

## Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide an outline of the complaints process at Brentwood 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 Brentwood 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:

Brentwood 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. The school's approach to addressing complaints is based on the Brentwood values and seeks to:

- provide a safe and supportive learning environment for students
- build open, positive and trusting relationships between students, parents/guardians and staff
- provide an important opportunity for reflection and learning
- provide a safe working environment for staff.

When addressing a complaint, it is expected that all parties will:

- act in good faith and discuss issues in a calm, courteous and respectful manner
- acknowledge 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 respect the privacy and confidentiality of those involved, as appropriate
- recognise that all parties, including the broader school community, have rights and responsibilities that must be balanced
- 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

Brentwood Secondary College encourages parents, carers or members of the community who may wish to submit a complaint to:

- do so promptly, as soon as possible after the issue arises
- provide complete and factual information about the complaint
- 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 Brentwood Secondary College (see “Further Information and Resources” section below).

The school will address complaints received from parents/guardians:

- courteously
- efficiently
- fairly
- promptly or within the timeline mutually agreed with the complainant
- in accordance with due process, principles of natural justice and DET’s regulatory framework.

### Complaints process

Brentwood Secondary College is always happy to discuss with parents/carers and community members any concerns that they may have. Complaints should be initially directed to the following staff in the circumstances stated below:

- Specific Classroom Issue: Classroom Teacher
- Student related matters: The relevant Classroom Teacher, House Leader, Head of House or Director of International Students in the first instance.
- School Policy, School Management or Staff Members: Associate Principal or relevant member of the Leadership Team.
- Very Complex Issues: 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 a member of the Principal Team.

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 Associate 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.

2. **Information gathering:** Depending on the issues raised in the complaint, the Principal, Associate 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.
3. **Response:** Where possible, a resolution meeting will be arranged with the Associate 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.
4. **Timelines:** Brentwood Secondary College 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, Brentwood 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, Brentwood Secondary College will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

### Help with making complaints

Personal support is most appropriate in situations where the complainant and others involved in the complaint process have emotional issues related to the complaint.

- 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 someone who is available through an appropriate support organisation who does not receive a fee for service.
- All parties involved in addressing a complaint may seek the services of a mediator when there is difficulty coming to an agreement.

The school will ensure that the complainant is aware of these supports. A complainant who wishes to use these support services should ensure the school representative addressing the complaint is aware of their intention and is in agreement.

### Managing parent/guardian complaints information

The school should consider recording the following details of all complaints received, even if the complaint appears to be minor:

- name and contact details (with permission) of the person making a complaint
- the date the complaint was made
- the form in which the complaint was received (such as face-to-face, by telephone, in writing)
- a brief description of the complaint
- details of the school representative 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.

However, in the first instance, when the complaint is easily resolved in a telephone call, a brief note in an Assistant Principal/ Head of House/ House Leader/ Director of International Students / teacher diary, recording the issue and the resolution may be all that is required.

## Resolution

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

- an explanation or further information about the issue
- an 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 (i.e. mediation)
- 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, Brentwood 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 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 Victoria Regional Office by contacting them on 8392 9300.

Brentwood Secondary College may also refer a complaint to North Eastern Victoria Regional Office if we believe that we have done all we can to address the complaint.

For complaints regarding International Students that cannot be resolved this may involve the International Education Division of the Department of Education and Training.

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

[Community Code of Conduct](#)

[College Communications Policy](#)

### Review Cycle and Evaluation:

This policy was last updated on 24 June 2019 and is scheduled for review on June 2022.

### Consultation:

Approved by Council on: 24 June 2019