



POLICY:	PARENT/ CARERS COMPLAINTS POLICY
DATE:	November 2019
ENDORSED BY COLLEGE COUNCIL:	
TO BE REVIEWED:	28 November 2022

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

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

SCOPE

This policy relates to complaints brought by parents, carers, students or members of our school community and applies to all matters relating to our school. In some limited instances, we may need to refer the complainant to another Department of Education and Training [DET] process where there are different mechanisms in place to review certain decisions, for example, expulsion appeals.

POLICY

SSC welcomes feedback, both positive and negative, and is committed to continuous improvement. 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 school community. We understand that it is in the best interests of students for there to be a trusting relationship between families and SSC.

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
- recognise that all parties, including the broader school community, have rights and responsibilities that must be balanced
- recognise that schools and the DET may be subject to legal constraints on their ability to act or disclose information in some circumstances.

Preparation for raising a concern or complaint

SSC 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 DET and SSC (see Further Information and Resources section below).

Complaints process

SSC is always happy to discuss with parents/carers and community members any concerns that they may have. In the first instance, the complainant should telephone the general office where your call will be directed to the appropriate person or send an email to strathmore.sc@edumail.vic.gov.au addressing your concerns. At no time should a complainant approach a staff member in the school without an appointment and first reporting to SSC Administration Office to sign in.

Where possible, school staff will work with you to ensure that your concerns are appropriately addressed.

If you would like to make a formal complaint, in most cases, depending on the nature of the complaint raised, SSC 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:** In line with the complaints process, telephone, email or write to SSC 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 Student's Team Coordinator or Student's Team Leader or Assistant Principal may need to gather further information to properly understand the situation. This process may also involve speaking to other members of the school community to obtain details about the situation or the concerns raised.
3. **Response:** Where possible, a resolution meeting will be arranged with the Student's Team Coordinator or Student's Team Leader or Assistant Principal 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.

Timelines: At SSC, complaints and concerns will be handled in a timely manner and with the intention to resolve the issues with a positive outcome. The school will address complaints as follows:

- It is our aim to respond to ALL complaints within 24 hours, but no longer than 48 hours
- Efficiently and fairly with a timeline for investigation and resolution communicated to all parties
- Promptly, within timelines agreed with the person with the concern or complaint
- In accordance with due process, the principles of natural justice and relevant regulatory frameworks
- After a complaint has been followed up, the resolution/decision will be communicated to all parties in writing (usually by email)
- It is good practice for serious complaints to be handled by two staff members, at least one of whom should be a Principal Class Officer

- SSC and its staff have the right to stop or refuse a complaint conversation/request with a parent, should the complaint have been raised at an inappropriate time or if a level of mutual respect and courtesy is not being followed.

Guiding Principles

The following principles guide the implementation of this policy:

- Dignity and respect between all parties, at all times
- SSC is committed to providing a safe and supportive work environment where everyone is treated with respect, fairness and dignity
- SSC will act to ensure the safety, security, health and wellbeing of all school community members
- SSC will apologise where required and work towards positive outcomes or shared understandings
- SSC may ask families to agree to disagree and move forward.

In some circumstances, SSC may also ask you to attend a meeting with an independent third party or participate in mediation with an accredited mediator to assist in the resolution of the dispute.

Escalation

If a parent/carer or community member is not satisfied that their complaint has been resolved by SSC, or if their complaint is about the Principal, then the complaint should be referred to the South West Victoria Region (SWVR) by contacting swvr@edumail.vic.gov.au

SSC may also refer a complaint to SWVR 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: [Parents Complaints Policy](#)

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

[Statement of Values](#)

[Child Safe Environment Policy](#)

There is a significant and valuable support resource from the DET with associated links:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx>

REVIEW PERIOD

This policy was last updated in November 2019 and is scheduled for review in November 2022.