

Lorne P-12 College



# Addressing Concerns & Complaints Policy



## **Purpose**

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The purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide an outline of the complaints process at Lorne P-12 College so that members of the community are informed of how they can raise complaints or concerns about issues arising at our school
- Ensure that all complaints and/or concerns regarding Lorne P-12 College are managed in a timely, effective, fair and respectful manner.

## **Scope**

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This policy relates to complaints and concerns brought by parents, carers, students or members of our school community and applies to all matters relating to our school. In some limited instances, we may need to refer the complainant to another Department of Education and Training (DET) process where there are different mechanisms in place to review certain decisions for example, expulsion appeals.

## **Implementation**

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Lorne P-12 College welcomes feedback, both positive and negative, and is committed to continuous improvement. We value open communication with our families and are committed to understanding complaints and addressing them appropriately. We recognise that the complaints process provides an important opportunity for reflection and learning.

We value and encourage open and positive relationships with our school community. We understand that it is in the best interests of students for there to be a trusting relationship between families and our school.

When addressing a complaint, it is expected that all parties will:

- raise and discuss issues in a courteous and respectful manner
- acknowledge that the goal is to achieve an outcome that is in the affected student's best interests and acceptable to all parties
- act in good faith and respect the privacy and confidentiality of those involved, as appropriate
- recognise that all parties, including the broader school community, have rights and responsibilities that must be balanced
- recognise that schools and the Department may be subject to legal constraints on their ability to act or disclose information in some circumstances.

## **Preparation for raising a concern or complaint**

Lorne P-12 College encourages parents, carers or members of the community who may wish to submit a complaint to:

- carefully consider the issues you would like to discuss
- remember you may not have all the facts relating to the issues that you want to raise
- think about how the matter could be resolved
- be informed by checking the policies and guidelines set by the Department.

The school expects a person raising a complaint to:

- do so 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, and value difference rather than judge or 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
- promptly, or within the timeline agreed with the person with the concern or complaint
- in accordance with due process, principles or natural justice and the DET's regulatory framework

## **Complaints process**

Lorne P-12 College is always happy to discuss with parents/carers and community members any concerns that they may have. Concerns in the first instance should be directed to as follows.

The complainant should telephone, visit or write to:

- The student's teacher about learning issues and incidents that happened in their class or group
- A member of the leadership team, 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.

Where possible, school staff will work with you to ensure that your concerns are appropriately addressed.

Where concerns cannot be resolved in this way, parents or community members may wish to make a formal complaint to the Principal or Assistant Principal. If you would like to make a formal complaint, in most cases, depending on the nature of the complaint raised, our school will first seek to understand the issues and will then convene a resolution meeting with the aim of resolving the complaint together.

The following process will apply:

1. **Complaint received:** Please either email, telephone or arrange a meeting through the front office with the Assistant Principal or Principal, to outline your complaint so that we can fully understand what the issues are. We can discuss your complaint in a way that is convenient for you, whether in writing, in person or over the phone.
2. **Information gathering:** Depending on the issues raised in the complaint, the Principal, Assistant Principal or nominee may need to gather further information to properly understand the situation. This process may also involve speaking to others to obtain details about the situation or the concerns raised.
3. **Response:** Where possible, a resolution meeting will be arranged to discuss the complaint with the objective of reaching a resolution satisfactory to all parties. In some circumstances, the Principal may determine that a resolution meeting would not be appropriate. In this situation, a response to the complaint will be provided in writing.
4. **Timelines:** Lorne P-12 College will acknowledge receipt of your complaint as soon as possible (usually within 48 hours) and will seek to resolve complaints in a timely manner. Depending on the complexity of the complaint, the school may need some time to gather enough information to fully understand the circumstances of your complaint. We will endeavour to complete any necessary information gathering and hold a resolution meeting where appropriate within 10 working days of the complaint being raised. In situations where further time is required, we will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions that can be put in place.

## Resolution

Where appropriate, Lorne P-12 College may seek to resolve a complaint by:

- an explanation or further information about the issue
- an acknowledgement of each other's perspective and agreement on ways to manage differences
- mediation, counselling or other support
- an apology or expression of regret
- a change of decision
- a change of policy, procedures or practices
- offering the opportunity for student counselling or other support
- cancelling a debt, such as school payments, or refund a fee
- other actions consistent with school values that are intended to support the student, parent and school relationship, engagement, and participation in the school community.

In some circumstances, Lorne P-12 College may also ask you to attend a meeting with an independent third party, or participate in a mediation with an accredited mediator to assist in the resolution of the dispute.

## Unsatisfactory Resolution

If a parent or community member is not satisfied that their complaint has been resolved by the school, or if their complaint is about the Principal, then the complaint should be referred to the DET's South West Victorian Region by contacting the Community Liaison Officer on 5225 1033.

Lorne P-12 College may also refer a complaint to the DET's Regional Office if we believe that we have done all we can to address the complaint.

For more information about the Department's *Parent Complaints* policy, including the role of the Regional Office, please see: [Parent complaints policy](#).

## Further Information and Resources

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Links which are connected to this policy are:

- [Student Engagement and Inclusion Guidance](#)
- The School Philosophy
- Responsible Behaviour Plan
- [Bullying and Harassment Policy](#)

## Review Cycle

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This policy was last updated in June 2018 and is scheduled for review in June 2021.

