



Darul Ulum College of Victoria

COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Rationale

Darul Ulum College of Victoria acknowledges that students, parents/guardians, school staff and the wider school community have a right to raise concerns and grievances which they may have. The College's approach in handling concerns and complaints is based on a commitment to:

- provide a safe and supportive learning environment for students;
- build positive relationships between students, parents, staff and the wider community; and
- provide a safe working environment for staff.

This policy and the procedures outlined herein are to ensure that concerns and complaints are dealt with in a fair and transparent way. The College's administration reassures all complainants that it will endeavour to handle complaints in a fair and just manner and that the complainant will not be adversely affected in any way or form for simply lodging a complaint.

This policy must be read in conjunction with the Protecting Children_ Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse Policy, the Critical Incident Policy and the Record Keeping Policy.

Scope

This policy is applicable to complaints and appeals made by:

- parents or guardians of students;
- students;
- staff members; and
- individuals from the broader community.

Policy Statement

This policy and its associated procedures cover concerns and complaints pertaining to:

- general issues of student behaviour that may be deemed to be in breach of the Student Code of Conduct, the Student Behaviour Management Policy and any other school policy;
- incidents of bullying, harassment and/or any form of abuse within the school environment;*
- learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning;
- school procedures;
- communication with parents;
- general administrative issues;
- staff conduct; and
- parent conduct or the conduct of a community member.

* **The school environment** is defined as: Any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school administration for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:

- (a) school grounds;
- (b) online school environments (including email and intranet systems); and
- (c) other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events.

Complaints Regarding Suspected Child Abuse

Darul Ulum College maintains a zero-tolerance policy for child abuse and any unlawful behaviour, including all forms of physical and sexual abuse, as well as grooming. Our Child Safety Policy outlines our dedication to creating a secure environment for all students. The steps to be taken in response to any disclosure of suspected child abuse are detailed in our Protecting Children_ Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse Policy.

If anyone suspects that a child has been subjected to physical or sexual abuse, or is at risk of such abuse, they must immediately report this to the Principal, Deputy Principal, or Head of School. They must not wait for the submission of a written complaint in such a situation unless otherwise advised by the school's management. The management will then take action to protect the child, eliminate the actual or potential threat, and report the incident to the appropriate authorities.

Implementation

Complaints and Concerns Process for Students

Darul Ulum College recognises that issues or concerns can cause stress or worry for students and affect their wellbeing and learning. We encourage our students to raise these issues or concerns as they arise so that we can work together to resolve them.

Students with a concern or complaint can discuss it with a trusted adult at school, such as their:

- Form Teacher
- Level Coordinator
- School Counsellor
- Student Wellbeing Coordinator
- Head of School
- Deputy Principal
- Principal
- Any staff member they feel comfortable to speak with.

If a student raises a concern with any staff member, including a volunteer, it is the responsibility of the staff member and volunteer to:

- Be approachable and professional, helping the students feel confident and supported to raise issues
- Take all complaints seriously, even if they seem minor to an adult
- Validate the student's experiences and concerns
- Acknowledge the complaint promptly
- Address the student's complaint promptly by scheduling a discussion at the earliest opportunity. If more appropriate, and with the student's consent, direct them to a more suitable staff member. In cases of referral, ensure proper follow-up with the designated staff member.
- Consider whether the student may require any internal / external support
- Consider relevant legislation, child safe policies, reporting obligations and guidelines when addressing the complaint
- Immediately notify the Principal / Deputy Principal, and the relevant Head of School if there are any concerns regarding a student's safety
- Document the complaint appropriately where applicable
- Direct the student to the school's counseling or support services as appropriate
- Ensure confidentiality and only share information with authorised personnel
- Seek support and advice from the relevant Head of School if you are uncertain about how to address the student's complaint
- If the matter is not resolved, escalate the complaint to the relevant department, including the Level Coordinator, Student Wellbeing Coordinator, Head of School, Deputy Principal or Principal

Students may also ask a parent, carer, or another trusted adult outside of school to raise the issue on their behalf.

Students also have the option to raise their concerns verbally or in writing. Upon raising their concerns with the relevant staff member, where deemed necessary, they may be asked to fill in the Student Complaint Form to ensure all the relevant information is made available.

Students will always have the right to escalate their complaints to the relevant Head of School, Deputy Principal or Principal.

Complaints and Concerns Process for Staff

1. Staff members who have a concern regarding another staff or school related matter member are encouraged to attempt to resolve the issue directly and informally by discussing the matter with the individual concerned.
2. Alternatively, staff members may request the assistance and intervention of the appropriate Head of School to pursue further informal resolution.
3. The Head of School will review the issue by listening to both parties and may facilitate a meeting to aid in reconciliation.
4. If both parties reach an agreement and a resolution is achieved, the Head of School will close the case.
5. If no resolution is reached through the informal process, the staff member may submit a formal complaint to the Principal.
6. If the issue or concern involves the Head of School or Deputy Principal, the staff member should escalate the matter to the Principal. The Principal will then determine whether to address the complaint through informal or formal channels, based on the nature of the concern.
7. Staff members wishing to lodge a formal complaint should email the Principal.
8. The details associated with a formal complaint process are outlined below under the heading Receiving the Complaint.

Complaints and Concerns Process for Parents, Guardians and Community Members

Raising a concern or complaint:

9. Parents, guardians, and community members should follow these guidelines when raising concerns or lodging a complaint:
 - **Learning-related concerns:** Parents/guardians should contact the relevant classroom teacher.
 - **Behavioural concerns:** Parents/guardians should contact the relevant Level Coordinator or Student Wellbeing Coordinator.
 - **Concerns about staff members or complex student issues:** These must be submitted in writing to the Principal.
 - **Community / visitor member concerns:** These must be submitted in writing to the Principal.
 - For complaints to be reviewed by the Principal, parents, community members / visitors are requested to write to:
 - Fawkner campus: Email info@dulum.vic.edu.au
 - Mickleham campus: Email infodua@dulum.vic.edu.au
10. If unable to email, parents/guardians can:
 - Download a Complaint Form from the school website or obtain a form from the school reception
 - Complete the form and submit it in a sealed envelope addressed to the Principal via the

receptionist.

Note: Staff members or volunteers receiving a complaint from a parent or community member are advised to refer them to the above guidelines, subject to the nature of the complaint.

Receiving the Complaint:

11. Upon receiving a written complaint, the written complaints will be directed to the Principal. Where appropriate, the Principal or their delegate will first attempt to resolve the issue through mediation, consulting with the complainant. If this informal approach proves unsuccessful or if the nature of the complaint necessitates a formal approach, the Principal will initiate the formal complaint resolution process.
12. The complainant will receive formal correspondence from the school's management acknowledging receipt of the complaint (usually within 2 working days).
13. In cases where the matter requires investigation, the task will usually be assigned by the Principal to one of the Heads of School or an appropriate staff member determined by the Principal. The Principal will inform the complainant of the investigator's details and will be provided with an approximate timeline for investigating the complaint if an investigation is deemed necessary.
14. In the rare occasion and subject to the sole discretion of the Principal, an external advisor may be appointed as an investigator and/or external legal advice may be sought. This will be considered when there is an allegation pertaining to breach of law.
15. The complainant may be contacted by the appointed person to investigate the complaint to seek further information or details pertaining to the complaint.
16. Complainants can seek support in cases where they feel they are unable to express their concerns clearly or need additional support. The support person should not be involved in the grievance and should not advocate during the meeting.
17. Parents, visitors and staff must not contact other parents, staff members or students about their concerns or complaints to avoid being in breach of school policies and privacy regulations.
18. The investigation and resolution process will be conducted confidentially. However, the complainant should be aware that there may be instances where the information provided needs to be shared with other relevant parties during the process.

Response

19. Whenever possible, a meeting will be scheduled with the Principal and/or Deputy Principal to discuss the findings of the investigation.
20. In certain situations, the Principal may decide that a meeting is not appropriate. In such cases, only a written response will be provided.
21. All concerned parties will be informed of the outcome.

Record Keeping

22. The school will maintain a record of all formal complaints in a Complaints Register and the outcomes of investigation. These records will be maintained by the relevant Heads of

School and overseen by the Principal in accordance with the school's Record Keeping Policy.

23. The Complaints Register will be accessible to the College's governing authority in order to be satisfied about the appropriateness of the school's arrangements that would regulate or guide the management who make such decisions for or on behalf of the school about child safety matters and child-connected work.

Timeline

24. The school may need some time to gather sufficient information to fully understand the circumstances of the complaint. We will strive to complete any necessary information gathering and, where appropriate, hold a meeting or provide any update within 14 working days of the complaint being raised.
25. If additional time is required, the school will inform the complainant accordingly.

Appeal

26. Complainants and respondents retain the right to appeal decisions.
27. Requests for decision review should be submitted in writing to the Principal. The grounds for the appeal must be clearly stated.
28. Appeals should be lodged within 14 days of a complaint resolution being finalized and communicated.
29. Acknowledgment of appeals will be provided by the Principal upon receipt.
30. The Principal will review the investigation process, the complainant's objections and issue a final resolution in writing.
31. If the outcome is not to the satisfaction of the complainant, the complainant may refer the matter to the College's Management Committee in writing.
32. Upon the Management Committee's review of the appeal, the Committee will advise the applicant of the decision in writing.
33. In cases where the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of a given resolution, the complainant may ultimately access alternative regulatory bodies such as the Victorian Registration and Qualification Authority (VRQA), Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) or the Department of Education and Training.

Complaints Referred to the Board of Directors

34. It is the responsibility of the Board of Directors to investigate complaints lodged against members of the Management Committee and the Principal.
35. A complaint made against members of the Management Committee or the Principal will be referred to the Board of Directors.
36. The Chair of the Board will form a sub-committee to conduct an investigation and deal with the issue.
37. The sub-committee, representing the Board, will propose recommendations to the Board regarding actions to resolve the matter under investigation.
38. The complainant will be advised in writing of the Board's final decision.

Communication

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

- Referenced in staff induction programs and annual staff orientation sessions.
- Referenced during parent information sessions.
- Referenced in the school's newsletter.
- Discussed at staff briefings or meetings, as required.
- Available on SharePoint for staff online access.
- Available for parents and students on the website and on Schoolbox.

Review

The school's management will regularly review this policy and procedures to effectively address all concerns and complaints as part of its cyclic policy and procedures review schedule. Situations that arise and are not covered by the policy will render an immediate review of the policy.

Important Note:

Complaints pertaining to unreasonable conduct or reportable conduct will require a different management approach than the procedures outlined in this policy. This will be determined by the Principal.

Date of Review	Next Review
Term 4, 2024	Term 4, 2026
Principal's Endorsement: 	