



Williamstown High School

Complaints Policy

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1. Rationale

This policy relates to complaints brought by students, parents/carers, or members of our school community and applies to all matters relating to our school.

In some limited instances, we may need to refer a complainant to another policy or area if there are different processes in place to manage the issue including:

- Complaints and concerns relating to fraud and corruption will be managed in accordance with the department's [Fraud and Corruption Policy](#)
- Criminal matters will be referred to Victorian Police
- Legal claims will be referred to the Department's Legal Division
- Complaints and concerns relating to child abuse will be managed in accordance with our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide an outline of the complaints process at Williamstown High School so that students, parents/carers 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 Williamstown High School are managed in a timely, effective, fair and respectful manner.

3. Implementation

Williamstown High School welcomes feedback, both positive and negative, and is committed to continuous improvement. The school values open communication with families and is committed to understanding complaints and addressing them appropriately. The school recognises that the complaints process provides an important opportunity for reflection and learning.

The school values and encourages open and positive relationships with the school community and believes that it is in the best interests of students for there to be a trusting relationship between parents/carers and the 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 center
- 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.

4. Specific procedures

Complaints and concerns process for students

Williamstown High School acknowledges that issues or concerns can cause stress or worry for students and impact their wellbeing and learning. The school encourages students to raise issues or concerns as they arise so that issues can be resolved.

Students with a concern or complaint can raise them with a trusted adult at school, ie. Homegroup teacher, classroom teacher, Year Level Coordinator, Engagement and Wellbeing staff, Koorie Education Support Officer or Education Support staff. Concerns or complaints will be acknowledged in an appropriate and professional manner and steps to resolve the issue and support the child will be outlined.

Students can also ask family members or trusted adults 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 the school include:

- talking to a member of the student leadership team about the concern and any suggestions for resolving it
- participating the Student Attitudes to School Survey
- participating in student forums
- completing the feedback forms

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](#) (VAEAI)

Complaints and concerns process for parents, carers and community members Preparation for raising a concern or complaint

Williamstown High School encourages parents/carers or members of the school community who may wish to submit a complaint to:

- carefully consider the issues you would like to discuss
- understand that you may not have access to 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 Williamstown High School (see “Further Information and Resources” section below).

Support person

A support person can be engaged to raise a complaint or concern with our school. The school asks that the name and contact details be provided prior to engagement of their support and also what their relationship is to the child/concern/complaint.

Raising a concern

Williamstown High School welcomes the opportunity to discuss concerns with parents/carers and school community members. Concerns in the first instance should be directed to the Homegroup teacher, classroom teacher or member of the Engagement and Wellbeing team, if related to a child. Concerns of another nature can be raised by telephoning Reception.

Making a complaint

Where concerns cannot be resolved in this way, parent/carers or community members may wish to make a formal complaint to a member of the Principal Class team.

Depending on the nature of the complaint raised, the 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. **Making a complaint:** Please either telephone, email or arrange a meeting with the Assistant Principal or Campus Principal, to outline your complaint so that the school can fully understand what the issues are. The complaint can then be discussed, as appropriate.
2. **Information gathering:** Depending on the issues raised in the complaint, a member of the Principal Class 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:** The school will work to resolve issues with the outcome to be appropriate, fair and effective outcomes aligned to school values. If after a resolution meeting the complaint has not been resolved, the school will outline how possible further action can be undertaken. In some circumstances, the Principal Class 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:** Williamstown High School 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, Williamstown High School may need some time to gather enough information to fully understand the circumstances of your complaint. The school 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, the school will consult with the complainant and discuss any interim solutions 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.

5. Evaluation and Review

Resolution

Where appropriate, Williamstown High School may seek to resolve a complaint by:

- 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
- other actions consistent with school values that are intended to support the student, parent/carer and school relationship, engagement, and participation in the school community.

In some circumstances, the school may also ask the complainant 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 the complaint is not satisfactorily resolved by the school, or if your complaint is about the Principal and it is undesirable to raise this with the Principal directly, then the complaint should be referred to the South Western Region by contacting 1300 333 232.

The school may also refer a complaint to the South Western Region

For more information about the Department's parent complaints process, including the role of the Regional Office, please see: [Raise a complaint or concern about your school.](#)

Record keeping and other requirements

To meet Department and legal requirements, the 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

The school also follows Department policy to ensure that record-keeping, reporting, privacy and employment law obligations are met when responding to complaints or concerns. Documentation is maintained by the Principal Class.

6. Definitions and References

Further information and resources:

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

- [Complaints - Parents](#)

The Department's parents' website:

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

7. Consultative process

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

- Available publicly on school website
- Included in staff induction processes
- Included in our staff handbook/manual
- Annual reference in school newsletter