

 <b>BERWICK COLLEGE POLICY</b>	TITLE	<b>PARENT CONCERNS &amp; COMPLAINTS</b>		
	VERSION/YEAR	3/2019		
	PUBLISHED LOCATIONS	COMPASS		
	ISSUE DATE	AUGUST 2019		
	REVIEW DATE	JUNE 2022		
	REVIEWED BY	ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL	RATIFIED BY	COLLEGE COUNCIL
PURPOSE:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To ensure that Berwick College policies and procedures accurately reflect the College operations, directions, educational philosophy and goals and meet all legislative, compliance and duty of care requirements.</li> <li>To provide policy and procedure direction to all staff, students, parents and volunteers of Berwick College.</li> <li>To ensure Berwick College responds to parent concerns and complaints in an effective, timely, fair and respectful manner.</li> <li>To improve parent understanding of the College's processes in relationship to enquiries, concerns, suggestions and complaints.</li> <li>To provide a safe working environment for staff.</li> </ul>			
BACKGROUND:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Berwick College seeks to establish and maintain a high level of professional standards in relation to all activities within the College. This policy is in accord with the College's 'Mission Statement', 'Values' and 'Service Standards'.</li> </ul>			
RELATED DOCUMENTS:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DET: <a href="#">Addressing parents' concerns and complaints effectively policy and guides</a></li> <li>DET <a href="#">Parent Complaints Policy</a></li> </ul>			

#### SCOPE:

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

#### RATIONALE:

Our College recognises the academic and social support provided for a child by developing positive and purposeful partnerships with parents. An important part of this philosophy is effective communication, links and processes. Parent understanding of College communication practices regarding raising concerns and complaints is important for the successful and smooth running of Berwick College. Berwick College is committed to continuous improvement and to providing a safe working environment for staff. This policy and its associated procedures are to ensure that concerns are dealt with in a fair, transparent and timely manner, with the aim of resolving the matter to the satisfaction of all parties.

#### IMPLEMENTATION:

We value open communication with our families 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 College community. We understand that it is in the best interests of students for there to be a trusting relationship between families and our College.

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 College community, have rights and responsibilities that must be balanced
- 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.

### **EARLY CONTACT:**

It is encouraged that communication is made at the start of the school year by the Homegroup teachers. Contact with parents is made through 'Meet the Home Group Teacher' night and parent information evenings for our (new) year 7 students.

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

- 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 Berwick College (see "Further Information and Resources" section below).

### **PARENTS' RESPONSIBILITY:**

- Parents phoning Berwick College should clearly identify themselves. We are committed to responding promptly and helpfully to all enquiries, concerns, complaints, suggestions and compliments. The office will direct the call. It should be noted that the College will not normally respond to anonymous or aggressive phone calls.
- Parents should try to remain calm. Even if you are anxious or upset about an issue it is not appropriate to seek out staff without an appointment. All visitors are to report to the College Administration office. The College is not a public place and any behaviour that is considered threatening to staff or students may lead to action for trespass and/or intervention orders from the courts. The police may also be called to attend the College.
- It is the responsibility of parents to provide current information and update this information as appropriate. This includes phone numbers, home address, medical information and family situations. It is important if a student is to be collected during the school day that an identifiable adult signs out the student.

Threatening behaviours may include:

- Shouting at College staff, either in person or over the phone
- Physical intimidation of College staff
- Threatening or swearing at College staff
- Actual physical violence
- Sexual or racist comments
- Aggressive communication such as emails and messages

### **COMMUNICATION:**

Berwick College will communicate with parents in a number of different ways and for a number of different purposes. We endeavour to maintain consistent systems of communication and will inform parents of any changes, especially those due to advances in technology.

Avenues of communication include:

- A newsletter emailed to every family 3 times a term.
- Information on the website: [www.berwickcollege.vic.edu.au](http://www.berwickcollege.vic.edu.au)
- Student / Parent / Teacher Interviews twice yearly with bookings made online.
- Interim reports at the end of terms 1 and 3.
- Student reports at the end of each semester.
- Parent representation on College council.
- Phone calls, emails and letters home regarding behaviour and progress.
- Permission forms for excursions and camps.
- SMS messages, phone calls and on line parent checks when students are absent.
- Annual 'Parent Opinion Survey'.
- Compass for communicating attendance information and requests

### **TIMELINES:**

It is the intention of the Berwick College to contact parents in a timely manner after a parent makes contact with the College or an incident occurs (usually within 48 hours) and will seek to resolve complaints in a timely manner. Depending on the complexity of the complaint, Berwick 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, Berwick College will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

In the case of an immediate parent concern or complaint e.g. bullying, report of suspected child abuse or alleged reportable misconduct involving current or former employees or volunteers then the College will aim to respond to the parent the same day (wherever practicable).

#### **TELEPHONE GUIDE FOR PARENTS:**

Berwick 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 the Homegroup teacher, Student Learning Leader or Assistant. Where possible, College 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 the College's leadership team, including the Assistant Principal and/or Principal.

If you would like to make a formal complaint, in most cases, depending on the nature of the complaint raised, our College will first seek to understand the issues.

#### **College Contact Details:**

- Attendance/Absences - 8768 1086
- General Enquiries and Appointments: 8768 1000
- Parents wishing to make contact with staff may also leave messages on our telephone message bank or College email address at: [berwick.sc@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:berwick.sc@edumail.vic.gov.au)

#### **RESOLUTION**

Where appropriate, Berwick 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 counselling or other support
- other actions consistent with College values that are intended to support the student, parent and school relationship, engagement, and participation in the College community.

In some circumstances, Berwick 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 College, or if their complaint is about the Principal, then the complaint should be referred to the Department of Education by contacting Southern Eastern Regional Office on 8765 5600.

Berwick College may also refer a complaint to South Eastern 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 see: [Parent complaints policy](#).

#### **LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK:**

All concerns and complaints must be addressed in line with the Department's legislative and regulatory framework, which includes the:

- Education and Training Reform Act 2006
- Education and Training Reform Regulations 2007
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
- Information Privacy Act 2000
- Wrong Act 1958

**ASSISTANCE:**

Managing difficult and complex complaints can cause stress for College staff. Additional support is available from DET regional office or the central complaints team. Staff experiencing stress or other wellbeing issues can contact the Department's 24/7 Employee Assistance Program via 1300 361 008. Managers can also seek advice and support from the program's manager assist phone advisory service, available Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. This service can be accessed via phone 1300 361 008.

**FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES**

- Appendix A - Aggressive behaviour from parents and visitors incident reporting form
- Appendix B - Parents' concern or complaint management process
- Statement of Values

**EVALUATION:**

- This policy will be reviewed as part of the College's three-year review cycle.

## Aggressive behaviour from parents and visitors INCIDENT REPORTING FORM

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

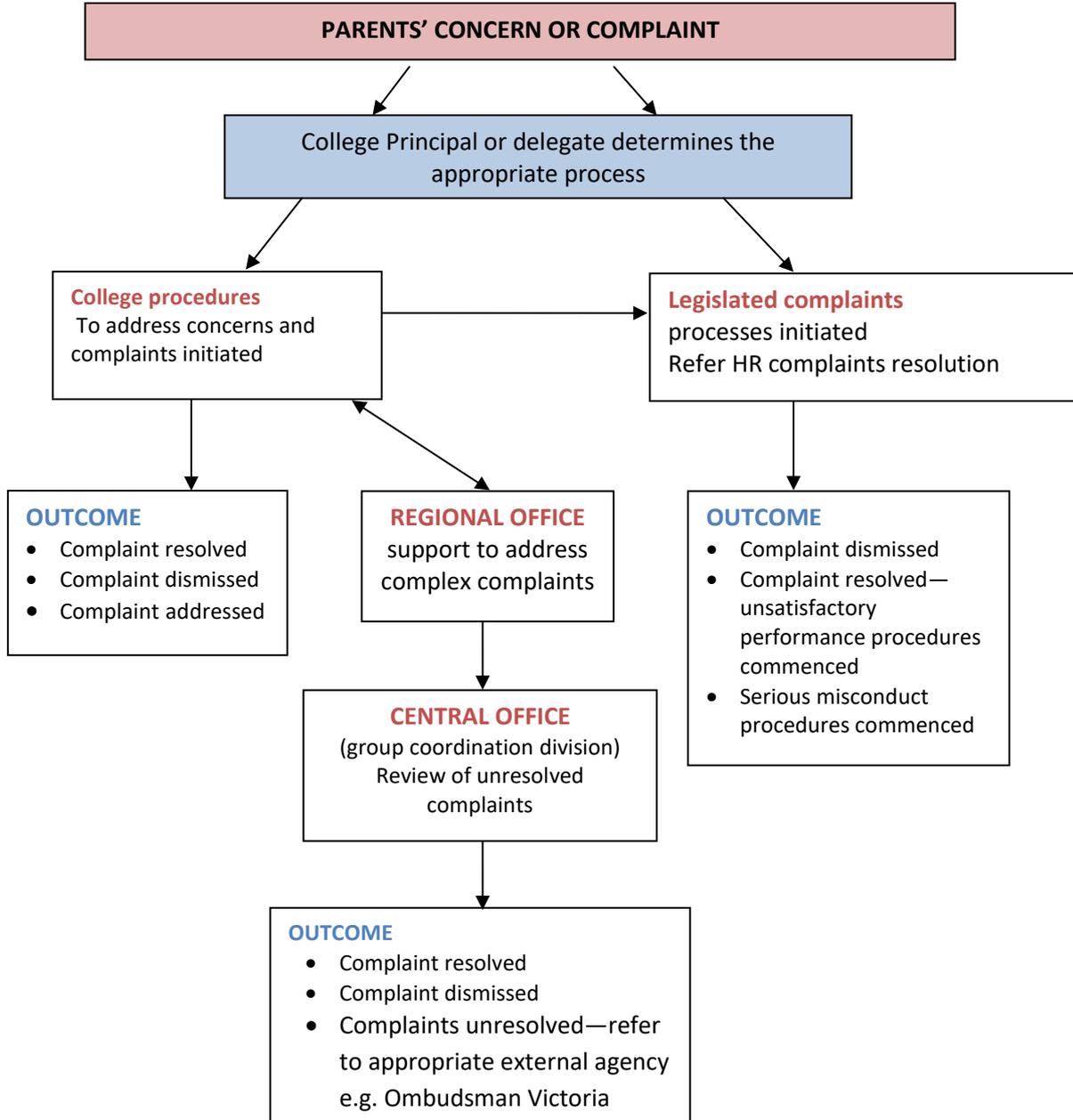
<b>Name of perpetrator</b>	Parent <input type="checkbox"/> Name _____ M/F ____ Visitor <input type="checkbox"/> Name _____ M/F ____
<b>Name of victim</b>	Staff member <input type="checkbox"/> Parent <input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> Name _____
<b>Nature of incident</b>	Verbal abuse <input type="checkbox"/> Intimidating behaviour <input type="checkbox"/> Refusal to cooperate <input type="checkbox"/> Physical assault <input type="checkbox"/> Racist or sexist comment <input type="checkbox"/> Incitement of others <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> _____
<b>Brief description of the incident</b>	_____ _____ _____ _____
<b>Action taken by principal class member</b>	_____ _____ _____ _____

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Parents' concern or complaint management process

- Concern is an issue of interest (because of its importance and effect) which is raised informally in order to improve or change a situation
- Complaint is an expression of grievance or resentment where the complainant is seeking redress or justice



## STATEMENT OF VALUES

### PROMOTING HEALTHY, SAFE AND RESPECTFUL SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

Berwick College recognises the importance of the partnership between schools and parents to support student learning, engagement and wellbeing. We share a commitment to, and a responsibility for, ensuring inclusive, safe and orderly environments for children and young people.

This Statement of Values sets out our behavioural expectations of all members in this school community, including the principal, all school staff, parents, students and visitors. It respects the diversity of individuals in our school community and addresses the shared responsibilities of all members in building safe and respectful school communities.

Discrimination, sexual and other forms of harassment, bullying, violence, aggression and threatening behaviour are unacceptable and will not be tolerated in this school.

Our Statement of Values acknowledges that parents and school staff are strongly motivated to do their best for every child. Everyone has the right to differing opinions and views and to raise concerns, as long as we do this respectfully as a community working together.

#### RESPONSIBILITIES

##### AS PRINCIPALS AND SCHOOL LEADERS, WE WILL:

- Work collaboratively to create a school environment where respectful and safe conduct is expected of everyone.
- Behave in a manner consistent with the standards of our profession and meet core responsibilities to provide inclusive, safe and orderly environments.
- Plan, implement and monitor arrangements to ensure the care, safety, security and general wellbeing of all students in attendance at the school is protected.
- Identify and support students who are or may be at risk.
- Do our best to ensure every child achieves their personal and learning potential.
- Work with parents to understand their child's needs and, where necessary, adapt the learning environment accordingly.
- Respond appropriately when inclusive, safe or orderly behaviour is not demonstrated and implement appropriate interventions and sanctions when required.
- Make known to parents the school's communication and complaints procedures.
- Ask any person who is acting in an offensive or disorderly way to leave the school grounds.

##### AS TEACHERS AND ALL NON-TEACHING STAFF, WE WILL:

- Model positive behaviour to students consistent with the standards of our profession.
- Proactively engage with parents about student outcomes.

- Work with parents to understand the needs of each student and, where necessary, adapt the learning environment accordingly.
- Work collaboratively with parents to improve learning and wellbeing outcomes for students with additional needs.
- Communicate with the principal and school leaders in the event we anticipate or face any tension or challenging behaviours from parents.
- Treat all members of the school community with respect.

##### AS PARENTS, WE WILL:

- Model positive behaviour to our child.
- Ensure our child attends school on time, every day the school is open for instruction.
- Take an interest in our child's school and learning.
- Work with the school to achieve the best outcomes for our child.
- Communicate constructively with the school and use expected processes and protocols when raising concerns.
- Support school staff to maintain a safe learning environment for all students.
- Follow the school's complaints processes if there are complaints.
- Treat all school leaders, staff, students, and other members of the school community with respect.

##### AS STUDENTS, WE WILL:

- Model positive behaviour to other students.
- Comply with and model school values.
- Behave in a safe and responsible manner.
- Respect ourselves, other members of the school community and the school environment.
- Actively participate in school.
- Not disrupt the learning of others and make the most of our educational opportunities.



### AS COMMUNITY MEMBERS, WE WILL:

- Model positive behaviour to the school community.
- Treat other members of the school community with respect.
- Support school staff to maintain a safe and orderly learning environment for all students.
- Utilise the school's communications policy to communicate with the school.

### THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING WILL:

- Provide support and advice to principals to equip them to manage and respond to challenging behaviour of students, parents and staff.
- Provide practical guidance and resources to support schools to manage and respond to challenging behaviour of students, parents and staff.
- Provide practical guidance and resources to support schools respond to and prevent bullying and promote cyber-safety and wellbeing.
- Provide access to evidence based resources and strategies to increase student safety, wellbeing and engagement.
- Provide schools with practical and legal support as required.
- Provide parents with practical guidance and resources to resolve conflicts with the school.

### CONSEQUENCES FOR FAILING TO UPHOLD THE STATEMENT OF VALUES

#### UNREASONABLE BEHAVIOURS

Behaviours that are considered inappropriate on and adjacent to school grounds or in relation to school business and that do not uphold the principles of this Statement of Values include when a person:

- is rude, aggressive or harasses others
- sends rude, confronting or threatening letters, emails or text messages
- is manipulative or threatening
- speaks in an aggressive tone, either in person or over the telephone
- makes sexist, racist or derogatory comments
- inappropriately uses social media as a forum to raise concerns/make complaints against the school
- is physically intimidating, e.g. standing very close.

#### CONSEQUENCES

Principals are responsible for determining what constitutes reasonable and unreasonable behaviour.

Unreasonable behaviour and/or failure to uphold the principles of this Statement of Values may lead to further investigation and the implementation of appropriate consequences. This may include:

- utilising mediation and counselling services
- alternative communication strategies being applied
- formal notice preventing entry onto school premises or attendance at school activities. Written notice will follow any verbal notice given.
- an intervention order being sought
- informing the police which may result in a charge of trespass or assault

By agreeing to meet specified standards of positive behaviour, everyone in our school community can be assured that they will be treated with fairness and respect. In turn, this will help to create a school that is safe and orderly, where everyone is empowered to participate and learn.