



Parents and Students Complaints and Grievances Policy

POLICY CATEGORY: CHILD PROTECTION

PUBLIC POLICY
STATUS: APPROVED

CONTENTS

- 1. PURPOSE 2
- 2. SCOPE 2
- 3. WHAT IS A COMPLAINT? 2
- 4. WOODLEIGH SCHOOL’S COMMITMENT 2
- 5. PROCEDURAL FAIRNESS PRINCIPLES 2
- 6. INFORMAL COMPLAINTS RESOLUTION 3
- 7. HOW DO I MAKE A FORMAL COMPLAINT? 3
- 8. OUR INTERNAL COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCESS 4
- 9. ESCALATION 4
- 10. REVIEW OF DECISIONS 4
- 11. CHILD PROTECTION COMMITMENT..... 5
- 12. CONFIDENTIALITY 5
- 13. IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY 5
- 14. POLICY BREACH 5
- 15. RESPONSIBILITIES..... 5
- 16. RELEVANT POLICY AND REFERENCES 6
- POLICY APPROVAL STATUS 6

1. PURPOSE

Woodleigh School strives to be a community where communication takes place in an environment of transparency, respect, compassion, fairness and inclusion for all. Within the reality of the schooling experience, it is recognised that, from time to time, misunderstandings and issues will arise, and that these need to be resolved satisfactorily in partnership with members of the School community.

Our response should be founded on a belief in the dignity of each person, on respect, compassion, integrity and truth.

Woodleigh School welcomes feedback from all members of the community and takes all complaints or concerns that may be raised seriously. This policy is designed to assist you to understand our complaints handling process.

2. SCOPE

This policy is provided for our community including parents and students to assist you to understand our complaints handling process.

Implementing the procedural aspects of this policy applies to all Woodleigh School staff, volunteers, contractors and Board members.

This policy applies to all School activities during and outside of school hours. This includes School activities that are occurring on school campus, offsite, online, extracurricular, sport activities and programs, excursions, camps, interstate and overseas travel.

3. WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to Woodleigh School, related to our services or operations, or the complaints handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.

4. WOODLEIGH SCHOOL'S COMMITMENT

Woodleigh School is committed to handling and resolving complaints fairly, effectively and efficiently.

5. PROCEDURAL FAIRNESS PRINCIPLES

The School is committed to ensuring procedural fairness when determining an appropriate resolution to a complaint and will, where possible:

- respect the right of all parties to be heard and treated fairly
- respond to complaints promptly and thoroughly
- make sure all parties understand the complaints policy and the process
- if the complaint is about a person, give that person the opportunity to respond to any allegations
- conduct investigations impartially, substantiate the facts of the matter and maintain appropriate records
- appropriately communicate the reason for any decision and any action it intends to take
- meet privacy and other legal obligations
- record complaints on a secure database with relevant levels of authorised access.

Our program includes the establishment of an online complaints management register which allows us to effectively capture, manage and report on complaints. The regular analysis of complaints received and the implementation of rectification action, where deficiencies are identified, are key to our commitment.

When addressing a complaint, all parties are expected to:

- be considerate of each other's views and respect each other's role
- be resolution focused
- 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 School policy.

When any parties involved in the complaint do not demonstrate the expected behaviours it may not be possible to reach a resolution.

Vexatious, querulous, frivolous or malicious complaints are governed and managed by alternative processes. To deal with these types of complaints effectively, a customised strategy may be required which does not adhere with this policy. The Principal will determine the plan for the management of these types of complaints.

6. INFORMAL COMPLAINTS RESOLUTION

The vast majority of issues causing concern in schools can be handled quickly and in an informal manner. In most cases these issues can be resolved through informal discussions with appropriate staff members. Even if an issue is able to be resolved informally, all staff are required to log issues through our complaints management register so we are able to identify any systemic issues arising, and take appropriate rectification action.

Students experiencing issues with other students should contact their Homestead Tutor or Head of Homestead at Senior Campus, or Classroom Teacher at the Junior Campuses in the first instance.

If the issue cannot be resolved informally, a more formal process can be instigated by the complainant as identified below.

7. HOW DO I MAKE A FORMAL COMPLAINT?

If you have been unable to resolve a matter informally, or simply wish to make a formal complaint you can do so by any of the following means:

- Sending an email to:
 - the relevant Head of Campus;
 - headofseniorcampus@woodleigh.vic.edu.au
 - headofminimbahcampus@woodleigh.vic.edu.au
 - headofpenbankcampus@woodleigh.vic.edu.au
 - if it is about the Head of Campus then it should be sent to the Principal at principalsoffice@woodleigh.vic.edu.au and
 - if it is about the Principal, it should be sent to the Board Chair chair@woodleigh.vic.edu.au
- Writing a letter to Woodleigh School addressed to The Principal; or if it is about the Principal, addressed to the Board Chair
- Calling 03 5971 6100 and asking for your details to be sent to the Principal

All formal complaints will be logged into our register and managed in accordance with the following procedure.

8. OUR INTERNAL COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCESS

Step 1

All formal complaints are logged through our online complaints management register where they are screened by one of our Heads of Campus or, Board Chair in the case of a complaint directly related to conduct by the Principal or Member of the School Board.

Step 2

All valid complaints will be acknowledged in writing as soon as practicable, and always within 10 business days. They will be allocated a status, priority and target resolution date. It is our policy, where possible, to commence an initial investigation and make a preliminary determination within 10 business days of acknowledging the complaint.

Step 3

The Head of Campus shall conduct an investigation into the issues raised, following principles of procedural fairness, and make a determination.

The investigation will establish the circumstances of alleged events and explore options for resolution. Investigations may consist of interviews with involved parties or subject matter experts and/or documentation to determine the full circumstances leading to the complaint. Following completion of the investigation the Head of Campus will make a determination

Step 4

Following the determination, if appropriate, the Head of Campus shall formulate a resolution and provide a written response to the complainant. The matter will be closed if this response is accepted.

Step 5

If the initial response is not acceptable the matter will be reviewed internally by the Principal or the Principal's delegate, who may seek additional information or submissions from the relevant parties. The Principal or their delegate seek to resolve all disputes within 20 business days of the acknowledgement of the complaint. The matter will be closed if the response of the Principal, or their delegate, is accepted. Where appropriate, the matter may be escalated to the Board.

Step 6

All complaints received will be entered into our Complaints Register and, where appropriate, a corrective action request will be made to address any underlying processes which the complaints investigation revealed may require improvement.

Step 7

If the matter remains unresolved, the complainant may pursue external resolution alternatives.

9. ESCALATION

A complaint may be escalated during any stage of the complaints process. If a complaint remains unresolved within timeframes, we consider reasonable, it will be escalated, unless agreed otherwise by the parties involved.

Escalation of a complaint may include requesting an alternate staff member to review the complaint or the commencement of a formal investigation.

10. REVIEW OF DECISIONS

If a formal decision has been made and the complainant is not satisfied with the process and/or outcome the complainant can request a formal internal or external review. The internal review will independently re-consider all the information available and may conduct its own enquiries and provide a decision on the matter.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied the matter may be escalated to the Board (chair@woodleigh.vic.edu.au) (Board Chair).

11. CHILD PROTECTION COMMITMENT

We are committed to protecting students in our care. We have zero tolerance for child abuse and are committed to acting in children's best interest, keeping them safe from harm. All child abuse complaints must be addressed in accordance with the School Child Safety Policy and Child Protection: Mandatory Reporting Policy and Procedures, child protection laws and reporting obligations. Please report concerns to the Principal or if it involves the Principal, to the Board.

12. CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality applies with respect to both information relating to the person making the complaint, and, if relevant, to a person against whom a complaint is made. Woodleigh School is committed to maintaining the confidentiality of information throughout the complaints process.

Personally identifiable information about a complainant will only be made available for the purpose of addressing the complaint and (unless the complainant consents) will be actively protected from disclosure.

Anonymous complaints are accepted. However, should additional information be required to investigate the complaint, the absence of identifying and contact information may mean investigation cannot be undertaken.

13. IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY

This Parents and Students Complaints and Grievances Policy is available to parents and carers, students and our community who are able to access this policy on the School website, School staff portal or provided on request to any person.

All staff will be made aware of their responsibilities with regard to this policy. Training will be provided to staff on the commencement of their employment and annually on identifying risks and their responsibilities.

14. POLICY BREACH

A breach of this policy or procedure may lead to disciplinary action which is outlined further in our:

- Consequence and Breach Policy (*in development*)

All breaches, near misses and risks related to this policy should be reported to the Principal.

Compliance with this policy will be monitored by the Principal and Risk Manager and this may include independent audits and reviews.

15. RESPONSIBILITIES

Board The Board is Woodleigh School governing authority. The Board is responsible for endorsing this policy, ensuring this policy is reviewed and updated as needed and reviewing the School's compliance with this policy and child safety obligations, and is responsible for confirming this policy is consistent with Board guidelines.

The Principal The Principal is responsible for the School's compliance with this policy.

16. RELEVANT POLICY AND REFERENCES

Key relevant policies to support this policy include:

- Woodleigh School Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Woodleigh School Mandatory Reporting Policy & Procedures

Related legislative instruments

The following legislation, standards and regulations apply and this policy aligns with these mandated requirements:

- Ministerial Order 870;
- Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic);
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic);

POLICY APPROVAL STATUS

POLICY RISK RATING	POLICY REFERENCE	WOODLEIGH	BOARD
High	AE4128	Approved	Approved
DATE WOODLEIGH APPROVAL		DATE BOARD APPROVAL	
26 th April 2021		5 th May 2021	