
Complaints Policy (2023 - 2025)



<i>Date implemented</i>	13 September 2023
<i>Author</i>	Justin Hird
<i>Date to be reviewed</i>	August 2025
<i>To be reviewed by</i>	Principal
<i>References</i>	Victorian Government Schools Reference Guide
<i>Approved by</i>	School Council
<i>Date</i>	13 September 2023
<i>Signature</i>	

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Hird', located below the signature field in the table.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide an outline of the complaints process at Castlemaine Secondary College so that staff, students, parents and members of the community are informed on how they can raise complaints or concerns about issues arising at our school.
- ensure that all complaints and concerns regarding Castlemaine Secondary College are managed in a timely, effective, fair and respectful manner.

Scope

This policy relates to complaints brought to the attention of Castlemaine Secondary College by staff, 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](#).

Policy

Castlemaine Secondary College welcomes feedback, both positive and negative, and is focussed on continuous improvement. We value open communication with all stakeholders 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 staff and students for there to be a trusting relationship between families and our school.

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

- raise and discuss issues in a 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.

Complaints and concerns process for students

Castlemaine Secondary College acknowledges that issues or concerns can cause stress or worry for students and impact their wellbeing and learning. Castlemaine Secondary College encourages 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, a Mentor Teacher, Precinct Manager, Precinct Leader or the College's Wellbeing Team. 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 (SRC) about your concern and any suggestions you have for resolving it.
- participating in our Attitudes to School Survey.
- participating in our student forums held every term.
- writing a note for our anonymous student suggestions box at reception.

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

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

- carefully consider the issue(s) you would like to discuss
- remember you may not have all the facts relating to the issue(s) 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 Castlemaine Secondary College (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

Castlemaine Secondary College 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 mentor teacher, and /or the Precinct Manager or Precinct Leader. Where possible, school staff will work with you to ensure that your concerns are appropriately addressed.

Making a complaint

Where concerns cannot be resolved in this way, parents or community members may wish to make a complaint to an appropriate member of the Leadership Team, specifically the Assistant Principal or Principal.

If you would like to make a 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 write a detailed account of your concerns and email to castlemaine.sc@education.vic.gov.au . Written information is required to provide specific information and clarity about your concerns, thus allowing this complaint to be directed to the most appropriate person.
2. **Information gathering:** Depending on the issues raised in the complaint, the Principal, Assistant 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 Assistant Principal/Principal/nominee 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:** Castlemaine 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, Castlemaine Secondary College may need additional time to gather enough information to fully understand the circumstances of your complaint. We will endeavor 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, Castlemaine Secondary College 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.

A vexatious complaint is defined by the following: *in relation to a staff member of a school, means a communication that a reasonable person would consider unreasonable, having regard to the circumstances, in one or more of the following forms.*

- A. *a person approaching, telephoning, sending messages to or otherwise contacting (whether by electronic means or otherwise) the staff member;*
- B. *a person publishing (whether on the internet, by email or by any other form of written communication) material about the staff member;*
- C. *a person causing someone else to engage in a behavior set out in paragraph (a) or (b) on the person's behalf;*
- D. *any prescribed communication.*

Complaints for staff

Making a complaint

We encourage staff to attempt to resolve any internal concerns by having conversations with the affected people, which may include students and / or other staff members. This may also involve the Leadership Team, specifically the Precinct Leaders.

If you would like to make a 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 write a detailed account of your concerns and email to the college principal. Written information is required to provide specific information and clarity about your concerns, thus allowing this complaint to be directed to the most appropriate person. The written information must include the following;
 - detailed account of the event
 - detailed strategies they have implemented, in line with our [Staged Level of Response](#) and [Berry Street Training](#). Please note these links are only available for CSC staff.
 - outline their specific concerns.
 - desired outcomes from raising this complaint.

2. **Information gathering:** Depending on the issues raised in the complaint, the Principal, Assistant Principal or nominee may need to gather additional 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 Assistant Principal/Principal/nominee 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.

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Resolution

Where appropriate, Castlemaine Secondary College 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 counseling or other supports
- 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, Castlemaine Secondary College may also ask you to attend a meeting with an independent third party, or participate in a mediation with an independent accredited mediator to assist in the resolution of the dispute.

Escalation

If a staff member, 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 Department of Education and Training's Northwest Regional office in Bendigo by email: nwvr@edumail.vic.gov.au or phone 1300 338 691.

Castlemaine Secondary College may also refer a complaint to the DET Northwest Regional office if we believe that we have done all we can to address the complaint.

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

Record keeping and other requirements

To meet Department 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 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 our College's website www.csc.edu.vic.au.
- Reminders in our school newsletter.
- Discussed in student forums.
- Included in the online staff handbook (Staff Central).
- Discussed at staff briefings/meetings as required.

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](#)

Providing feedback and ongoing consultation

At CSC we encourage involvement from staff, students and families in relation to all policies, please email castlemaine.sc@education.vic.gov.au to provide suggestions.

Policy Review and Approval

Policy last reviewed	16 August 2023
Consultation	21 June 2023
Approved by	School Council
Next scheduled review date	August 2025 – the mandatory review cycle for this policy 2 years