



## RAISING CONCERNS & COMPLAINTS - POLICY & PROCEDURES

### UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

In 2007, the Beaufort schools developed a set of values that are to apply in each of the schools. It is expected that all members of our school community (students, staff and parents) will accept and comply with these values. They are **tolerance, consideration, co-operation, caring for others, friendliness, truthfulness, fairness and loyalty.**

Consistent with these values, Beaufort Secondary College will apply the following principles when handling parents' concerns and complaints:

- The school is committed to providing a high quality educational program for all students,
- There needs to be a strong relationship between students, parents and teachers,
- Students have the right to a safe and supportive learning environment, whilst
- Staff members have the right to a safe and supportive working environment.

### SCOPE OF THE POLICY & PROCEDURES

Beaufort Secondary College has worked hard to develop positive relationships with parents. Staff members welcome the discussion of general concerns, and such matters are normally dealt with informally and co-operatively. For example, where there are concerns about learning issues or incidents that have occurred within a particular class or year level, the school encourages parents to make contact with the student's classroom teacher, home room teacher or year level co-ordinator.

The following policy and set of procedures relate to formal complaints made by a parent about the school. Such complaints may be in relation to:

- General issues of student behaviour that are contrary to the school's code of conduct
- Incidents of bullying or harassment in the classroom or the school yard
- 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.

The procedures do not cover matters for which there are existing rights of review or appeal, as detailed in the **Victorian Government Schools Reference 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

## **OWNERSHIP**

The school will develop its policy and procedures to address complaints in collaboration with parents and the school community. These procedures take effect from 1 January 2010.

## **EXPECTATIONS OF PARTIES**

The school requires a person making a complaint to:

- Do so as soon as possible after the issue occurs
- Provide complete and factual information about the issue involved
- 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

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

- Courteously
- Efficiently
- Fairly
- As promptly as possible
- In accordance with due process, principles of natural justice and the Department's regulatory framework.

## **MAKING COMPLAINTS**

It is expected that any concerns and complaints will, in the first instance, be made to the school.

A complaint may be made by telephone, letter/email, or by visiting the school (after making an appointment). As a general rule, it should be directed to:

- The Assistant Principal, Mrs Higgins, where there are issues relating to staff members or complex student issues, or
- The Principal, Mr Macaulay, if there are issues relating to school policy or school management, or if earlier attempts at resolution have been unsuccessful

If you are unsure of who to contact, Mrs Higgins will assist.

## **MANAGING PARENT COMPLAINTS**

The school:

1. Record the following details of all complaints in the "Register of Complaints" located in the Principal's office:
  - Name and contact details of the person with the complaint
  - The date the complaint was made
  - The form in which the complaint was received
  - A brief description of the complaint
  - Details of the school officer responding to the complaint

- Action taken on the complaint and the outcome of any action taken
  - Any recommendations for future improvement in the school's policy or procedures
2. Make every effort to resolve the complaint at school level.
  3. Provide a complainant with a copy of the school's complaints policy and procedures.
  4. 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.
  5. Investigate thoroughly all issues contained in the complaint
  6. Provide a response to the complainant as quickly as possible. Where deemed necessary or requested, this response will be in writing. Please note that the timeline will depend upon the complexity of the matter being investigated.

## **REMEDIES**

If, after appropriate investigation and consideration, the school determines that a concern or complaint is substantiated in whole or part, it will apply an appropriate remedy. Depending on the circumstances, this may be:

- An explanation or further information about the issue
- Disciplinary action involving one or more students.
- Mediation, restorative justice strategies, counselling or other support
- An apology, expression of regret or admission of fault
- A change of decision
- A revision of school policies, procedures or practices

The school will implement the remedy as soon as practicable.

Please note that when a complaint by a parent results in disciplinary action against one or more students, the school will not enter into discussion about the nature or severity of the action being taken with anyone other than the parents of the student(s) being punished.

## **REFERRAL OF CONCERNS OR COMPLAINTS**

A parent with a concern or complaint who is not satisfied with the outcome determined by the school, should contact the Community Liaison Officer at the Grampians Regional Office of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development on 5337 8444. He will attempt to broker a mutually acceptable outcome.

If the complaint cannot be resolved by the complainant, school and regional office working together, there are further avenues for review.

## **COMMUNICATION**

The school's policy and procedures for dealing with concerns and complaints procedures are published in the Parent Handbook (given to parents when their children enrol) or can be obtained by request.

The school will brief all members of staff (including volunteers) about its procedures to address concerns and complaints on a regular basis, and provide them with the training and support appropriate to their responsibilities under the procedures.

#### **MONITORING THE PARENT COMPLAINTS POLICY**

The school 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.

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

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