



Craigieburn Secondary College

RESPECT RESPONSIBILITY and ACHIEVEMENT in our learning COMMUNITY

Complaints

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide an outline of the complaints process at Craigieburn Secondary College so that parents 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 Craigieburn Secondary College 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 process where there are different mechanisms in place to review certain decisions, for example, expulsion appeals.

POLICY

Craigieburn Secondary College 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 our school.

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.



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Preparation for raising a concern or complaint

Craigieburn Secondary 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 Craigieburn Secondary College (see “Further Information and Resources” section below).

Complaints process

Craigieburn Secondary 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 sub school/Assistant Principal. Where possible, school staff will work with you to ensure that your concerns are appropriately addressed.

Formal Complaint

Where concerns cannot be resolved in this way, parents or community members may wish to make a formal complaint to the Assistant Principal or Principal.

If you would like to make a formal complaint, in most cases, depending on the nature of the complaint raised, our school 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 through the front office with the Assistant Principal or Principal, 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 nominee 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:** The complainant will receive written communication informing them of the conclusion of the process. Where appropriate, and taking into account privacy considerations, the response should broadly outline the key findings. In some situations, it may not be appropriate to inform the complainant about specific details of the action taken against the employee for reasons of sensitivity or confidentiality.



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- 4. Timelines:** Craigieburn Secondary College will acknowledge receipt of your complaint as soon as possible (usually within two school days) and will seek to resolve complaints in a timely manner. Depending on the complexity of the complaint, Craigieburn Secondary 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, Craigieburn Secondary College will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

Resolution

Where appropriate, Craigieburn Secondary 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 school values that are intended to support the student, parent and school relationship, engagement, and participation in the school community.

In some circumstances, Craigieburn Secondary 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

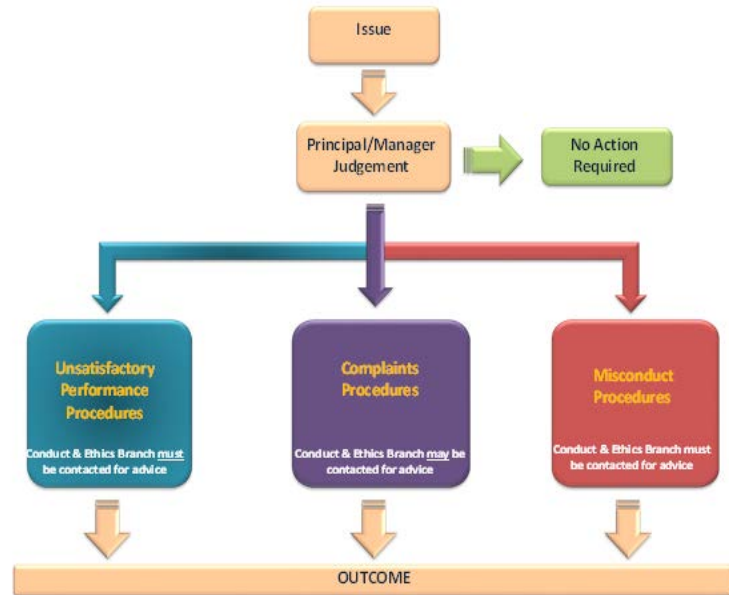
If you are not satisfied that your complaint has been resolved by the school, or if your complaint is about the Principal and you do not want to raise it directly with them, then the complaint should be referred to the North Western Regional Community Liaison Officer by contacting nwvr@education.vic.gov.au or 1300 338 691.

Craigieburn Secondary College may also refer a complaint to North Western Region 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: [Parent Complaints policy](#).



LOCAL COMPLAINTS PROCESS



Complaints against an employee may arise from:

- unprofessional conduct and/or unsatisfactory performance
- allegations of aggressive, demeaning or uncooperative behaviour
- a particular incident
- allegations of unlawful discrimination (for example, discrimination on the ground of a protected attribute such as race, religious belief, disability, sexual orientation, gender, family responsibilities) or racial or religious vilification
- allegations of unlawful harassment, including sexual harassment
- allegations of bullying, as defined by the Victorian WorkCover Authority
- decisions made, or not made, by the principal/manager that a complainant believes are unfair, unreasonable or inappropriate.

The assistant principal or principal must ensure that a complaint is dealt with in a way that is both procedurally and substantively fair.

It is important that all steps in the complaints process are documented.



Bringing an issue to the attention of an assistant principal or principal

1. Verbal Complaint

- Issue raised verbally with Principal/Manager– where possible the wishes of the complainant will be taken into consideration with regard to the actions taken, however in some circumstances the Principal/Manager may be required to take action as they need to satisfy legal or policy requirements.
- Where the complainant and the Principal/Manager determine that the issue can be resolved without formal action then Principal/Manager works with the complainant to resolve the issue locally – could involve coaching of complainant, mediation, review of processes.
- Following on from a verbal complaint where the issue is deemed to require a further action the complainant will be asked to document the specific complaint in writing. This will then be dealt with using the written complaints process.

2. Written Complaint

- Upon receiving a written complaint (this may include statements from students, staff, parents or other members of the community) a letter acknowledging the complaint is given to the complainant

In the management of complaints, misconduct and unsatisfactory performance matters, the principles of natural justice must be observed as necessary. The Guidelines incorporate these principles and also include the following:

- the right of an employee to know the allegation(s) being made against him or her
- the right of each party to be heard with respect to the allegations
- the right of each party to be treated fairly
- the right of the employee to have a support person present during meetings
- the right of each party to a decision-maker who acts fairly and in good faith.

Consistent with the *Fair Work Act 2009*, these Guidelines have been developed to ensure that the principle of a “fair go all round” is accorded to all parties. That is, the principles of procedural and substantive fairness underpin any investigation or inquiry into an employee’s performance or conduct. Page 6

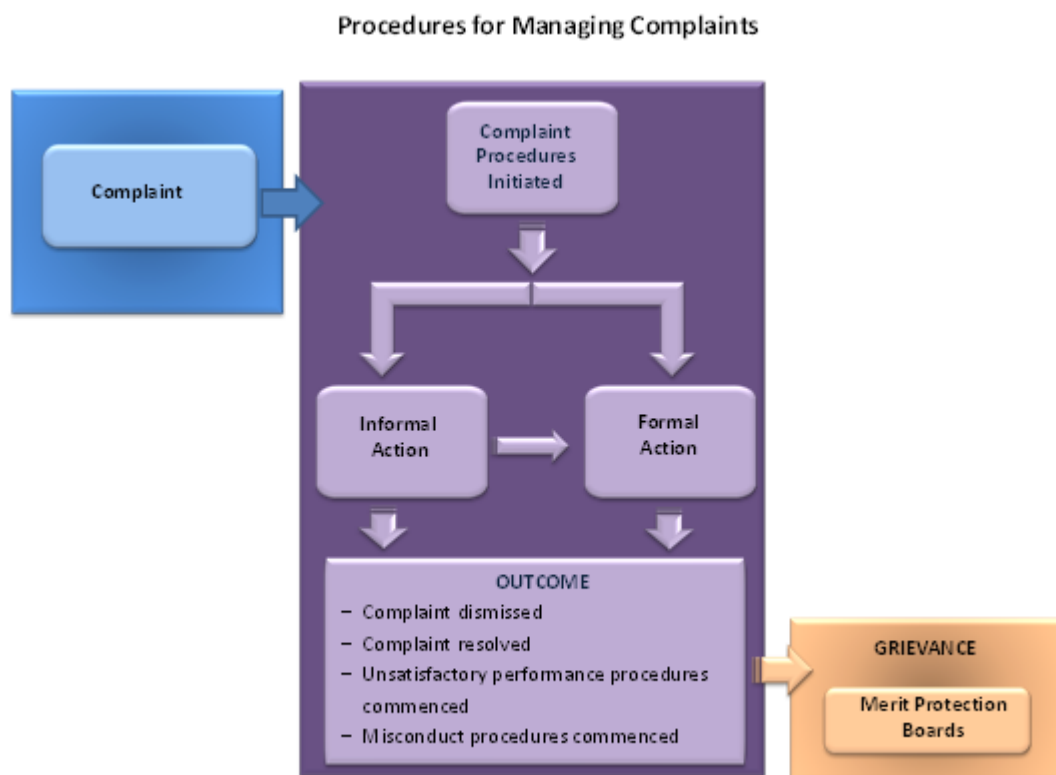
WHERE NO ACTION IS REQUIRED

- The complainant and the staff member who is the subject of the complaint will receive written communication that the complaint has been managed and that the outcome is that no further action is required.



Where action is required

- The assistant principal or principal will assess whether the course of action falls within Unsatisfactory Performance Procedures, Complaints Procedures (*formal or informal*), or Misconduct Procedures – as outlined in the flow charts above and below.
- The staff member who is the subject of the complaint can expect the process to be followed as outlined in the guidelines.



- The complainant will receive written communication informing them of the conclusion of the process.
- Where appropriate, and taking into account privacy considerations, the response should broadly outline the key findings. In some situations, it may not be appropriate to inform the complainant about specific details of the action taken against the employee for reasons of sensitivity or confidentiality.
- The Principal / delegate will communicate with the employee that a complaint has been made and the complaints process has begun. The principal / delegate will inform the employee of a follow up email for a meeting and who will be present.



Setting up the meeting

The employee will be told;

- You want to meet with them to advise of them of the issues that have been raised
- The time date and location of the meeting
- Who you will have in attendance
- They can bring a support person

Conducting the Meeting

The purpose of the meeting is to provide a letter to the employee outlining the allegation and including any supporting documentation. The employee may read the letter during the meeting, they may respond at that time and/or take the letter away and respond by an agreed date in writing. During this meeting advice regarding support such as the AEU, Colleagues, EAP.

From this meeting confidentiality requirements are in place

The letter

The letter to the employee outlines the allegation and requires a response to the allegation (s) in writing by a set date. The letter outlines the next steps in the process, i.e. the Principal/delegate considers the response as part of the wider investigation and determines the validity of the allegation.

- Further meetings may be required.
- Time line is communicated.
- Advised of possible advancement of the complaint.
- Confidentiality requirements are outlined.
- A letter to the employee confirming that their response has been received and a possible follow up meeting may be required

Outcome letter to the employee

The outcome letter outlines the allegations and the Principals/delegates decision regarding the validity of the allegation with supporting reasons. Refers to the professional document to which the complaint relates, and outlines actions that are to be followed in order to support the employee in prevention of future reoccurrence. Should the employee disagree with the assistant principal or principal's findings they are able to lodge a grievance with the Merit Protection Board.

Outcome letter to the complainant

The complainant receives a letter that outlines the determination and or actions taken.



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FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Statement of Values and Philosophy

Communication with School Staff

REVIEW PERIOD

This policy was last updated on 14/10/2020 and is scheduled for review in October 2024.