

MORDIALLOC COLLEGE

Parent/Carer Concerns and Complaints Policy

POLICY

Rationale

Mordialloc College is committed to maintaining a collaborative, respectful and supportive environment for parents, staff, students and the wider community based on our four core values of Personal Best, Respect, Responsibility and Integrity. From time to time parents may have a need to raise an issue with the school that is beyond the ordinary methods of communication such as parent teacher nights or general administration or classroom questions. This complaints policy is designed to outline the steps available to parents for raising an issue or making a complaint, and the principles that govern how that complaint should be approached and managed by school leadership. This policy aligns with the Department of Education and Training (DET) guidelines for dealing with parent concerns and complaints.

Aims

- To provide a harmonious, positive and productive school environment
- To outline the steps available to parents for raising an issue or making a complaint, and the principles that govern how that complaint should be approached and managed by school leadership. Thus, to ensure that a fair and consistent approach is utilised to deal with concerns and complaints raised by parents.

Implementation

1.1 Scope

This policy covers complaints made by parents to officers of the school. Complaints may be regarding an individual (such as education support staff, teaching staff, or school leadership) or about a process or a policy. It may be about an issue or event that has already occurred or that may occur in the future. While the school may have its own response to issues of a serious or criminal nature, complaints of this kind must be made directly to the police.

As per the steps in this document, parents are strongly encouraged to raise any issues at the school level first. However a parent may at any time take a complaint to DET. In the first instance such complaints may occur over the phone or in writing to the Regional Office. If parents remain unsatisfied, a complaint *in writing* using the Department's Parent Complaint Form <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/contact/parentcomplaintform.pdf> can be made to Central Office.

This policy is based on guidelines provided by DET located at the following website:

[http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/commrel/contacts/POLICY AND GUIDES Addressing parents concerns.pdf](http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/commrel/contacts/POLICY_AND_GUIDES_Addressing_parents_concerns.pdf)

1.2 Principles governing the management of complaints

When a complaint is raised it can be a stressful process for all parties involved – for parents, staff and leadership. The purpose of this policy is to outline the steps of that process to ensure that leadership and staff are clear about the steps of complaint resolution and to assure parents that a clear pathway and steps to resolution exist.

MORDIALLOC COLLEGE

Parent/Carer Concerns and Complaints Policy

POLICY

In all its activities and communications, the school attempts to build trust and a sense of belonging to a wider community as outlined in the strategic plan.

Therefore, in its approach to managing complaints, the school undertakes to:

- Listen respectfully to the perspective of complainants
- Make reasonable attempts to resolve complaints quickly and clearly
- Maintain communication with all parties about the progress of resolution

1.3 Issue or complaint resolution process

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.

MORDIALLOC COLLEGE

Parent/Carer Concerns and Complaints Policy

POLICY

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

MORDIALLOC COLLEGE

Parent/Carer Concerns and Complaints Policy

POLICY

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.

Stage 3 – DET Regional Office

- Where a parent is dissatisfied with the response of the Principal in relation to any matter, she/he may then take the complaint to the Department of Education and Training Regional Office. Complaints may be made over the telephone to the South Eastern Victorian Region on (03) 8765 5600. Complaints may also be made in writing to the Regional Director Email: sevr@edumail.vic.gov.au
- Where the parent is dissatisfied with the outcome of the school council process, she/he may then take the complaint to the Department of Education and Training Regional Office. Complaints may be made over the telephone to the South Eastern Victorian Region on (03) 8765 5600. Complaints may also be made in writing to the Regional Director Email: sevr@edumail.vic.gov.au

Stage 4 – DET Central Office

- If the complaint cannot be resolved by the complainant, school and regional office working together, parents may request that the regional office refer it to the DET's Group Coordination Division OR parents can lodge a complaint themselves using the **Department's Parent Complaint Form**. <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/contact/parentcomplaintform.pdf>
- Central Office will ask the complainant for a complete and factual account in writing of the complaint and the complainant's opinion about why the school and regional office did not resolve it to their satisfaction. The complainant will be asked to outline their view on the course of action required to resolve the complaint.
- If the complainant is unable to provide a written account, the officer from Group Coordination Division should act on the information provided.
- The Department undertakes to respond within 20 days or to notify parents if the management of the complaint will take longer.
- If a parent feels the issue has not been dealt with appropriately by the Department, they may consider submitting their complaint to an external agency (**see the Department Website: Parent Complaints – Further Resources and Information:** <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/complaininfo.aspx>).

MORDIALLOC COLLEGE

Parent/Carer Concerns and Complaints Policy

POLICY

1.4 Principles for resolution

School Approach

The school will:

- make every endeavour to respond to and resolve complaints according to the timeframes in this policy and procedures
- acknowledge written complaints in writing, including a timeframe for resolution where relevant
- ensure that the confidentiality and principles of privacy regarding all parties are protected

Parent responsibilities

Mordialloc 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 consider the following principles when making a complaint.

Parents are asked to:

- raise a complaint (where possible) as soon as possible after the issue occurs. The longer it takes to raise a complaint, the less clear memories of the event become and the more mistrust may be created amongst the parties
- be clear about the issue or topic to be discussed and provide as much detail as possible
- maintain and respect the privacy and confidentiality of all parties
- act in good faith and in a courteous manner
- remain calm and remember that they might not always have all the facts relating to the circumstances of the topic or issue at hand
- be as informed as they can be about the DET policies or any other issues that are relevant
- recognise that the rights and responsibilities of all parties influence the resolution process

1.5 School Administration requirements

The school will maintain a register of complaints and record the following details of all complaints received in writing:

- name and contact details of the person with a complaint
- the date the concern was expressed or complaint made
- a brief description of the complaint
- details of the school officer responding to the complaint
- action taken on the complaint
- the outcome of action taken on the complaint
- any recommendations for future improvement in the school's policy or procedures

1.6 Outside support

Parents may bring a support person, such as an unpaid advocate or friend, to meetings with the Principal or Assistant Principal. 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.

MORDIALLOC COLLEGE

Parent/Carer Concerns and Complaints Policy

POLICY

1.7 Remedies

The types of remedies that the school may offer in relation to a complaint include:

- an explanation or further information about the issue
- mediation, counselling or other support
- an apology, expression of regret or admission of fault
- to change its decision
- to change its policies, procedures or practices
- to cancel a debt (such as for school payments)
- a fee refund

The school will implement the remedy as soon as practicable.

The types of responses that the school council might offer in relation to an issue or complaint include:

- providing an explanation of current policy to the parent
- undertaking to review a policy
- calling for further research or input from the parent body

1.8 Quality cycle and improved practice

Mordialloc College is committed to increasing communication with parents and to improving its approach to the resolution of complaints. To that end, it will undertake the following actions to create a continuous cycle of improvement in its approach to complaints resolution:

- the Principal and Assistant Principals will identify common or recurring issues that may need addressing at a policy level
- the Principal, Assistant Principals, and school council will periodically assess the effectiveness of these and other procedures and whether they are being followed
- the Principal and Assistant Principals will use information provided to the school through the Parent Opinion survey on the views of parents

1.9 Communications and staff training

- The school will make this policy and procedures readily available to parents and the school community, in clear and easy-to-understand language and, where appropriate, in a range of community languages and formats.
- The school's procedures for addressing concerns and complaints will be:
 - published on the school's website
 - printed in a leaflet given to a parent when their child enrolls
 - printed in the parent handbook
 - printed in the school newsletter
- The school will:
 - annually brief all members of staff (including volunteers) about its procedures to address complaints

MORDIALLOC COLLEGE

Parent/Carer Concerns and Complaints Policy

POLICY

- provide staff with (or provide access to) training and support appropriate to their responsibilities under the procedures
- ensure staff who manage complaints demonstrate the personal attributes outlined in the “Good Practice Guide: Ombudsman Victoria’s guide to complaint handling for Victorian public sector agencies”.

1.10 Contact information

At the school

Teaching staff

Parents may contact teaching staff to request an appointment time or may telephone the school office on 9580 1184 to request an appointment with the relevant teacher.

School Principal

Michelle Roberts

Correspondence marked ‘confidential’

In writing: Letters may be delivered to the front office for Michelle

Email: mordialloc.co@edumail.vic.gov.au

Tel: 9580 1184

Assistant Principal

Jennifer Roep

Correspondence marked ‘confidential’

In writing: Letters may be delivered to the front office for Jennifer

Email: mordialloc.co@edumail.vic.gov.au

Tel: 9580 1184

Assistant Principal

Kevin Osborne

Correspondence marked ‘confidential’

In writing: Letters may be delivered to the front office for Kevin

Email: mordialloc.co@edumail.vic.gov.au

Tel: 9580 1184

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@edumail.vic.gov.au

MORDIALLOC COLLEGE
Parent/Carer Concerns and Complaints Policy
POLICY

Department Central Office

Correspondence marked 'confidential' should be addressed to:

Deputy Secretary
Regional Services Group
c/o Manager, School Operations and Governance Unit
Regional Monitoring and Support Division
GPO Box 4367
Melbourne VIC 3001

Email: community.stakeholders@edumail.vic.gov.au

Fax: 9637 2180

Evaluation:

- This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle.

This policy was last ratified by School Council in

October 2015