



RAISING CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

Overview:

- Understanding definition and process for concern or complaint
- Concern: Should be communicated with the relevant Coburg High School staff
- Complaint: Should be communicated with Senior Management/Leadership
- All parental communication (including emails) must strictly be during school business hours Monday - Friday 8:30am - 4:30pm. The 'schedule send' function for emails should be utilised to ensure times are adhered to.
- Timeframe for Coburg High School staff to respond (5 school days) Resolution (20 school days).

Location:

All Coburg High School policies are located under the 'community tab' on Compass, sub-section 'School Documentation' and then 'Policy Documents'.

Language Opportunities:



If you require this document to be translated into another language, please contact:

info@coburg.vic.edu.au

Se si richiede che questo documento sia tradotto in un'altra lingua, si prega di contattare:

info@coburg.vic.gov.au

Εάν ζητήσετε να μεταφραστεί αυτό το έγγραφο σε άλλη γλώσσα, επικοινωνήστε με την ηλεκτρονική διεύθυνση info@coburg.vic.edu.au

यदि आपको इस दस्तावेज़ को किसी अन्य भाषा में अनुवादित करने की आवश्यकता है, तो कृपया संपर्क करें:

info@coburg.vic.edu.au

اگر شما نیاز دارید که این سند به زبان دیگری ترجمه شود ، لطفاً با این آدرس تماس بگیرید: info@coburg.vic.edu.au

หากคุณต้องการแปลเอกสารนี้เป็นภาษาอื่นกรุณาติดต่อ: info@coburg.vic.edu.au

إذا كنت تريد ترجمة هذا المستند إلى لغة أخرى ، فيرجى الاتصال بـ: info@coburg.vic.edu.au

CONTENTS

Rationale **Page 2 - 3**

Scope **Page 3**

Implementation **Pages 3 - 9**

Further Information **Page 9 - 10**

Evaluation **Page 10**

POLICY FOR RAISING CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

Rationale

At Coburg High School (CHS), we believe that all members of the school community have the right to work in a safe and supportive environment. Our school is committed to ensuring a caring learning environment, which promotes respect and values diversity. The principal and staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all students, parents and other staff. This policy and associated procedures are in place to clarify for parents, students and the community the process for raising concerns and complaints.

Note: Complaints raised by staff members are covered by DEECD Policy and Guidelines.

This policy is developed within the guidelines found in the document “Addressing parents’ concerns and complaints effectively: policy and guides.” Office for Government School Education April 2009.

Definitions

- “Parent” in the policy has the same meaning as in the Education and Training Reform Act 2006.
- “Concern” is an issue of interest (because of its importance and effect) which is raised informally in order to improve or change the situation.

e.g. I believe that the school’s physical education policy and program is inadequate. I don’t think that it caters for students who have well-developed skills and who need to be involved in competitive sport. I think the school should review its policy in this area.

- “Complaint” is an expression of grievance where the complainant is seeking redress or justice.

e.g. My daughter has been left out of the school’s netball team for the third time in a row. She is an accomplished netballer and deserves to be part of the team. It is not fair that she is left out and I want you to do something about it.

- “Legislative and Regulatory Framework”: All concerns and complaints must be addressed in line with the Department of Education’s legislative and regulatory framework.
- “Dignity and respect statement”: Concerns and complaints must be addressed in line with the Department’s 2006 Dignity and Respect Statement which is:

EXCELLENCE INTEGRITY CURIOSITY COMMUNITY

The Department is committed to providing safe and supportive work environments where diversity is valued and everyone is treated with respect, fairness and dignity. Discrimination, sexual and other forms of harassment, bullying, violence and threatening behaviour are unacceptable. All employees, students, parents and visitors in schools and other Departmental workplaces are expected to act accordingly. The Department (which includes schools) and school councils, will act to ensure that the safety, security, health and wellbeing of all employees, students, parents and visitors in schools and other Departmental workplaces are protected.

Scope

Coburg High School aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint or concern. The school will give careful consideration to all concerns and complaints and deal with them as swiftly as possible. The school aims to resolve concerns or complaints through open dialogue and mutual understanding and, in all cases, the school puts the interests of the student above all other issues. The school aims to provide opportunities for any concern or complaint to be fully discussed and resolved.

Expectations and responsibilities of parents with concerns or complaints:

- Raise the concern or complaint 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 difference, rather than judge and blame
- Recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced.

Implementation

Teachers / Education Support Staff expectations:

- Maintain confidentiality at all times.

EXCELLENCE INTEGRITY CURIOSITY COMMUNITY

- Work to resolve concerns and complaints promptly.
- Record concerns and complaints on the school's management system (Compass) confidentially.
- Communicate concerns and complaints to the Leading Teacher of the relevant year level, Leading Teacher of Curriculum or Leading Teacher of Assessment and Reporting, Assistant Principal or Principal where appropriate and as needed.
- Refer parent complaints and concerns to Learning Area Leaders or Sub School Team Leaders or other relevant staff as needed and where appropriate.

Principal / Assistant Principal expectations:

- Maintain confidentiality and impartiality in dealing with each matter.
- Work to resolve complaints and concerns at the school level, wherever possible.
- Record concerns and complaints on the school's management system (Compass) confidentially.
- Develop and implement a process for registering, responding to and managing parent enquiries, concerns and complaints.
- Ensure that the process for managing concerns and complaints includes recording and monitoring complaints and their outcomes to enable improvements to be identified and implemented.
- Ensure that procedures for enquiries, concerns and complaints are communicated clearly to parents and community members.
- Ensure that school policies and procedures are monitored and modified, where necessary, to address areas of concern.
- Ensure that processes are consistent with relevant Department of Education and Training (DET) policies.
- Ensure that complainants and respondents are aware that they can have a friend or adviser present during discussions. 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 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 difficulty coming to an agreement.

- Refer the complaint, where appropriate, to the Regional Director for resolution.

Concerns and complaints covered by the procedures

The above procedures cover concerns and complaints about:

- General issues of student, staff or parent behaviour that may be contrary to the school's Engagement and Wellbeing Policy;
- Incidents of bullying or harassment in the classroom, in the school yard or online; • Curriculum, learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning; • Communication with parents;
- School fees and payments;
- General administrative issues;
- Any other school-related matters except as detailed below.

These procedures do NOT cover matters for which there are existing rights of review or appeal, as detailed in the Victorian Government Schools Reference Guide, including:

- Student discipline matters involving suspensions or expulsions;
- Complaints about employee conduct or performance and complaints that should be dealt with by performance management, grievance resolution or disciplinary action;
- Complaints by the Department's employees related to their employment;
- Student critical incident matters;
- Criminal matters.

Making a Complaint / Raising a Concern

In the first instance, a complaint should be made with the school during school business only. 8:30am - 4:30pm. Parents/guardians are encouraged to use the schedule send function on email platforms so a complaint is received during this time.

- Concerns or complaints about learning issues should be raised with the **student's subject teacher** or **Learning Area Leader** in the first instance. If required, the **Leading Teachers of either Curriculum or Assessment and Reporting** can be

notified.

- Concerns or complaints about incidents that happened in class should be raised with the student's subject teacher, **Home Group teacher**, **Student Managers** or **Sub School Leaders** of respective year levels.
- Concerns or complaints about incidents involving several classes should be raised with the relevant **Sub School Leaders**.
- Issues relating to staff members or complex student issues should be raised with the **Assistant Principal**.
- Issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members or very complex student concerns should be raised with the **Principal**.
- Complaints made directly to the Principal in the first instance may be referred to an appropriate member of staff (unless there are special circumstances which prevent other leaders within the school from managing the complaint).

Complaints can be made:

- Verbally
- By letter
- By email

Coburg High School's phone number is: 03 9353 1700

Written complaints should be addressed to the appropriate member of staff:

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Coburg High School

PO Box 162

Coburg 3058

Or via email: info@coburg.vic.edu.au

Minimum information required when making a complaint

The following information should be provided when making a complaint:

- name and contact details;
- copies of any relevant correspondence or documents relating to the complaint;
- the nature of the complaint; and
- what is needed to resolve the complaint.

Dealing with Concerns and Complaints

Responsiveness

The school will endeavour to acknowledge written complaints or concerns within 5 school days. In order to properly process your complaint, an acknowledgement may be sent as an initial response. As per Department of Education guidelines, where possible complaints will be resolved, dismissed or addressed by the school within 20 school days. The school will also endeavour to resolve concerns in a timely manner. If because of the serious nature of the complaint, it is deemed necessary to forward it on to another section of the Department of Education and Training, the school will do this without delay. In all cases the complainant will be kept informed of the progress of the complaint or concern.

Example acknowledgement:

Dear _____,

Thank you for your communication with Coburg High School regarding a concern or complaint. In line with our value of integrity, we acknowledge the communication and will fully respond to your enquiries. As your matter relates to _____ it is being handled by _____ who will contact you within 20 school days. Please refer to the CHS Policy for [Raising Concerns or Complaints](#) for more detail on how this process is conducted.

Yours Sincerely,

Should the complaint involve complex issues, the school might need to take advice from the Department's regional office which may take more time. The school will inform the complainant of the new timeline for addressing the complaint and the reasons for any delays. In all cases, the school will try to resolve a concern or complaint within 20 school days.

Recording concerns or complaints

The school will record the following details of all complaints received, even if the complaint appears to be minor:

- name and contact details (with permission) of the person with a concern or complaint
- the date the concern was expressed or complaint made
- the form in which the concern or complaint was received (such as face-to-face, by telephone, in writing, by email)
- 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 of action taken on the concern or complaint
- any recommendations for future improvement in the school's policy or procedures.

However, in the first instance, when the complaint is easily resolved in a telephone call, a brief note in the school's/principal's/teacher's diary recording the issue and the resolution may be all that is required.

Enquiring about a complaint's progress

Complainants may enquire as to the progress of their complaint at any time by directly contacting the appropriate person. At the time of lodging a verbal complaint or concern, or in the acknowledgment letter for a written complaint, this person will be identified for the complainant.

Outcome of a complaint

The school will advise complainants verbally, or in writing of the outcome of their complaint. The outcome of all written complaints will be provided in writing.

If a concern or complaint about school policies, procedures or practices is substantiated in whole or part, the school will offer an appropriate remedy such as an apology, expression of regret or admission of fault; an explanation or further information about the issue; mediation, counselling or other support; a change of decision; or a change to its policies, procedures or practices.

Further Information

When a complainant is unhappy with the outcome of a complaint

If a complainant is dissatisfied with attempts to resolve their complaint, or dissatisfied with the outcome, they may raise their concerns or complaints to the North West Victorian regional office on 1300 338 691 or email at nwvr@education.vic.gov.au

Rejecting a Complaint:

Complaints or concerns judged to be vexatious, trivial or without substance, or where it is judged to not warrant further action, will not be processed. Complainants will be advised of this decision in writing.

Anonymous Complaints:

The school requires all complaints to be investigated; however, it must be recognised that staff may not be able to fully investigate a complaint if they cannot effectively liaise with the complainant. Furthermore, anonymous complaints raise natural justice issues for respondents who have a right to know the particulars of allegations made against them. The school principal should determine the extent to which an anonymous complaint received by the school shall be investigated.

Unreasonable complainant conduct

Unreasonable complainant conduct is behaviour that:

- is clearly and significantly outside the expectations of confidentiality, cooperation, courtesy and

respect

- calls for staff resources and time unjustified by the nature or significance of the complaint
- is vexatious (that is, an action or complaint that is brought without merit, often to cause annoyance to another person)
- is oriented towards conflict
- is communicated outside the regular school hours causing undue stress to an individual

Social media

Making a complaint public via social media platforms presents a range of serious barriers to the effective resolution of a complaint. Staff cannot respond to social media complaints and will direct complainants to this policy. Attributing actions to Coburg High School staff in public forums is potentially slanderous and leaves the complainant open to legal action.

Evaluation

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 annual Parent Opinion Survey on the views of parents.

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle, or at times when the principal or school council believes that policy warrants a review.

Last ratified on: Thursday 11 July, 2022