

Complaints and Grievances Policy and Procedures

1. PURPOSE

Kingswood College is committed to providing students with an education of the highest possible quality. However, from time to time, students, parents or teachers may raise concerns, complaints or grievances about matters or issues relating to their experiences at the school.

This document sets out the internal procedures that apply within the school for addressing complaints and grievances. These procedures are designed to ensure that throughout the school there is a transparent process for ensuring complaints and grievances are dealt with fairly, consistently and promptly.

This policy does not address complaints relating to staff employment matters. The relevant awards provide information on the management of such issues.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the whole College Community (staff, students and parents).

3. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Position/Roles	Responsibilities
Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure appropriate policy and procedures exist to deal with concerns and complaints; Deal with complaints related to the actions or decisions of the Principal
Executive Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the College conducts proper and transparent grievance processes to investigate and resolve any such complaints. Ensure this policy is easily accessible, by publishing it on Kingsnet and on the College website.
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adhere to this policy and procedure to ensure consistent and fair treatment of all concerns and complaints.
Parents and Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise a concern or complaint directly with the person involved in an attempt to resolve the matter initially informally; Raise any unresolved issues following the procedures detailed in this policy.

4. KEY ELEMENTS OF THE POLICY

4.1 Definition

All members of the College community (students, parents and staff) are entitled to voice concerns or make a complaint, either informally or formally, in order to ensure a safe, harmonious and effective learning environment is maintained. Kingswood College will endeavour to handle all concerns and complaints informally where possible.

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.

A 'complaint' is an expression of grievance or resentment where the complainant is seeking redress or justice.

Concerns and complaints are welcomed and used within the College's continuous improvement process.

4.2 Raising Concerns or Complaints

Initial Concerns

All parties need to be clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints.

The following key messages deal with complaints but the underlying principle is that concerns ought to be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. The requirement to have a complaints procedure need not in any way undermine efforts to resolve the concern informally. In most cases the member of staff or the individual delivering the service in the case of external providers, will receive the first approach. It would be helpful if staff were able to resolve issues on the spot, including apologising where necessary.

All complaints will be noted and acted on promptly by the staff member who receives the concern or complaint.

Formal Procedures

Formal procedures will need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

The school has nominated members of staff to have responsibility for the operation and management of the school complaints procedure, beginning with the Year Level Coordinator or Head of School and moving to the Deputy Principal or Principal (see section 4.6 below).

4.3 General Principles

The complaints procedure will be committed to ensuring confidentiality and privacy of information, and will:

- encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible

- be easily accessible and publicised
- be simple to understand and use
- be impartial
- be non-adversarial
- allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress
- ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary
- address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary
- treat all complaints with sensitivity
- provide information to the school's senior management team so that services can be improved
- ensure that no person is victimised as a result of raising a complaint

4.4 Investigating Complaints

It is suggested that at each stage, the person investigating the complaint makes sure that they:

- establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved
- clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved
- meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or further information is necessary)
- clarify what the complainant feels would put things right
- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- keep notes of the interview

4.5 Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the procedure it is important to keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- an apology
- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again

- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint

It would be useful if complainants were encouraged to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. An admission that the school could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence.

An effective procedure will identify areas of agreement between the parties. It is also of equal importance to clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred as this can create a positive atmosphere in which to discuss any outstanding issues. Based on the issue, the designated person shall take immediate and appropriate corrective action.

Every effort shall be made to provide appropriate support to all relevant parties. This support may include the provision of information about counselling or mediation. Depending on the circumstances, this may be offered at any stage of the process, including where the matter remains unresolved.

Disciplinary action may be warranted and implemented, depending on the findings of the investigation. Any such action would be in accordance with the student Behaviour Management Policy, the Staff Enterprise Agreement, or the Parent Code of Conduct.

4.6 The Stages of Complaints

- Stage 1: Informal concerns heard by Class/Subject teacher (although not if the teacher is the subject of the complaint)
- Stage 2: Informal concerns heard by Wellbeing Mentor
- Stage 3: Complaint heard by Year Level Coordinator
- Stage 4: Complaint heard by Head of School
- Stage 5: Complaint heard by Deputy Principal
- Stage 6: Complaint heard by Principal

In some rare cases it may not be possible to resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant using these procedures. In such a case complainants should discuss the options for further action with the Principal. Options may include review by the Chair of the College Council. The Chair will review the processes undertaken and policies applied with whatever parties are deemed appropriate to ensure that these policies and procedures have been appropriately applied. Should any of these requirements not be evident, the Chair may, at its sole discretion, investigate the facts and require the Principal to revisit the case.

If the matter still remains unresolved, then the individuals concerned or the College Council may refer the matter to the relevant body, such as Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA), Victorian Institute of Teaching, Consumer Affairs Victoria, Human Rights Commission.

4.7 Timeframes

Complaints will be considered, and resolved, as quickly and efficiently as possible. To be effective, staff members will need to set realistic time limits for each action within each stage. However,

where further investigations are necessary, new time limits can be set and the complainant given details of the new deadline and an explanation for the delay.

Realistic timeframes would include:

- A maximum of 3 working days (72 hours) to acknowledge a written complaint (via email or letter). This acknowledgement would normally include some indication of the next steps.
- A maximum of 10 working days to investigate a complaint, or where circumstances exist which limit the investigation (e.g., absence of a relevant staff member or student), contact at least every 10 days to provide an update to the complainant.

5. MONITORING AND RECORD KEEPING

When the complaint is made verbally and is simple and easily resolved in a telephone call, a brief note made by the staff member recording details of the issue and the resolution of the issue may be all that is required.

The Principal will ensure a record is maintained of all written complaints / the response / outcome in a secure location within the school.

Depending on the nature of the complaint and the outcome of any investigation, a record may be kept on a student file, and/or on a staff file.

The Principal and College Council, as appropriate to their roles, will monitor parent concerns and complaints and consider issues raised through the complaints process. The Principal and School Council, as appropriate to their roles, will review its information about complaints made over time to identify common or recurring issues that may need addressing and assess the effectiveness of these and other procedures and whether they are being followed.

The College Council will review its policy and procedures to effectively address parent concerns and complaints as part of its cyclic policy and procedures review schedule.

6. RELATED COLLEGE POLICIES

Behaviour Management Policy

Parent Code of Conduct

Privacy Policy

Respectful and Safe School Policy & Guidelines

Staff Code of Conduct

Whistleblower Policy

POLICY NUMBER: POL-012

VERSION: 2.1

APPROVED BY EXECUTIVE: November 2021

ENSORED BY COUNCIL: November 2021

7. REFERENCES

Documents used to prepare this policy

- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010: Section 174(2)(b)
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: Regulations 168(2)(o) and 176(2)(b)
- Information Privacy Act 2000 (Vic)
- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 7: Leadership and Service Management
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Privacy Regulations 2013 (Cth)
- Guidelines to the Minimum Standards and Requirements for School Registration