and respect
- it calls for staff resources and time unjustified by the nature or significance of the complaint
- an action or complaint is brought without merit, often to cause annoyance to another person
- it is oriented towards conflict. For information about how to manage unreasonable complainant behaviour, see: Victorian Ombudsman's Unreasonable Complainant Conduct Manual Managing Unreasonable Complainant Conduct (joint project of the Australasian Parliamentary Ombudsman)

http://www.ombudsman.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0022/35617/GL_Unreasonable-Complainant-Conduct-Manual-2012_LR.pdf

Anonymous complaints

The Department requires all complaints to be considered. However, it recognises that its staff might not be able to fully consider a complaint if they cannot effectively liaise with the parent. Furthermore, anonymous complaints raise natural justice issues for respondents who have a right to know particulars of the allegations made against them. Department staff responsible for handling parent complaints should determine, in consultation with other relevant personnel from the central office or region, the extent to which an anonymous complaint received by the school, region or central office shall be investigated

Guidelines for Resolution of Concerns and Complaints

Complainants are to be informed about the following:

If an issue is substantiated in whole or part, the College will offer an appropriate remedy. Depending on the circumstances the College may offer:

- An explanation or further information regarding the issue.
- Mediation, counselling or other support.
- A resolution of the issue through a restorative conference
- To change its decision on the issue.
- To change its policy, guidelines, procedures or practices.
- To cancel a debt (such as for school payments).

The College will implement the remedy as soon as practicable.

Guidelines for Referral of Concern or Complaint

Complainants are to be informed about the following:

1. If the complainant is not satisfied that the matter has been resolved by speaking to one of the College's Associate Principals or Principal, they can contact South Western Victoria Region - Regional Office. An officer from the regional office will ask them for a complete and factual account of the concern or complaint in writing and their opinion as to why they believe the College did not resolve it to their satisfaction.

2. If the complainant believes the matter remains unresolved after discussions with the regional office they can send their complaint, in writing, to:
Deputy Secretary,
Regional Support Group
Department of Education and Training
GPO Box 4367
MELBOURNE, Victoria 3001

Guidelines for Monitoring of the Concern & Complaint Policy and accompanying procedures

The College will review its information about issues raised over time to identify common or recurring issues that may need addressing and will assess the effectiveness of these and other procedures.

Horsham College School Council will review the Concern & Complaint Policy as part of its cyclic policy and procedures review schedule.

APPENDIX 1

	CONCERN & COMPLAINT POLICY <i>Complaint Checklist</i>		File location: U:\Public\Policies & Procedures\Parent Complaint Checklist.doc
			Authorised by: Principal – Date ?
Date Created: 9.3.18	Last Updated: 9/3/18	Review Date: 2020	Page Number: 1 of ?

Teacher Name: _____

STUDENT INFORMATION:

Student/Parent Name:	
Brief issues reported:	
Parent Information:	
Number of occurrences of the issue:	

CHECKLIST:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Complaint received in writing:	Brief description:
<input type="checkbox"/>	Complaint acknowledged and time frame for resolution given:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Principal or Head of School has been informed and considered within VALUES and school operation. Process is given OK by Principal	Resolution brief:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assistant Principal or appropriate delegate contact parent regarding complaint and requests a mutually beneficial resolution• Assistant Principal or appropriate delegate meets with staff member to inform concerns and arrange a meeting (they may bring a support person)• Assistant Principal or appropriate delegate informs Leading Teacher and process outlined		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Complaint is raised by Assistant Principal or delegate in meeting (minute taker and advocate for teacher is advised)	Brief description:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Outline of the complaint and ways Leadership can support• Opinions from staff member and discussion• Resolution strategies are negotiated and review set for 3 weeks		

IF MEETING NOT SUCCESSFUL:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Consult with further advice from Principal or relevant DET Department	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Discuss school finding with parent and give suggestions as to how the situation can reach a mutually agreeable resolution	

IF RESOLUTION REACHED:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Parent agreed with resolution. Review Period 3 weeks for a quick chat with all parties	Date of Review:
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IF RESOLUTION NOT REACHED:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Talk to staff member or school community member to consider a range of actions that could be taken	Description
<input type="checkbox"/>	Give Checklist to Principal and note review date	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Principal of the school agrees with resolution	Signature of Principal:

APPENDIX 2

PARENT COMPLAINT FLOWCHART

