



## ELTHAM HIGH SCHOOL

### POLICY DOCUMENT *Addressing Parent Complaints*

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#### INTRODUCTION

Eltham High School encourages all members of the school community to work towards resolving complaints and concerns that may arise throughout the school in an efficient, fair, respectful and timely manner. This policy is developed in accordance with Departmental policy '*Addressing parents' complaints and concerns effectively: policy and guides.*'

Note: this policy does not apply to matters where there are existing Departmental protocols and processes relating but not limited to such matters relating to serious employee misconduct, student critical incidents and criminal activities.

#### PHILOSOPHY

Our Statement of Values acknowledges that parents and school staff are strongly motivated to do their best for every child. Everyone has the right to differing opinions and views and to raise concerns, as long as we do this respectfully as a community working together.

#### POLICY STATEMENT

When addressing parent/guardian concerns or complaints, Eltham High School will:

- Abide by relevant regulatory and legislative frameworks
- Maintain confidentiality, where possible
- Balance the rights and responsibilities of all parties
- Ensure all parties are aware of their right to advocacy
- Act in a manner that seeks to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties.

#### GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTING THE POLICY

These procedures cover concerns and complaints about:

- General issues of student behaviour that are contrary to the school's code of conduct
- Incidents of bullying or harassment in the classroom, in the school yard or on the way to and from school
- 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 School Policy and Advisory Guide. Those matters include:

- Student discipline matters involving 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
- Other criminal matters.

## **Expectations**

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 situation
- 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 or blame others' perspectives
- Recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities, which must be respected

## **Management of complaints**

The school will address any concerns and complaints received from parents:

- Courteously
- Efficiently
- Fairly
- Promptly, or within the timeline agreed with the person with the concern or complaint
- In accordance with due process, principles of natural justice and the Department's regulatory framework

In the first instance, a complaint should be made to the school. The complainant should telephone, visit or write to:

- The student's teacher or home group teacher about learning issues and incidents that happened in their class or group
- The sub school leader if students from several classes are involved
- The assistant principal about issues relating to staff members or complex student issues
- The principal about issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members or very complex student issues

For contact details for any staff member, call the office on 9430-5111.

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. 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.

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

- Name and contact details 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.

The school will make every effort to resolve concerns and complaints before involving other levels of the Department.

- 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.

- All complaints will be noted and acted on by either the staff member who receives the complaint, or it will be referred on.
- The school will acknowledge all complaints made in writing. It will provide the complainant with a timeline for investigating the complaint and communicate with the complainant when it appears that the resolution of the complaint will extend beyond the indicated timeframe.
- Concerns and complaints about general school matters; such as timing of events, school policies and facilities, will be addressed by the principal or a relevant staff member.
- The school will make every attempt to resolve a concern or complaint as quickly as possible. If a complaint involves many students and more than one issue, the school will need more time to investigate and resolve it.
- 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 communicate to the complainant 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.

### **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
- To cancel a debt (such as for school payments)
- A fee refund
- 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 North Western Victoria Regional Office of the Department of Education and Training.
- The 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 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 action the information provided.

### **BASIS OF DISCRETION**

The School Council has responsibility for the establishment, evaluation and review of school policies. The School Principal has the responsibility to ensure that school policies are implemented effectively.

Minor changes to the policy (changes that will not affect the spirit of the policy) may be made at the discretion of the Principal.

The Policy Review and Evaluation process will recommend any major changes to the policy to School Council.

### **RELATED POLICIES**

Parent Complaints – Government Schools

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

Student Engagement Guidelines

Bullying Prevention Policy

## REVIEW

This policy should be reviewed every 3 years.

Date Endorsed: 16 September 2015

### Executive Officer

Eltham High School Council

### CONSULTATION PROCESS AND WORKING PARTY INFORMATION:

**This policy was written by: Fran Mullins**

**Consultation has taken place with the relevant group(s) in the following list:**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Consultation</b> <input type="checkbox"/>
School Operations Committee	
Staff	
Students (randomly selected group)	
Parents (randomly selected group)	
Members of the Community	
Other (where relevant please specify)	<b>Executive Leadership team</b>
Planning and Policy Review Team of Council <b>(Mandatory)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School Council <b>(Mandatory)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>

