

GEELONG BAPTIST COLLEGE  
COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES POLICY



Adopted by: Board

Reviewed by: Principals

Date: 02/2020

To Be Reviewed: 2024

### Legal and regulatory basis for compliance

- Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)
- Education and Training Reform Regulations (2017)
- Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) Minimum Standards
- Child Safe Standards Ministerial Order 870
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth).

### Principles governing the way in which complaints are handled

- In resolving a complaint the school will give priority to the student's wellbeing and educational needs.
- The school will respond to all formal complaints in a timely manner. The school will acknowledge the complaint promptly and parents will be kept informed of the progress of their complaint, particularly when the complaint is complex and may take time to resolve.
- The school will ensure that the complaint procedure is responsive and flexible. In practice that means that parents are able to make a complaint in person, by phone or in writing. The school will provide support for parents with specific needs for example language translation.
- The school will ensure that the handling of complaints does not contravene the school's Privacy Policy. The school will seek actively to prevent the disclosure of personally identifiable information concerning the parents and students involved in the complaint. The principal or board must advise all persons of their obligation to keep the confidentiality and rights of the complainant.
- A student/parent who believes that a complaints process has been improperly managed or resulted in a manifestly unreasonable outcome, may wish to go to an external agency for further advice and assistance. He or she may take his or her complaint to the external agency at any stage in the complaint handling process if he or she is unhappy with the progress being made in dealing with his or her complaint. The board (internal) or external agencies (eg The Disciplinary Appeals Board or the Department of Education and Training) will be able to assist the complainant.

### If the source of the complaint is a parent or guardian:

Parents are encouraged to make their own decision about the appropriate member of staff in the College/school to whom their complaint should be made. If in doubt, however, the points below offer some guidance:

- If a complaint to a classroom teacher is of a minor nature and easily resolved then the teacher and parent should act together to resolve the issue between them.
- If the complaint is of a more substantial nature the teacher should refer the complainant to a more senior member of staff in the appropriate area.
- If the matter cannot be resolved at this level it should be referred to the principal. Failing resolution, the parent may request that the matter be referred to the chairman of the College Board who, together with the board, is the final authority on matters concerning the College.

In all instances of complaint the College's representative shall record the issues and steps which have been

taken to resolve any complaints. The principal, or senior members of staff, may choose to interview students without parents or staff members being present.

**If the source of the complaint is a student:**

Students are encouraged to make their own decision about the appropriate member of staff in the College to whom their complaint should be made. If in doubt, however, the points below offer some guidance:

- The teacher and student should act to resolve a minor complaint to the satisfaction of both parties. If the student feels he cannot raise the matter directly with the staff member concerned, he may approach his Home Room teacher, the School Chaplain or another staff member.
- If a satisfactory resolution is not achieved, or if the matter is of a substantial nature, the matter should be referred to an appropriate senior staff member.
- Failing a resolution at that level the matter should be referred to the Principal for appropriate action.
- A record of the issues and steps taken to resolve the matters should be kept by the College's representatives.

**If the source of complaint is a staff member:**

- Complaints of a minor nature should be resolved between colleagues. A more senior staff member or a chaplain acting as facilitator can be requested by either party.
- Complaints related to sexual or sex based harassment should be dealt with according to the College's Mandatory Reporting Policy.
- Other complaints should be directed to the principal. During any stage of the process, a person may choose to have a supporting person present at discussions or interviews with the principal.
- If unresolved, the staff member may write to the Chairman of the Board, who, together with the board, is the final authority on matters concerning the College.
- Employees are entitled to seek personal or professional support or advice from individuals (eg union) other than potential witnesses. The seeking of this advice is not seen to be a breach in confidentiality. The principal or board will observe appropriate confidentiality in relation to the management of any complaint.

**If complaints relate to physical, sexual or emotional abuse of children, the following procedures should be followed:**

- If the complaint is against a College employee:  
The student should be directed to the College chaplain who should take and record details from the student. The chaplain should then inform senior members of staff. The principal or other senior member of staff will investigate the matter.
- If, after investigation, there are no grounds for further action, the student should be advised that no action will be taken.
- If the complaint is deemed frivolous or mischievous the student should be informed and at the discretion of the principal, the matter referred to the parents of the student.
- If the complaint of alleged verbal or emotional abuse can be substantiated, the matter should be discussed immediately with the employee concerned. If the employee agrees that the student's allegations are true, appropriate action will be taken by the principal.
- If the employee disputes the allegation the principal should conduct a further investigation making sure all actions are documented, as are findings and decisions. Subsequent action by the principal will depend upon the findings. In all such cases the principal will consult with the Chairman of the Board at the earliest possible moment once actions are deemed serious enough for further investigation.
- For complaints of a serious physical nature the College's governing body should seek legal advice in relation to the College's actions towards the employee. Any police action relating to non-sexual physical abuse should be left to the parents to initiate unless it is considered to be staff misconduct.
- For complaints of alleged sexual abuse the college's governing body should seek legal advice immediately in relation to the College's actions towards the employee. Parents must be contacted

immediately. Investigations of the alleged sexual abuse, unless obviously frivolous or mischievous, should be left to the police.

**Complaint from students against people outside the College:**

- If the principal or member of the executive is convinced that the complaint is justified and of a serious nature, the matter should be discussed by the principal with the Chairman of the Board, with a view to making contact with the police.