



COMPLAINTS POLICY

Approved by School Council August 2019

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide an outline of the complaints process at Bentleigh 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 Bentleigh Secondary College are managed in a timely, effective, fair and respectful 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.

POLICY

Bentleigh 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.

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:

- 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.

Preparation for raising a concern or complaint

Bentleigh Secondary 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 and Bentleigh Secondary College (see "Further Information and Resources" section below).

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. It is important to us to discuss with parents/carers and community members any concerns that they may have. Concerns in the first instance should be directed to the appropriate person to ensure a quick response and to avoid double handling.

In the first instance the complainant should telephone or email:

- the student's teacher about learning issues or an incident that occurred in class
- the relevant Head of Year Level, Head of Sub 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.

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

At no time should a parent/guardian 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, parents may be asked to put any concerns in writing (usually via email). 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.

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, noting that formal complaints should be directed to a member of the school's leadership team (Head of Sub School, Assistant Principal or 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:

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.

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.

Response: Where possible, a resolution meeting will be arranged with the Assistant Principal/Principal 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.

Timelines: Bentleigh Secondary College will acknowledge receipt of your complaint as soon as possible (usually within two school days) and will seek to resolve complaints in a timely manner. Depending on the complexity of the complaint, Bentleigh 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, Bentleigh Secondary College will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

Resolution

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

- an apology or expression of regret
- a change of decision
- maintaining a decision and where possible explaining the reason for this
- a change of policy, procedure or practice
- offering the opportunity for student counselling or other support
- 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, Bentleigh 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

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 the South Eastern Region by contacting sevr@edumail.vic.gov.au or 1300 338 738.

Bentleigh Secondary College may also refer a complaint to the South Eastern 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

Bentleigh Secondary College's Statement of Values

Communication with School Staff Policy

REVIEW PERIOD

This policy was last updated in August 2019 and is scheduled for review in 2022.