



## PARENT COMPLAINTS POLICY

Approved by School Council – November 2021

### PURPOSE

Bentleigh Secondary College recognises families may wish to raise concerns or complaints with the College. This policy provides an outline of the complaints process at Bentleigh Secondary College so that parents are informed of how they can raise complaints or concerns about issues arising at our school. The College believes a positive school culture is supported when such matters are handled correctly and raised and responded to in a respectful and constructive 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 circumstances we may need to refer the complaint to another Department of Education process where there are different mechanisms in place to review decisions.

### POLICY

At Bentleigh Secondary College, we welcome feedback, both positive and negative, and we are committed to continuous improvement. We value ongoing communication with parents/guardians; we strive to understand, address and respond in a professional manner to concerns expressed by parents and recognise that this is an important opportunity for reflection and learning. At Bentleigh Secondary College, we value and encourage open and positive relationships with families.

When addressing a complaint the college expects that all parties will:

1. Be honest in disclosing all relevant information, acting in good faith.
2. Maintain and stress the confidentiality of all discussions (subject to relevant legislative requirements).
3. Raise concerns in a courteous manner and to show respect and understanding of each other's point of view and perceptions, consistent with the school's core values.
4. Acknowledge that the goal is to achieve an outcome that is in the affected student's best interests and acceptable to all parties.
5. Recognise that all parties, including the broader school community, have rights and responsibilities that must be balanced.
6. Recognise that school and the Department may be subject to legal constraints on their ability to act or disclose information in some circumstances.
7. Remember that all parties may not have all the facts relating to the issues raised.

### COMPLAINTS PROCESS

At Bentleigh Secondary College, complaints and concerns are handled in a timely manner and with the intention to resolve such matters with a positive outcome.

The following points describe how parents/guardians should raise a concern/make a complaint to the College; raising a concern with the appropriate person will ensure a quick response and no double handling.

In the first instance the complainant should telephone or email:

- The student's teacher about learning issues of an incident that occurred in class
- The relevant Head of Year Level, Head of Middle School/Head of Senior school if it is a concern about behaviour or wellbeing, or a serious incident that occurred in class
- An Assistant Principal or the Principal about issues relating to other staff members or complex student issues
- The Principal or Assistant Principals about issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members or very complex student management issues

At no time should a parent/guardian directly approach a staff member in the school without first making an appointment and reporting to the College's General Office.

If the complaint is complex, following a telephone conversation, in many instances the College will ask parents to put any concerns in writing ([bentleigh.sc@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:bentleigh.sc@education.vic.gov.au)). At times a telephone conversation may be sufficient to discuss and resolve a complaint, but the school values personal appointments with parents and students to discuss concerns so a resolution meeting may be organised.

The staff member who has received the communication in the form of the complaint may need to gather further information to properly understand the situation. This process may involve speaking to others to obtain details about the situation or the concerns raised.



Bentleigh Secondary College may resolve a complaint by:

- An apology or expression of regret
- A change of decision
- Maintaining a decision and where possible explaining the reasons for this
- A change of policy, procedure of practice
- Offering the opportunity for student counselling or other support
- Other actions consistent with the school values that are intended to support the student, the parent and school relationship, engagement and participation in the school community.

After a complaint has been followed up, the resolution/decision will be communicated to all parties. In some circumstances a resolution meeting may not be appropriate. In this situation, a response to complaint will be provided in writing. If a parent or community member is not satisfied that their complaint has been resolved by the school, then the complaint should be referred to the South Eastern Region of Victoria (SEVR) by contacting 8765 5600.

The principles of natural justice and relevant regulatory frameworks will be adhered to; as such, the College is unlikely to act upon anonymous complaints - the respondent to a complaint is entitled to know the identity of a complainant. Bentleigh Secondary College may also refer a complaint to SERV if we believe that we have done all we can to address a complaint.

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.

The College takes very seriously the need to maintain respectful conduct and confidentiality/discretion in the management of concerns and complaints. In this regard, inappropriate communication about staff members, students and parents (for example, emails or social media content that may attack, humiliate, defame or harass, staff, students or parents) within the broader Bentleigh Secondary College community may be referred to the DET and/or Victoria Police.

For more information about the Department's Parent Complaints Policy, including the role of Regional Office, please see <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/complaints/policy>

## **EVALUATION**

*Review annually, with recommended changes being presented to College Council*