

 <b>BERWICK COLLEGE POLICY</b>	TITLE		<b>COMPLAINTS</b>	
	VERSION/YEAR		4/2022	
	PUBLISHED LOCATIONS		COMPASS, WEBSITE	
	ISSUE DATE		AUGUST 2022	
	REVIEW DATE		JUNE 2025	
	REVIEWED BY		ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL	RATIFIED BY
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> <li>To provide an outline of the complaints process at Berwick College so that students, parents and members of the community are informed of how they can raise complaints or concerns about issues arising at our College.</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="#">Complaints - Parents</a></li> </ul> The Department's parents' website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Raise a complaint or concern about your school</a></li> <li><a href="#">Report racism or religious discrimination in schools</a></li> </ul>			

**SCOPE:**

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

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 the following:

- 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](#).

**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 are committed to responding promptly and helpfully to all enquiries, concerns, complaints, suggestions and compliments.

## **EARLY CONTACT:**

We understand that it is in the best interests of students for there to be a trusting relationship between families and our College. 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 your Learning Team' night and parent information evenings for our new year 7 students. 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 centre
- 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.

## **COMPLAINTS AND CONCERNS PROCESS FOR STUDENTS:**

Berwick College acknowledges that issues or concerns can cause stress or worry for students and impact their wellbeing and learning. Berwick 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 it with a trusted adult at school, for example, with your Home group teacher, Learning Team Leader or Wellbeing or Education Support staff. 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 leadership
- participating in the Attitude to School Survey and the Bullying Prevention Survey.

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:**

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 our policies on Compass or the College website.

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 the student out.

## SUPPORT PERSON:

You are welcome to have a support person to assist you in raising a complaint or concern with our College. 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:

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 your child's teacher, Student Learning Leader or Assistant. Where possible, school staff will work with you to ensure that your concerns are appropriately addressed.

Parents phoning Berwick College should clearly identify themselves. The office will direct the call to the appropriate person. It should be noted that the College will not normally respond to anonymous or aggressive phone calls.

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)

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.

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.

## MAKING A COMPLAINT:

Where concerns cannot be resolved in this way, parents or community members may wish to make a formal complaint to the Assistant Principal overseeing the Learning Team or Domain Leader, or to the 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 and will then convene a resolution meeting with the aim of resolving the complaint together. The following process will apply:

1. **Complaint received:** Please either email, telephone or arrange a meeting to outline your complaint so that we can fully understand what the issues are. We can discuss your complaint in a way that is convenient for you, whether in writing, in person or over the phone.
2. **Information gathering:** Depending on the issues raised in the complaint, the Principal, Assistant Principal or Leading Teacher 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 or delegate 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, you may raise your concerns with the Department of Education. In some circumstances, the Principal or delegate may determine that a resolution meeting would not be appropriate.
4. **Timelines:** Berwick College will acknowledge receipt of your complaint as soon as possible 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.

Please note that unreasonable conduct (e.g. vexatious complaints) may need to be managed differently to the procedures in this policy.

#### **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 you are not satisfied that your complaint has been resolved by the College, or if your complaint is about the Principal and you do not want to raise it directly with them, then the complaint should be referred to the Department of Education by contacting Southern Eastern Regional Office on 1300 338 738 / [sevr@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:sevr@education.vic.gov.au)

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 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, our College 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 follows Department policy to ensure that record-keeping, reporting, privacy and employment law obligations are met when responding to complaints or concerns.

#### **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 2017
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
- Information Privacy Act 2000
- Wrongs 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 Service phone advisory service, available Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. This service can be accessed via phone 1300 361 008.

#### **EVALUATION:**

- This policy will be reviewed every two years.