

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide an outline of the complaints process at Yarrawonga College P-12 so that students, 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 and concerns regarding Yarrawonga College P-12 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 process, where there are different processes in place to manage the issue including:

- review of certain decisions such as expulsion appeals.
- Complaints and concerns relating to fraud and corruption will be managed in accordance with the Department of Education's [Fraud and Corruption Policy](#)
- Criminal matters will be referred to Victorian Police
- Legal claims will be referred to the Department of Education's Legal Division

Complaints and concerns relating to child abuse will be managed in accordance with our Child Safety Responding and (Mandatory) Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures.

POLICY

Yarrawonga College P-12 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, acknowledging that the goal is to achieve an outcome that is in the affected student's best interests and acceptable to all parties
- act in good faith and cooperation, and 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 of Education policy.
- recognise that schools and the Department of Education may be subject to legal constraints on their ability to act or disclose information in some circumstances.
- recognise that all parties, including the broader school community, have rights and responsibilities that must be balanced

Complaints and concerns process for students

Yarrowonga College P-12 acknowledges that issues or concerns can cause stress or worry for students and impact their wellbeing and learning. We encourage our students to raise issues or concerns as they arise so that we can work together to resolve them.

Students with a concern or complaint can raise them with a trusted adult at school, for example, with your classroom teacher, Year Level Coordinators, Wellbeing staff, Koorie Education Support Officers, Education Support staff. This person will take your concern or complaint seriously and will explain to you what steps we can take to try to resolve the issue and support you.

You can also ask your parent, carer or another trusted adult outside of the school, to talk to us about the issue instead. Information about our parent/carer complaints and concerns process is outlined further below. The parent/carer process also applies to students who are mature minors, refer to: [Mature Minors and Decision Making](#).

Other ways you can raise a concern or complaint with us include:

- talking to a member of the student representative council about your concern and any suggestions you have for resolving it
- participating in our Attitudes to School Survey (for Grades 4-6)
- writing a note to your Campus Principal or Engagement & Wellbeing LT

Further information and resources to support students to raise issues or concerns are available at:

- [Report Racism Hotline](#) (call 1800 722 476) – this hotline enables students to report concerns relating to racism or religious discrimination
- [Reach Out](#)
- [Headspace](#)
- [Kids Helpline](#) (call 1800 55 1800)
- [Victorian Aboriginal Education Association](#) (VAEI)

Complaints and concerns process for parents, carers and community members

Preparation for raising a concern or complaint

Yarrowonga College P-12 encourages those 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 of Education and Yarrowonga College P-12 (see “Further Information and Resources” section below).

Support person

You are welcome to have a support person to assist you in raising a complaint or concern with our school. Please advise us if you wish to have a support person to assist you, and provide their name, contact details, and their relationship to you.

Raising a concern

Yarrowonga College P-12 is always happy to discuss with parents/carers and community members any concerns that they may have. Concerns in the first instance should be directed to your child's teacher, Year Level Coordinators, Campus Principal or College Principal. Where possible, school staff will work with you to ensure that your concerns are appropriately addressed.

Where concerns cannot be resolved in this way, parents or community members may wish to make a formal complaint to the Principal or Campus Principal, noting that formal complaints should be directed to a member of the school's leadership team.

Making a complaint

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:

1. **Complaint received:** Please either email, telephone or arrange a meeting through the front office with the Campus 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. Appendix 1 & 2

Information gathering: Depending on the issues raised in the complaint, the Principal, Campus 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.

2. **Response:** Where possible, a resolution meeting will be arranged with the Principal or Campus 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.
3. **Timelines:** Yarrowonga College P-12 will acknowledge receipt of your complaint as soon as possible (usually within 48 hours) and will seek to resolve complaints in a timely manner. Depending on the complexity of the complaint, Yarrowonga College P-12 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, Yarrowonga College P-12 will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

Please note that unreasonable conduct (e.g. vexatious complaints) may need to be managed differently to the procedures in this policy.

Resolution

Where appropriate, Yarrowonga College P-12 may seek to resolve a complaint by:

- an acknowledgement, apology or expression of regret
- a change of decision
- 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, Yarrowonga College P-12 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 a parent or community member is not satisfied that their complaint has been resolved by the school, or if their complaint is about the Principal, then the complaint should be referred to the North Eastern Region by contacting 03 8392 9500.

Yarrowonga College P-12 may also refer a complaint to DE Group Coordination Division if we believe that we have done all we can to address the complaint.

For more information about the Department of Education's *Parent Complaints* policy, including the role of the Regional Office, please see: [Parent complaints policy](#).

Record keeping and other requirements

To meet Department of Education and legal requirements, our school must keep written records of:

- Serious, substantial or unusual complaints
- Complaints relating to the Child Information Sharing Scheme and Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme, to meet regulatory requirements - refer to Child and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes for further information

Our school also follows Department of Education policy to ensure that record-keeping, reporting, privacy and employment law obligations are met when responding to complaints or concerns.

COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on school website
- Included in staff handbook/manual and induction processes
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

The Department of Education's Policy and Advisory Library (PAL):

- [Complaints - Parents](#)

The Department of Education's parents' website:

- [Raise a complaint or concern about your school](#)
- [Report racism or religious discrimination in schools](#)

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	May 2023
Consultation	8 th – 13 th September 2022
Approved by	YCP-12 School Council
Next scheduled review date	May 2025

APPENDIX 1

GUIDELINES FOR ACTION

- The College will publicise and make accessible for families, children and the school community avenues for reporting incidents or concerns through enrolment packages, the College newsletter, College website and brochures at the General Office.
- The College will provide information on policies and procedures in relevant community languages, including Aboriginal languages and relevant modalities if required.
- Staff members and the community will be briefed annually about procedures relating to addressing concerns and complaints.
- The Office administration will ensure that parents make appointments with staff and in the case of phone calls, pass on messages to the appropriate staff member.
- Parents **MUST** make an appointment to see a staff member, and **MUST NOT** approach staff in classrooms, in the yard or in the general community when raising a concern.
- The staff member may request assistance from the Principal, Campus Principal or Student Engagement and Wellbeing Leader when handling a concern or complaint. In difficult situations, the concern will be handled by the Principal and/or Student Engagement and Wellbeing Leader and **NOT** the staff member directly involved.

In the case of a parental or community member's concern or complaint the following process will be followed:

- The complainant should telephone, write or make an appointment with the appropriate school personnel – e.g. classroom teacher, Year level Coordinator or Unit Leader, Principal, Campus Principal or Student Engagement and Wellbeing Leader
- Accurate recording of relevant information and actions taken will be ensured

If you are unsure of whom to contact, please telephone the Principal, Campus Principal or Student Engagement and Wellbeing Leaders at the respective Campuses.

The complainant should:

- raise their concern 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
- act in good faith in a calm and respectful manner, according to the College values
- show respect and understanding of each other's point of view and value differences rather than to judge and blame

Complainants may be accompanied by an advocate if they feel they are unable to express their concern clearly. An advocate can be a friend or someone who is available through an appropriate organisation who does not receive a fee.

The school / staff member will:

- listen to and record all details of the concern and complaint
- address all concerns fairly, respectfully, efficiently and promptly, or within a time frame agreed upon by both parties, and in accordance with due process, principles of restorative justice and the DEECD regulatory framework.
- In the case of a formal complaint, record all details on the “Concerns and Complaints Form” (Appendix 2). These will be stored in a secure location in the Principal’s Office.
- Ensure that the parent is phoned back to communicate details of the school’s response, the outcome of any action taken and any recommendations for the future.
- Provide the complainant with a copy of this policy unless the matter is easily and satisfactorily resolved.
- Ensure that all concerns and complaints are kept confidential
- Provide ongoing support to make referrals for support to affected victims, their families and affected staff, such as helping them understand their rights and the process that will be followed in responding to concerns/complaints.

COMPLAINTS POLICY

APPENDIX 2

CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS FORM

(This form is to handed to the Principal or Campus Principal on completion of the complaints process for filing)

Date: _____

Complainant:

Name: _____

Telephone: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Form in which complaint / concern received: Telephone / Email / Letter / Face to face

Description of concern / complaint:**School Response:****Action taken relating to the concern / complaint:****Recommendations for the future:**