South Oakleigh Secondary College

Policy: Dispute Resolution

The school’s approach to handling concerns and complaints is based on our school values of Respect, Responsibility and Resilience. Hence we aim to

- Provide a safe and supportive learning environment
- Build relationships between students, staff and parents
- Provide a safe working environment for staff

**South Oakleigh Secondary College will address any concerns and complaints around**

- the learning program, including assessment and reporting of student learning
- students behaviour, including bullying and harassment
- communication with parents
- school fees and payments
- general administrative issues

This policy does not address matters for which there are existing rights of review or appeal, as detailed in the *Victorian Government’s School Policy and Advisory Guide*, including expulsions, complaints about employee conduct or performance, student critical incidents and other criminal matters.

These procedures will take effect from November 2011.

**Implementation**

The school expects, in the first instance, any concerns should be raised with the school directly.

The school expects any person raising a concern 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, in a calm and courteous manner
- show respect and understanding of each other’s point of view
- recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities that must be balanced

The school will address any concerns and complaints received from members of the school community

- courteously
- efficiently
- fairly
- promptly, or within the timeline agreed with the person with the concern or complaint
- in accordance with DEECD regulatory framework
In the first instance, a complainant should contact
  • the student’s teacher about learning issues and incidents that happened in their classroom
  • the year level coordinator about broader incidents relating to general learning issues or across several classes
  • the Assistant Principal about complex student issues
  • the Principal about issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members or very complex student issues

Complainants can seek the services of an advocate when they feel they are unable to express their concern clearly. An advocate can be a friend or support person who does not receive a fee for service.

All parties may seek the advice of a mediator when there is difficulty coming to an agreement.

The school will record all details of a complaint, including names, dates, the details of the complaint, and the action taken.

The school will make every effort to resolve concerns and complaints before involving other levels of the Department.

The school will make every attempt to resolve a concern or complaint as quickly as possible. If the complaint is complex, it may require more time for investigation. Under these circumstances, the school may seek advice from the regional office or central office. This may require more time, but the complainant will be kept informed by the Principal.

If a concern or complaint is substantiated, the school will offer an appropriate remedy.

If a person with a complaint is not satisfied with the outcome determined by the school, they should contact the Department’s regional office.