



**MORDIALLOC COLLEGE**  
A better choice in education

## Complaints Policy

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### Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide an outline of the complaints process at Mordialloc 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 Mordialloc 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

Mordialloc 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

Mordialloc 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 Mordialloc College.

## Complaints process

Mordialloc College is always happy to discuss with parents/carers and community members any concerns that they may have. We 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, we 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 ten working days of the complaint being raised. In situations where further time is required, we will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

### *Informal Resolution*

#### *Staff level*

It is not always appropriate or possible to resolve complaints informally. Some complaints of a serious or criminal nature must be taken straight to the school Principal and/or the police.

Parents may put a complaint in writing to the school Principal or to DET at any time. However, there are many benefits to attempting to resolve a matter informally in the first instance.

The advantages of informal resolution are that:

- it can provide for the clarification of miscommunications or misunderstandings
- it can create greater paths for future communication between the parties
- if successful, it can avoid the need for escalation

Informal resolution involves a parent speaking directly with the relevant staff member and attempting to resolve the issue between those two individuals.

If informal resolution is unsuccessful or if a parent feels dissatisfied with the outcome, the staff member with whom the parent has spoken should direct the parent to the Assistant Principal or Principal.

#### *School leadership level*

A parent may prefer in the first instance to raise a matter informally with the Principal or Assistant Principal. In general, an Assistant Principal is best approached regarding issues relating to complex student issues, student welfare issues or school concerns regarding curriculum. In general, the Principal is best approached about issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members or very complex student issues.

The purpose of an informal approach is for the Principal or Assistant Principal to listen to the parent and provide initial counsel. This may entail suggesting that the parent speak with the relevant staff member, or the Principal or Assistant Principal agreeing to follow up the complaint/issue and responding to the parent verbally or in writing (as is appropriate) within a reasonable time frame.

The informal resolution should usually take no more than 20 working days.

### *Formal Resolution Process*

### *Stage 1a – Principal or Assistant Principal – operational matters and/ or policy*

Parents who are dissatisfied with:

- the outcome of an informal discussion with an administration, teaching, or support staff member and/or
- the timeframe for resolution

Should next approach the Principal or Assistant principal with their concerns. Concerns may be raised via telephone, in a face to face meeting or in writing.

- The Principal or Assistant Principal will respond to the complaint within a week. She/he may do this in the form of writing, a telephone call, or in a face to face meeting. Some record of the meeting should be kept in the form of email or diary note. The school leader will alert the parent to the existence of this complaints policy.
- If the Principal or Assistant Principal undertakes to pursue certain investigations and discussions or follow up action from the meeting, she/he will advise the parent of a proposed time frame. The Principal and Assistant Principal may conduct their own investigations by talking with relevant parties if they believe the matter can be resolved informally.
- Where a complaint is more complex, the Principal may confer with or draw on the resources of DET.
- The Principal will provide regular and timely feedback to the parent or facilitate action as appropriate to the complaint.
- The Principal may not always be able to provide details of action to parents, especially where practices of staff management or industrial matters are concerned. However, the Principal will ensure that the parent is made aware of this policy and the steps available to the parent.
- This aspect of the formal resolution should usually take no more than 20 working days.

### *Stage 1b – School Council – Policy matters*

- Where a parent is dissatisfied with a matter of school policy only, she/he may raise the complaint with the President of the school council in writing. **The school council cannot respond to operational or matters of industrial management. These are the purview of the school Principal and DET.**
- The president of the school council may speak with the parent to better understand the policy issue. The School Council President will alert the parent to the existence of this complaints policy.
- At the request of the parent, and (i) where an issues falls within the parameters of council's responsibilities or (ii) it is unclear as to whether the issue falls within council's powers, the president will raise the issue at school council for discussion. The parent, and any other parents interested in the policy, will be invited to any such meeting of the council for participation in discussion. The parent will be entitled to a formal response from the school council in writing.

### *Stage 2 – Formal Appeals in writing to the Principal*

- Where a parent is dissatisfied with the outcome of speaking verbally with the school leadership team, she/he will then put his or her complaint in writing to the Principal.
- The Principal will respond to the complaint in writing within a week. In that response, the Principal will either respond directly to the complaint, or advise a future timeframe for response because of investigations or actions that need to take place.

### **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 Community Liaison Officer of the Bayside Peninsula Area, Alan Curtain by contacting 03 8766 5698.
- Mordialloc College may also refer a complaint to Alan Curtain if we believe that we have done all we can to address the complaint.

### Review period

This policy was last updated on **November 2019** and is scheduled for review on **November 2022**.