



Parade College

Complaints Handling Policy

Background

Parade College (the College) as an Edmund Rice Education Australia Victorian School Limited (EREA VSL) entity that values and encourages positive and respectful relationships within our school community.

Within our College, relationships are founded in the gospel values of justice, compassion, reconciliation and kindness. Such relationships support the learning and development of students and value the innate dignity of each person. It is important that each member of the community, including staff, parent(s) guardian(s) students and volunteers, are contributors to the building of the College community. A timely and professional response to complaints is an effective means of encouraging communication, building trust and resolving issues for the betterment of all concerned.

The College understands that from time-to-time complaints arise regarding aspects of our school's operation of programs and activities and that it is important that all members of the community have the opportunity to be heard. The College commits to ensuring procedural fairness is observed when dealing with complaints and grievances.

Positive, clear and effective procedures and processes for resolving grievances between the College and community members can assist in building strong relationships, dispelling anxiety and ultimately providing students with a settled and happy learning environment.

Purpose

This policy is designed to assist all members of the College community including parent(s)/guardian(s) and students to understand how to make a complaint and outline the College's approach to managing complaints.

This policy seeks to ensure that the College manages and responds to complaints in a way that:

- promotes the health, safety and wellbeing of students
- ensures consistent and fair complaints management
- improves the outcomes of complaints with a focus on collaboration and resolution
- meets its legal and regulatory obligations.

Scope

This Policy and Procedure applies to the College environment, which includes, any campus of the College, online and virtual environments and other locations provided by the College or through a third-party provider for a child or student.

This Policy applies to all College employees, students, parent(s)/guardian(s), third party service providers, volunteers and contractors involved in the College Environment.

The College environment encompasses all factors that influence a student's learning and life on campus, including the physical surroundings, academic and social structures, and campus culture, ranging from buildings and facilities to psychological, social, and cultural settings such as peer interactions, faculty relationships, and administrative policies.

Matters outside the scope of this policy

This policy does not relate to matters where there are existing rights (and processes) for review. This includes matters relating to criminal activities, fraud and corruption, legal claims, privacy, suspensions and expulsions, critical incidents, emergency management, criminal offences, the School Community Safety Order (SCSO) Scheme, the conduct of the clergy or other persons involved in religious ministry and employment matters. Please see below details for further information regarding the process for specific matters.

Misconduct or serious misconduct

All complaints of alleged misconduct or serious misconduct by a teacher, staff member, contractors or volunteers should be reported to the Principal of the College.

Complaints about teachers can also be reported to the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) – the regulator in relation to the registration and investigation of serious misconduct (including conduct which is of a physical or emotional nature) of all teachers in the state of Victoria. If unsure whether the complaint constitutes serious misconduct by a teacher, contact the VIT on 1300 888 067 or vit@vit.vic.edu.au.

In some cases, certain actions which involve physical or emotional misconduct, such as unlawful assault or threats to the person, may constitute a criminal offence. These types of offences should be reported to and investigated by the police. Initial consultation with the Principal of the College may help to determine the appropriate course of action in these circumstances.

Child abuse (including sexual offences)

Child abuse includes any instances of physical or sexual abuse (including grooming), emotional or psychological harm, serious or significant neglect and family violence involving a child.

Complaints of alleged child abuse (including sexual offences) of children or school students should be reported to the Principal of the College.

There are legal obligations on all adults to report child abuse to police once a reasonable belief is formed that a sexual offence may have been committed against a child. Failure to disclose a sexual offence against a child is a criminal offence under section 327 of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.) (Crimes Act) and applies to all adults (18 years of age and over) in Victoria.

Communication with children under 16 years of age by teachers, staff or any other person to prepare or groom a child for future sexual activity is a criminal offence under section 49M(1) of the Crimes Act and

must be reported to the police. The offence of grooming applies to any person aged 18 years or over and does not apply to communication between people who are both under 18 years of age.

Complaints relating to reportable conduct

Legal obligations are imposed on the EREA VSL as the Head of Entity for Parade College to report to the Commission for Child and Young People (CCYP), and investigate allegations of reportable conduct, where those allegations are based on a person's reasonable belief that reportable conduct or misconduct involving reportable conduct has occurred. Reportable conduct includes the following:

- sexual offences against, with or in the presence of a child
- sexual misconduct against, with or in the presence of a child
- physical violence against, with or in the presence of a child
- behaviour that causes significant psychological or emotional harm
- significant neglect.

Complaints relating to a reportable conduct allegation which meets the requisite threshold and which involves a College employee (which amongst others, can include a teacher, principal, volunteer or contractor) must be reported.

Complaints of reportable conduct in relation to an employee (other than a principal) at the College should be reported to the Principal. Complaints of reportable conduct involving the Principal should be reported to the Chief Executive Officer, Edmund Rice Education Victorian Schools Ltd and emailed to complaints@erea.vic.edu.au. Further information can be found in the

Employment

Staff and volunteers should refer to the [EREA Internal Grievance Policy Guidelines](#) to address concerns and complaints.

Whistleblower disclosures

Concerns or disclosures must be addressed in accordance with [EREA's Whistleblower Protection Policy & Guidelines](#)

Enrolment

Concerns or complaints must be addressed in accordance with the College Enrolment Policy or the EREA VSL Suspension, Negotiated Transfer and Expulsion policy and procedures.

[Complaint Handling Form](#)

Complaints against the clergy or other persons involved in religious ministry

If the complaint relates to the clergy or other persons involved in religious ministry with the College, the complainant should contact and seek advice from the Professional Standards unit of the Vicar General's Office in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, 383 Albert Street, East Melbourne. Visit www.melbournecatholic.org or contact 03 9926 5677. If the person is a member of a religious order, the complainant should also contact the provincial head or professional standards office of that congregation or religious order.

Information Sharing

The College is a prescribed Information Sharing Entity (ISE) that may share information under the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) and the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS). As an ISE, the College may receive complaints from individuals in relation to its conduct as an ISE under the CISS or FVISS. It may also receive a complaint from another ISE.

The following information is recorded where a complaint is received under the CISS or FVISS:

- the date the complaint was made and received
- the nature of the complaint
- the action taken to resolve the complaint
- the action taken to lessen or prevent the issue from recurring
- the time taken to resolve the complaint
- further action taken if the complaint was not resolved

Anonymous Complaints

Complaints may be made anonymously or using a pseudonym.

However, we are unable to provide anonymous complainants with feedback on the progress and outcome of their complaint.

The College endeavours to address and respond to all complaints. In some situations, it may not be possible to fully address complaints that are made anonymously or without sufficient detail being provided to enable a review or resolution of the matter.

To ensure procedural fairness, respondents have a right to know the particulars of the allegations being made against them and be given an opportunity to respond to them.

Where possible, complainants are encouraged to give their names and to be reassured that we will deal with complaints professionally and in accordance with procedural fairness and confidentiality.

If the complainant wishes to remain anonymous, it is at the Principal's discretion what, if any, action will be taken. Anonymous complaints will be recorded in the same manner that all other complaints are recorded.

Principles

This policy relates to formal complaints raised by students, parent(s)/guardian(s) or members of the College community. It applies to all matters relating to the College, or the behaviour of any person within the school including employees, volunteers, contractors, families, students, subject to the below exclusions.

In the day to day running of the College, students, parent(s)/guardians(s) may also have queries, concerns or areas requiring clarification. These matters are not considered complaints, and the College encourages its staff to work collaboratively with students, parent(s)/guardian(s) and members of the College community to resolve informally with the wellbeing of the student at the centre. If a matter is unable to be resolved in this manner, then it may escalate to a complaint under this Policy and Complaint Handling Procedure.

In receiving and responding to complaints, the following guiding principles will inform and direct the College actions:

- a) Complaints of a school-based nature are best received and managed at the College level, with the parties involved expected to act in good faith and work together with respect and openness to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties.
- b) Complaints that are unable to be resolved at the local level will be escalated to the CEO of EREA VSL.
- c) Complaints are received and managed in a way that is culturally safe and sensitive to the diverse circumstances of children and students, as well as providing support to vulnerable children and students.
- d) Complainants can expect their concern or complaint to be taken seriously and to be responded to in a respectful, thorough and timely manner.
- e) Staff members and volunteers will be informed of formal complaints that are made about them.
- f) Complainants and the person/s against whom the complaint is made have the right to be heard and to expect that procedural fairness will be observed.
- g) Confidentiality, protection of privacy, respect, access, dignity and impartiality will form the basis of the complaints resolution process. The complaints resolution process will seek to achieve the restoration of good and respectful relationships.
- h) The best interests of the school community together with the interests of the individual will be taken into account.
- i) Recordkeeping, reporting, privacy and employment law obligations will be complied with when receiving and handling complaints.
- j) The College Codes of Conduct for parent(s)/guardian(s) and students outline the expectations of behaviour for members of the College community. The following procedures relate to any concerns that members of the College community may have – whether these are serious grievance issues, or relatively minor concerns.

Procedures

Procedures for the processes used to manage complaints at the College are documented separately as Parade College Complaints Handling Procedures and form Appendix 2 to this policy document.

Responsibilities

The following hold particular roles and responsibilities for the complaint handling process. Detailed roles and responsibilities are outlined in Appendix 1: Roles and Responsibilities:

- a) Principal,
- b) Risk and Compliance Committee,
- c) Parade College Complaints Officers,
- d) all Staff
- e) The Edmund Rice Education Australia (ERRA) Victorian Schools Ltd (VSL) Board
- f) EREA VSL Chief Executive Officer
- g) EREA VSL Complaints Officer

The College Complaints Officers are:

- a) Staff Matters – Assistant Principal, Staff Wellbeing and Development;
- b) Student Wellbeing Matters - Assistant Principal, Student Wellbeing; and

- c) Property, facilities, transport, fees or other matters – Business Manager

Providing feedback to the College

Feedback from the College community is important to us. There are many avenues to provide feedback to the College staff outside of this policy. These include:

- annual formal parent(s)/guardian(s) survey
- formally scheduled parent(s)/guardian(s) feedback forums
- meetings with the principal or other staff members to express concerns

Definitions

Complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with an action taken, decision made, service provided or handling of an issue at the College.

A complaint may be regarding:

- a. people matters; or
- b. property, facilities, transport, fees or other.

Informal Complaint

An informal complaint is a complaint that can generally be resolved, either at the time the complaint is made and received, or very shortly after it is received, by frontline or first point of contact staff, without the need for a formal investigation.

Formal Complaint

A Formal Complaint is a complaint that requires further investigation and/or a written acknowledgement and response, and are handled in accordance within the College Complaints handling Policy and Procedures.

College Environment

College environment means any of the following physical, online or virtual places, used during or outside school hours:

- (a) a campus of the school;
- (b) online or virtual school environments made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child or student (including email, intranet systems, software applications, collaboration tools, and online services); and
- (c) Other locations provided by the school or through a third-party provider for a child or student to use including, but not limited to, locations used for:
 - camps;
 - approved homestay accommodation;
 - secondary providers or another school; or
 - sporting events, excursions, competitions or other events.

Appendices

- Appendix 1: [Roles and Responsibilities](#)
- Appendix 2: [Complaints Handling Procedures](#)

Related Policies and Documents

The Complaint Handling Policy has linkages to other relevant College policies and professional expectations, as follows:

- [Child Safeguarding Program](#)
- [Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct](#)
- [EREA VSL Complaints Management Policy](#)
- [Parade College Privacy Policy](#)
- [Parent Code of Conduct](#)
- [Suspension, Negotiated Transfer and Expulsion of Students Policies and Procedures](#)
- [Student Behaviour Management Policy](#)

Legislation and Standards

- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005
- Crimes Act 1958
- Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017

Document control

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