

*This policy is compatible and compliant with The Brotherhood of St Laurence – High Street Centre Frankston, Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) and the broader Brotherhood of St Laurence policies.*

## **Policy Background and Purpose**

Students and members of the school community are valuable partners in the David Scott School, and their feed back is critical to ensure we meet their needs and expectations. This is part of developing a culture of learning and creating a quality improvement feedback loop.

This policy outlines how the David Scott School will deal with complaints and grievances in a fair, open and timely manner.

Complaints received are seen as an opportunity for continual improvement, and are welcomed as such. All feed back is taken seriously.

Complaints are valuable for maintaining our engagement and credibility with students, their communities and also our funding bodies. We will make all reasonable efforts to understand issues or concerns and address complaints when they arise.

The handling of complaints through this procedure can enhance student satisfaction. Encouraging feedback can offer opportunities to maintain or enhance student engagement, satisfaction, improve effectiveness and enhance our profile and reputation in the field.

This policy aims to ensure that:

- Students and parent/guardians/carers have access to an open, responsive and ethical complaints handling process
- Students and parent/guardians/carers have the opportunity to resolve minor complaints in an informal manner
- Students and parent/guardians/carers have a clear process for escalating a complaint to a formal procedure
- Students and parent/guardians/carers have a clear process to follow should they wish to lodge an appeal
- Students and parent/guardians/carers have the opportunity to have the complaint addressed by an independent arbitrator should the formal process not provide a satisfactory outcome
- The David Scott School resolves complaints in a consistent and systematic manner
- The David Scott School identifies trends to improve our operations and services

# Complaints and Grievances Policy

- The David Scott School creates a student centred approach to resolving complaints, and encourages staff to improve their skills in working with students

**Scope**

This policy applies to all students, and parents, carers or guardians of the David Scott School.

**Definitions**

**Feedback:** Students can give positive or negative feedback about the services via the client feedback systems or informally to staff. All feedback is collated and analysed to track trends and be used for quality improvement.

**Concern:** A concern is any initial issue or matter you wish to raise in relation to academic and non -academic matters. A concern is when you informally contact us (e.g. verbally or by email) and we can deal with your concern quickly to the satisfaction of all concerned without requiring further action.

**Grievance:** A grievance is a written statement of complaint. For the purposes of this policy, a grievance is a formal complaint. A grievance may be initiated from a concern that has not been dealt with to your satisfaction and therefore requires further action.

**Complaints:** A complaint is any type of problem, concern or grievance about the learning experience or the learning environment. Basically, anything which negatively affects a student's studies or experience at The David Scott School can be raised as a complaint. A formal complaint is where a student's negative feedback requires a formal investigation and response from management. This formal process may be instigated by the client, by a staff person or manager becoming aware of the student's complaint. A student complaint may be initiated by a student themselves or a parent or guardian on their behalf.

**Appeals:** The complaints process may not be used for appealing marks or assessments. However, if students are not happy with the actions or behaviour of staff they can use the complaints process.

**Staff Grievance:** Staff who have a "complaint" against a manager need to utilise the staff grievance process. Trainees who are employed by the BSL in traineeships need to use the staff grievance process if it pertains to their employment.

**Student:** For the purposes of this procedure, students of The David Scott School include students and their parents or guardians.

**Serious complaint:** A serious complaint is one where the nature of the complaint regards criminal activity, legal issues, serious ethical breaches, an issue leaving a person at risk of serious harm or death. These must be reported to the Principal immediately, who will inform the Chair of the School Council.

**Principles of Management**

Collaborative, Blame Free and Resolution Focused: We work with people to find solutions without blame.

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**Learning (Continuous Improvement):** We continuously learn from what we do. Even when a complaint is not substantiated we still need to ask what have we learnt about what students need and what we need to do better.

**Transparent and Accessible:** The process of (i) making a complaint, (ii) investigation and (iii) resolution is done in a transparent and open manner that considers issues regarding resources, language, culture, disability, or impairment. The reasons for any decisions of an investigation will be given to students.

**Timely:** We respond quickly to people's concerns with the aim of resolving them.

**Communication:** Students need to be kept informed of the progress and outcome of a complaint. Communication is critical for effective resolution of complaints.

**Respect, Listening and Understanding:** We aim to listen and understand people's concerns. The process of managing the complaint is just as important as the final outcome.

**Fairness and Justice:** The process aims to be fair and give justice to all involved in the complaint with procedural fairness. Persons investigating the complaint must not be the subject of the complaint.

The student, parent or guardian has the right to appeal the results of an investigation if they are not satisfied with the outcome. This will be referred to the next level of management or to an external body, if appropriate.

**Accountable:** We are accountable for our actions to our students, their communities, colleagues, management and funding bodies. The issues and learnings from complaints received will be responded to by the appropriate level of management.

**Open:** We are open to feedback from students and acknowledge our mistakes. Where possible we attempt to rectify the situation.

**Confidential:** Details of the complaint must be kept confidential for all parties (students and staff) with access only as required. Complaint documentation will be kept in a secure place and accessible only to staff handling the complaint. Information may be forwarded to the management team as part of ongoing improvement activities within the service.

## **Standards of Management**

**Accessible:** All information about making a complaint shall be reasonably accessible for students, taking into account their resources and capabilities. Where needed, an independent person may help the client with a complaint. Staff will make all reasonable efforts to assist students in making a complaint. Interpreters shall be offered for students where English is a second language.

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**Acknowledgement:** All formal complaints are acknowledged in writing by the service within 5 working days. The outcomes are formally notified either in person, by mail or email without delay.

**Timely:** We give prompt and timely responses to students making a complaint.

**Resolution:** All reasonable attempts will be made to resolve the complaint in 30 days of receipt of the complaint. Where a complaint cannot be resolved in 30 days the complainant is informed in writing and the reasons documented on the complaint file.

**Recording:** Full and accurate records of complaints shall be maintained and all follow up processes shall be securely kept, including outcomes and all correspondence. Any additional documents shall be kept with the complaint file for a 7 year period or as specified by legislation.

**Accountability and Reporting:** We report regularly to management about the receipt and progress of complaints to ensure we track trends in services and identify common themes for service and staff development. Each service will report on their complaints monthly to the School Council. A yearly report will be completed for the School Council.

## **Accountabilities**

Staff are responsible for reporting complaints to their line manager as soon as practical. The Principal or delegate will be responsible for:

- Management of the complaints process, including tracking the progress of a complaint
- Maintaining the Complaints Register
- Ensuring that complaints are entered on closure into a complaints register to inform ongoing improvement activities within the service
- Analysing feedback trends for the purposes of informing ongoing improvement activities within the service
- Providing monthly reports of the number and type of complaints and then a six monthly report to the School Council analysing the data about complaints, identifying any emerging trends and recommendations for service improvements.

## **Assessment**

All complaints will be rated according to their level of seriousness and risk at the time of receipt and allocation of the complaint. The Principal is responsible for assessing level of risk or seriousness and reporting these to the Chair of the School Council where needed.

### **Level 1 Low risk and low seriousness**

- Complaints that do not have the potential to escalate and/or cause harm to students
- A minor breach of policy and procedures.
- With the agreement of the complainant Level 1 issues can be dealt with informally or formally at the local level.

### **Level 2 Moderate risk/and or seriousness**

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- Complaints that are not classified as high risk or serious
- Complaints which have the potential to escalate
- Repeated, less serious breaches of policy and procedures
- Recurrence of similar minor complaints/disputes.

### **Level 3 - High risk and/or seriousness**

- A complaint that is deemed serious under the definition outlined in this policy
- A significant breach of policy and procedures
- Breach of duty of care to client.

Level 3 complaints need to be reported within 48 hours to the Chair of the School Council for consultation.

### **Information for students**

- All students and parents/guardians/carers will be informed on enrolment about the process for lodging complaints and feedback.
- Staff and volunteers shall have an understanding of the Complaints Policy and will be available to assist students, parents/guardians/carers in providing feedback to the service.
- Information is also accessible through the David Scott School Website

### **Making & Receiving a complaint**

- Complaints will initially be directed to the Assistant Principal who will discuss with the Principal
- The Principal will allocate a level of risk and seriousness for the complaint
- Depending on the level of seriousness, and with the agreement of the complainant, the Principal or delegate will consult with all parties, with a view to addressing the complaint informally
- In the event that a satisfactory resolution is not able to be reached informally, or the complaint is classified Level 2 or 3, the complaint will be documented in writing by the student or their representative. Independent school staff will be available to assist with this stage if required
- A copy of the complaint, signed by the student, will be provided to all parties
- Complaints can be communicated in a variety of ways including:
  - In person, verbally or in writing to a member of staff
  - In person, verbally or in writing to the Assistant Principal
  - In writing to the Principal
- If a student/parent/guardian/carer has difficulties with written or spoken English or needs any other form of assistance the staff

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shall either help them or make reasonable attempts to actively link them with an independent person who can assist them make a complaint

- When a complaint is received at the school staff will direct the complainant to the Assistant Principal, or record details of the complaint and then send this information to the Principal for follow-up. If the complaint is received by email at the [info@davidscottschool.vic.edu.au](mailto:info@davidscottschool.vic.edu.au) or any other address it shall be directed to the Principal
- Staff will not give out staff mobile numbers to students making complaints.

## Initial Response

- All formal complaints and their investigation will be recorded in the Complaints Register
- Complaints at the outset will be managed by the Assistant Principal and not escalated unless it is unable to be resolved at this level.
- All formal complaints will be communicated to the School Council.
- The Principal has initial responsibility for investigating the complaint and for the ongoing progress of the investigation. Should it become necessary to escalate the complaint, the Principal will pass the complaint to the Chair of the School Council
- All formal complaints will be documented and tracked
- Staff will not investigate complaints about themselves
- Should a complaint be made against the Principal, the matter will be addressed by the Chair of the School Council
- Staff must ensure that student's needs and interests are not prejudiced when a complaint is made. For this reason the complaint may be kept confidential from staff and may not be entered on the student file while the complaint remains open.

## Investigation

- Within 5 working days of receipt of the complaint the Principal or delegate will formally acknowledge the complaint in writing
- Staff tasked with investigating complaints will systematically gather and document all relevant information, including records of interviews, telephone calls, consultations and other follow up with all persons concerned.

## Resolution & Outcome

- The outcome needs to be communicated to the complainant either in person, by telephone or email/mail and followed up in writing within 30 days of receipt of the complaint
- If the complaint cannot be resolved within 30 days the reasons for this need to be communicated to the complainant. The Principal needs to consult with the Chair of the School Council and note these communications in the complainant case file.
- Complainants have the right to request an internal reconsideration of decisions have made in relation to their complaint. Options for

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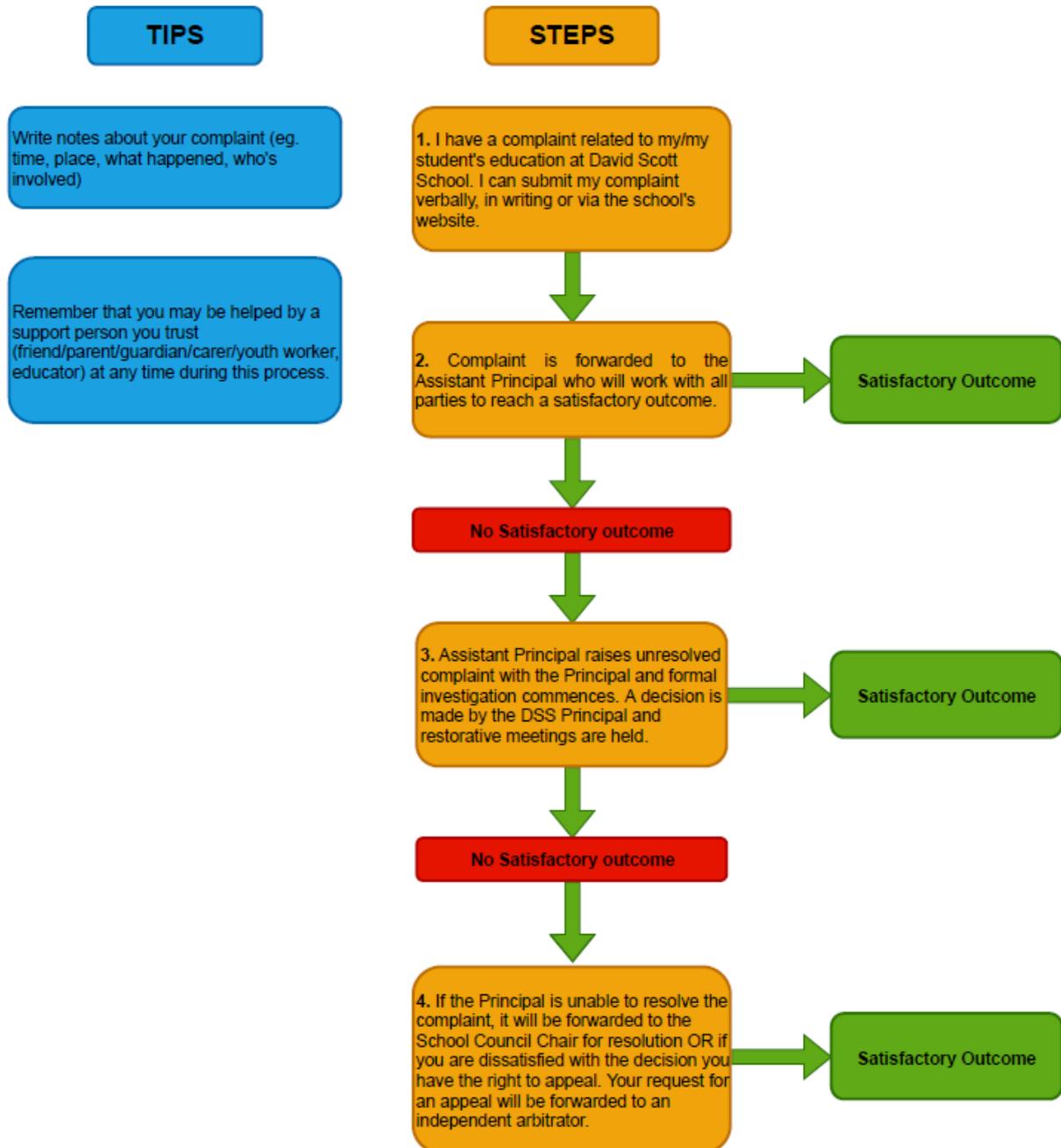
internal reconsideration of decisions and external complaint resolution are offered to any

- complainant who is not satisfied with the resolution of their complaint within the service
- Complaints with implications for professional registration shall be referred to the relevant professional body
- Complainants have the right to seek assistance from respective consumer and service care advocacy services in raising a complaint and staff will provide all the necessary information if needed
- Complainants wishing to appeal a decision will be referred to an appropriate independent arbitrator on request

## **Case Closure**

When the outcome is resolved the case will be closed and entered into the Complaints Register.

## Complaints and Grievances Policy and Procedure



<b>Approved by</b>	Catherine Arnold – Principal
<b>Approved Date</b>	October, 2020
<b>Review Date</b>	2022
<b>Authorising Department</b>	David Scott School
<b>Prepared by</b>	Craig Colgan – Business Manager
<b>Control File title</b>	Complaints and Grievances Policy
<b>Version No</b>	V 2.1
<b>Superseded documents</b>	V 1.0

## Policy Changes

<b>Date</b>	<b>Reason for Change</b>	<b>Made by</b>