

PARKDALE SECONDARY COLLEGE

CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY



POLICY DATE: 2022

REVIEW PERIOD: 2022 - 2026

APPROVED BY: The Principal – David Russell

RATIONALE

Parkdale Secondary College is committed to maintaining a collaborative, respectful and supportive environment for parents, staff, students and the wider community. We recognise that from time to time families may wish to raise concerns or complaints with the school. The College believes that when complaints are handled correctly and both raised and responded to in a respectful and constructive manner, that this forms part of our framework for a connected and positive school tone and culture. 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.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide an outline of the complaints process at Parkdale Secondary College so that parents and members of the community are informed of how they can raise complaints or concerns about issues arising at our school.
- Ensure that all complaints regarding Parkdale Secondary College are managed in a timely, effective, fair and respectful manner.
- Recognise a student or parent's right to raise concerns about an issue at the College;
- Recognise that in managing complaints from parents, all parties will be honest, fair, respectful and understanding of each other's point of view and perceptions.
- Provide a protocol and process for responding to complaints in a timely manner.
- Communicate the common goal of achieving an outcome acceptable to all parties, in good faith and in a calm and courteous manner.

SCOPE

This policy relates to complaints 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 process where there are different mechanisms in place to review certain decisions, for example, expulsion appeals.

This policy does not cover matters for which there are existing rights of review or appeal, such as:

- Student discipline matters involving expulsions;
- complaints about employee conduct;
- performance and complaints that should be dealt with by performance management; grievance resolution or disciplinary action;
- student critical incident matters or any criminal matters.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Parkdale Secondary 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.

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

- be considerate of each other's views and respect each other's role
- be focused on resolution of the complaint, with the interests of the student involved at the centre
- act in good faith and cooperation
- behave with respect and courtesy
- respect the privacy and confidentiality of those involved, as appropriate
- operate within and seek reasonable resolutions that comply with any applicable legislation and Department policy.
- recognise that schools and the Department may be subject to legal constraints on their ability to act or disclose information in some circumstances.

PARENTS/CARERS

Parkdale Secondary College encourages relationships of responsibility and respect amongst members of the school community. The complaint process can be a difficult emotional process for all parties.

The school asks that parents/carers consider the following principles when making a complaint:

- Do so promptly, as soon as possible after the issue/incident occurs.
- Carefully consider the issues you would like to discuss
- Provide complete and factual information about the concern or complaint.
- Maintain and respect the privacy and confidentiality of 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 difference in values, rather than judge and blame.
- Acknowledge that the common goal is to achieve an outcome that is acceptable to all parties.
- Recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced.
- Acknowledge the relevant College values as they relate to the complaint.
- Think about how the matter could be resolved
- Be informed by checking the policies and guidelines set by the Department and Parkdale Secondary College (see "Further Information and Resources" section below).

Parents may bring a support person, such as an unpaid advocate or friend, to meetings with the Principal or Assistant Principal. Anyone bringing an outsider to a meeting should give prior notice to the other party first.

SCHOOL

In all its activities and communications, the school attempts to build trust and a sense of belonging to a wider community. Parkdale Secondary College is committed to:

- Listening respectfully to the perspective of complainants
- Acknowledge the initial complaint within two school days.
- Maintain communication with all parties about the progress of resolution.
- Providing a safe and supportive environment where everyone is treated with respect, fairness and dignity.
- Ensuring the safety, security, health and wellbeing of all community members.

The School will address complaints as follows:

- In a fair, professional, courteous and respectful manner.
- In accordance with due process, the principles of natural justice and relevant regulatory frameworks

School officers may call upon the expertise or input of others such as specialist staff, staff from the Department, etc. in their meetings with parents. Anyone bringing an outsider to a meeting should give prior notice to the other party first.

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The school will maintain a register of serious, substantial or unusual complaints and record the following details of all complaints received in writing:

1. Name and contact details of the person with a complaint.
2. The date the concern was expressed, or complaint made.
3. A brief description of the complaint.
4. Details of the school officer responding to the complaint.
5. Action taken on the complaint.
6. The outcome of action taken on the complaint.
7. Any recommendations for future improvement in the school's policy or procedures.

COMPLAINTS PROCESS

Parkdale Secondary 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 the relevant person according to the Schools Communication Policy (available on Compass and the school website). Where possible, school staff will work with you to ensure that your concerns are appropriately addressed.

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:** 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

In the first instance telephone, email or write to:

- The student's teacher about learning issues and incidents that may have happened in their class.
- The Student's Tutor teacher or Year Level Coordinator if it is a concern about behaviour or wellbeing
- A Year Level Leader or Assistant Principal about issues relating to other staff members or complex student issues.
- The Principal about issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members or very complex student issues.
- If unsure who to contact please refer to the college's Parent Communication Protocol on the school website and Compass.

If a face to face meeting is required:

- Parents/carers must make an appointment time to meet with school staff.
- Parents/carers must sign in at the college office before the scheduled meeting time.
- Parents/carers must not approach a staff member directly without making an appointment time.

Contact Information

Parkdale Secondary College

Email:

Email staff member directly via Compass or parkdale.sc@education.vic.gov.au Attention : Relevant staff

Telephone:

9580 6311 – ask to be put through to the relevant staff member.

Writing:

Attn: Relevant staff member
Parkdale Secondary College
Warren Road
Mordialloc East 3194

2. **Information gathering:** Depending on the issues raised in the complaint the relevant person 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.

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- 3. Response:** Where possible, a resolution meeting will be arranged with the relevant person to discuss the complaint with the objective of reaching a resolution satisfactory to all parties. If after the resolution meeting we are unable to resolve the complaint together, we will work with you to produce a written summary of the complaint in the event you would like to take further action about it. 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:** Parkdale Secondary College will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within two school days and will seek to resolve complaints in a timely manner. Depending on the complexity of the complaint, Parkdale Secondary College 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, Parkdale Secondary College will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

Resolution

Where appropriate, Parkdale Secondary College may seek to resolve a complaint by:

- offering the opportunity for both parties to participate in a Restorative Practice process
- offering the opportunity for student counselling or other supports
- 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, Parkdale Secondary 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.

Escalation

As per the steps in this document, parents are strongly encouraged to raise any issues at the school level first.

If you are not satisfied that your complaint has been resolved by the school, or if your complaint is about the Principal and you do not want to raise it directly with them, then the complaint should be referred to:

Department Regional Office - South Eastern Victoria Region

Correspondence marked 'confidential' should be addressed to:

The Regional Director,

Postal address: PO Box 5,

Dandenong, Victoria 3175

Location: 165-169 Thomas Street, Dandenong, Victoria 3175

Phone: (03) 8765 5600

Fax: (03) 8765 5784

Email: sevr@education.vic.gov.au

Parkdale Secondary College may also refer a complaint to South Eastern Region Victoria if we believe that we have done all we can to address the complaint.

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COMMUNICATION

- Published on Compass
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

The Department's Policy and Advisory Library (PAL):

- [Complaints - Parents](#)

The Department's parents website:

- [Raise a complaint or concern about your school](#)

EVALUATION

The Principal Team, in consultation with the School Improvement Team will be responsible for the will be responsible for the review of this policy.