



COMPLAINTS POLICY

Council Ratification: 17/6/2020
Revised: 11/06/2020

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide an outline of the complaints process at Fairhills High School 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 Fairhills High School are managed in a timely, effective, fair and respectful manner.

SCOPE

This policy relates to complaints brought by parents, carers, students or other 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.

Complaints involving internal staff and school matters are not included under this policy. These are dealt with by following relevant Department workplace, employment and health and safety guidelines.

POLICY

Fairhills High School welcomes feedback, both positive and negative, and is committed to continuous improvement. We value and encourage open and positive communication with our families and are committed to understanding complaints and addressing them appropriately. We understand that it is in the best interests of students for there to be a trusting relationship between families and our school. We recognise that the complaints process outlined below provides an important opportunity for reflection and learning.

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

Detailed implementation guidelines are developed by the staff through the established consultative committee process. These are developed within the parameters of the Council

policy and can be changed as circumstances or strategies change without further reference to Council.

GUIDELINES

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.

Preparation for raising a concern or complaint

Fairhills High School 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 (on their website) and those available from Fairhills High School.

Complaints process

Fairhills High School 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 the specific subject teacher, Year Level Coordinator or Assistant Principal. Where possible, school staff will work with you to ensure that your concerns are appropriately addressed.

Where concerns cannot be resolved in this way, parents or community members may wish to make a formal complaint to the Principal or Assistant 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 General 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:** Where possible, a resolution meeting will be arranged with the Assistant Principal and/or 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.
4. **Timelines:** Fairhills High School will acknowledge receipt of your complaint as soon as possible by phone call or email (usually within two school days) and will seek to resolve complaints in a timely manner. Depending on the complexity of the complaint, Fairhills High School 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, Fairhills High School will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

The Department's Parent Complaint Policy requires the Fairhills High School will keep a written record of serious, substantial or unusual complaints that require resolution actions and document all steps taken to achieve agreement.

Resolution

Where appropriate, Fairhills High School 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, Fairhills High School 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 Department's North Eastern Regional Office (Inner East Melbourne) by contacting 1300 333 231.

Fairhills High School may also refer a complaint to the Department's North Eastern Regional Office (Inner East Melbourne) 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](#).

REVIEW PERIOD

This policy was last updated on 11/6/2020 and is scheduled for review in June 2023.