



CONCERNS & COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT POLICY

1. BACKGROUND

From time to time parents or others may have concerns that they wish to take up with the school. At Apollo Bay P-12 College, we welcome feedback and encourage parents to raise any concerns and complaints so that they can be dealt with in a timely and professional manner. The school aims to work with the school community to support each student's needs. We can only do this through a cooperative approach.

Our school has both a desire and a responsibility to ensure that staff and students maintain high standards of conduct at all times, and that concerns and complaints are managed courteously, fairly, efficiently, promptly and in accordance with relative DET Policy and legislation.

Apollo Bay P-12 College will uphold our Statement of Values to manage concerns and complaints from parents, guardians and the wider community.

2. PURPOSE & AIMS

- To provide a harmonious, positive and productive school environment.
- To resolve complaints courteously, fairly, efficiently, promptly and in accordance with relative legislation.
- To handle all concerns or complaints based on the understanding that the college
 - Provides a safe and supportive learning environment,
 - Builds relationships between students, parents and staff, and
 - Provides a safe working environment for all staff.

3. IMPLEMENTATION

SCOPE

Parents' concerns and complaints most commonly relate to:

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

'Parent' in this policy has the same meaning as in the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, which is:

- **'parent'**, in relation to a child, includes a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for the child including parental responsibility under the *Family Law Act 1975* of the Commonwealth and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides.

For the purposes of the policy:

- a **'concern'** is an issue of interest (because of its importance and effect) which is raised informally in order to improve or change a situation. For example: *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.*
- a **'complaint'** is an expression of grievance or resentment where the complainant is seeking redress or justice. For example: *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!*

The procedures in this document cover concerns and complaints about:

- General issues of student behaviour that are contrary to the school's Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy and Whole School Behaviour Guidelines
- Incidents of bullying or harassment in the classroom or in the school yard
- Learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
- Communication with parents
- Schools fees and payments
- General administrative issues
- Any other school-related matters except as detailed below.

As detailed in "Addressing parents' concerns and complaints effectively: policy and guides" Office for Government School Education:

https://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/commrel/contacts/POLICY_AND_GUIDES_Addressings_parents_concerns.pdf these procedures do not cover matters for which there are existing rights of review or appeal. If, at any stage, it becomes apparent that the concern or complaint relates to such matters, the relevant procedures should be implemented immediately. This policy is not applicable where a complainant has employed another party to represent them, such as a solicitor. In these circumstances, the concern or complaint should be referred to the Department's Legal Services Branch for their assessment. However a complainant is entitled to an advocate who can be a friend or colleague or a person provided through an appropriate support agency who does not receive a fee for service.

NOTE: The school will determine whether a concern or complaint should be managed through the school's concerns and complaints process or through other complaints processes of the Department.

PROCEDURES

These procedures have been developed in consultation with the school community and approved by school council.

1. Expectations of the parent with a concern or complaint

The college expects a person raising a concern or complaint to:

- Do so promptly, as soon as possible after the issue occurs with the appropriate school representative as follows:
 - the student's teacher or homegroup teacher about learning issues and incidents that happened in their classroom or the yard
 - the Learning Community Manager if students from several classes are involved
 - the assistant principal about issues relating to complex/serious student issues
 - the principal about issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members or very complex/serious student issues
 - the assistant principal if you are unsure who to contact about your concern or complaint
- Provide complete and factual information about the concern or complaint
- 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.

2. Behaviour of parties involved with a concern or complaint

2.1 Apollo Bay P-12 College is committed to seeking a resolution to all concerns and complaints sensitively and with a commitment to listening and responding to parents or others concerns positively and professionally. Therefore, we ask that all parties conduct any interactions in a positive manner, in accordance with our college Statement of Values, and refrain from verbal abuse and/or threatening behaviour.

2.2 If any interaction between parents or members of the public and school based personnel involve such unacceptable behaviour, any discussion or meeting will be terminated. Discussion may only continue at an appropriate time when an agreement to continue in a professional, appropriate and positive manner is given.

3. Raising concerns or complaints

3.1 Many concerns can be clarified by speaking directly with your child/ren's Classroom Teacher, Learning Community Leader, or Head of School without the need for it to be managed at a higher

level. This is the appropriate place to begin. Should you feel the concern or complaint is more serious than this, an appointment should be made directly with the Assistant Principal or Principal.

- 3.2 The person with the concern or complaint should telephone, visit or write to:
- the student's teacher or homegroup teacher about learning issues and/or incidents that happened in their classroom or in the yard.
 - the Learning Community Leader or Head of School if students from several classes are involved
 - the Assistant Principal about concerns relating to complex/serious student issues
 - the Principal about issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members or very complex/serious student issues
 - the Assistant Principal if you are **unsure who to contact**

- 3.3 Contact can be made by:
- a phone call to the general office on 52376483
 - accessing the college web site and sending a message via the "contact" tab, using the link "contact us now"
 - an email to the college email address as follows: apollo.bay.p12@edumail.vic.gov.au
 - a written letter either dropped into the general office or posted in the mail

- 3.4 Please remember that the person who the complainant wishes to speak with (Principal, Assistant Principal, Head of School, Learning Community Leader or Teacher) may have other commitments at the time of your initial communication.

- 3.5 The person with the concern or complaint should request to make an appointment to see the appropriate person, especially if the matter is of a serious nature.

- 3.6 All initial contacts with the college on matters of concerns or complaints are managed in a confidential manner.

***PLEASE Outline the seriousness of your issue with the person you initially speak to if you believe an urgent response is necessary.**

4. Help with raising a concerns or complaints

- 4.1 Complainants can seek the services of an advocate if 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.
- 4.2 All parties involved in addressing a complaint may seek the services of a mediator when there is difficulty coming to an agreement.

5. Managing concerns and complaints information

- 5.1 The school will record the details of all concerns and complaints, including the name and contact details of the persons making the complaints. Attached is a form to be used by the school for this purpose.
- 5.2 When the concern or 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.
- 5.3 All concerns and complaints will be noted and acted on promptly by the staff member who receives the complaint.
- 5.4 The school will acknowledge all complaints made in writing, and where possible, provide the complainant with a timeline for investigating the complaint.
- 5.5 The investigating staff member will record the details of the investigation.
- 5.6 All records of parent complaints, subsequent investigations and outcomes will be stored in the principal's office.

6. Addressing concerns and complaints

- 6.1 All concerns and complaints should ultimately be resolved at the school level in order to provide the best possible outcome for students before involving other levels of the Department.

- 6.2 Concerns and complaints about general school matters (such as the timing of events, school policies and facilities) will be addressed by the Principal or a relevant staff member.
- 6.3 A copy of the college concerns and complaints policy and procedures will be offered to the complainant.
- 6.4 The school will make every attempt to resolve a concern or complaint as quickly as possible. If the complaint involves many students and a range of issues, the school may need significant time to investigate and resolve it. .

NOTE: Should the complaint involve complex issues, the college may need to take advice from the Department's regional office, which may take time. The college will inform the complainant the changes in timelines for addressing the complaint and the reasons for any delays should this situation arise. In all cases, the college will aim to resolve a concern or complaint within 20 school days.

- 6.5 Following the investigation, the investigating staff member will communicate with the complainant or other relevant parties to provide their findings and remedies, if any.

7. Remedies

- 7.1 If a concern or complaint is substantiated in whole or part, the college will offer an appropriate remedy at its discretion. Depending on the circumstances, the college may offer the following:
 - 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 direct decision
 - to change its policies, procedures or practices
 - to cancel a debt (such as for school payments)
 - a fee refund
- 7.2 The college will implement the remedy as soon as is practicable.

8. Referral of Concerns or Complaints

- 8.1 If the complainant feels the issue has not been resolved, an appointment should be made to see the Assistant Principal or Principal. Please inform them of the nature of the issue when you make the appointment.
- 8.2 Following your meeting with either the Assistant Principal or Principal you may need to-
 - provide further information
 - be available for further discussion with appropriate people within the school
 - consider the involvement of DET guidance officers, psychologist, social workers or personnel from community agencies
- 8.3 If a person with a concern or complaint is not satisfied with the outcome determined by the college, they should contact the DET South Western Regional office on 5225 1099.
- 8.4 An officer from the regional office 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 college did not resolve it to their satisfaction.
- 8.5 If the complaint cannot be resolved by the complainant, school and regional office working together, the regional office may refer another area within the DET.

9. Communication and training

- 9.1 The college will make information about procedures for making and addressing concerns and complaints readily available to parents within the school community, in clear and easy to understand language and in a range of formats that are accessible to everyone so that no-one is disadvantaged.
- 9.2 The college will promote this policy as widely as possible by including:
 - on the college website
 - a printed brochure, which will also be included in the college enrolment package
 - through inclusion in the college staff handbook
 - the college newssheet
 - by publishing it widely within the school

- 9.3 The college will:
- brief all members of staff (including volunteers) about its procedures to address concerns and complaints annually
 - provide staff with (or access to) appropriate 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

10. Monitoring the parents' concerns and complaints policy and procedures

- 10.1 The college 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.
- 10.2 The college will report to College Council at each meeting the number of, and type of, concerns or complaints received each month to identify common or recurring issues that may need addressing, assess the effectiveness of these and other procedures and whether they are being followed and use information provided to the school through the parent opinion survey on the views of parents.

4. EVALUATION

This Policy will be reviewed as part of the College's ANNUAL review Cycle.

DEFINITIONS: SEE "IMPLEMENTATION" SCOPE.

REFERENCES:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/complaintslanding.aspx>

DATE RATIFIED: 14 June 2016

DATE FOR REVIEW: Term 2 2017

Tiffany Holt
Principal

Andrew Gardiner
College Council President



CONCERN OR COMPLAINT RECORD

For COLLEGE USE ONLY

Name				
Parent of or representing body?				
Contact Details				
Date				
Form by which complaint was made (tick).	Face-to-Face	Telephone	In Writing (Copy attached)	Email (Copy Attached)
Staff member taking this concern or complaint	Name:			
	Role:			
Description of the concern or complaint (Add further pages as required).				
Action taken on the concern or complaint				
Outcome of action taken				
Recommendations for future improvement in the school's policy or procedures				

Signed and Dated by Staff member taking the complaint:

Date Complainant notified of outcome of investigation ____ / ____ / ____

This complaint has been sighted by the principal:

Signed: _____

Date: _____

A copy of this has been filed in the Principals complaints management file.

Raising Concerns or Complaints Information Brochure



From time to time parents or others may have concerns and complaints they wish to take up with the school. At Apollo Bay P-12 College, we welcome feedback and encourage parents to raise any issues so that they can be dealt with in a timely and professional manner. The school aims to work with the school community to support each student's needs. We can only do this through a cooperative approach.

Apollo Bay P-12 College aims to handle all concerns or complaints based on the understanding that the college:

- Provides a safe and supportive learning environment according to our Statement of Values
- Builds relationships between students, parents and staff
- Provides a safe working environment for staff

The following procedure should assist parents or others in addressing any concerns within the school community.

1. Parents or others should raise the matter by *verbal or written* communication to:

- the student's teacher or homegroup teacher about learning issues and incidents that happened in their classroom or the yard
- the Learning Community Manager if students from several classes are involved
- the assistant principal about issues relating to complex/serious student issues
- the principal about issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members or very complex/serious student issues
- the assistant principal if you are unsure who to contact about your concern or complaint

This can be done by:

- A **phone call** to the General Office on 52376483
- Accessing the college **web site** and sending a message via the "Contact" tab, using the link "Contact Us Now"
- An **email** to the college email address as follows: apollo.bay.p12@edumail.vic.gov.au
- A written letter either dropped into the General Office or posted in the mail.

The person you wish to speak with (Principal, Assistant Principal, Learning Community Leader, or Teacher) may have other commitments at the time of your initial communication.

2. Request to make an appointment with the appropriate person

Many concerns can be clarified by speaking directly with your child/ren's Classroom Teacher or Learning Community Leader, therefore, a meeting with your son/daughter's *Learning Community Leader* is the appropriate place to begin.

Should, however, you feel the concern or complaint is more serious than this, ***an appointment should be requested to see the Assistant Principal or Principal.*** In such cases, please outline the seriousness of your issue with the person you initially speak to if you believe an urgent response is necessary.

*All initial contacts with the college on matters of concerns or complaints are managed in a **confidential** manner.*

A full copy of the College Concerns or Complaints Management Policy can be obtained from our General Office, or via our College website or COMPASS.

Appropriate staff will be able to explain our school policy or Department of Education and Training requirements that may relate to your concerns. They may also refer you to the wide range of educational information on the Department's website at www.education.vic.edu.au.

At Apollo Bay P-12 College, we are committed to seeking a resolution to all concerns or complaints sensitively and with a commitment to our Statement of Values.