

POLICY: SCS 33 Parent concerns and complaints policy and procedures	Issued: March 2023
REVIEW: March 2025	Approved: Sue Holmes Principal

# PARENT CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURES



## Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact reception on 0397552007

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

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

## SCOPE

This policy relates to complaints brought by students, parents, carers, or members of our school community and applies to all matters relating to our school.

In some limited instances, we may need to refer a complainant to another policy or area if there are different processes in place to manage the issue including:

- Complaints and concerns relating to fraud and corruption will be managed in accordance with the department's [Fraud and Corruption Policy](#)
- Criminal matters will be referred to Victorian Police
- Legal claims will be referred to the Department's Legal Division
- Complaints and concerns relating to child abuse will be managed in accordance with our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures

## POLICY

Sherbrooke Community School welcomes constructive feedback, 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.

### Preparation for raising a concern or complaint

Sherbrooke Community 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 other policies and guidelines set by the Department and Sherbrooke Community School.

### Complaints process

Sherbrooke community school acknowledges that issues or concerns can cause stress or worry for students and impact their wellbeing and learning. Sherbrooke community school encourages our students to raise issues or concerns as they arise so that we can work together to resolve them.

Students with a concern or complaint can raise them with a trusted adult at school, for example, with their classroom teacher, year coordinator, wellbeing staff, Koorie Education Support Officer or identified support person. This person will take your concern or complaint seriously and will explain to you what steps we can take to try to resolve the issue and support you.

You can also ask your parent, carer or another trusted adult outside of the school, to talk to us about the issue instead. Information about our parent/carer complaints and concerns process is outlined further below. The parent/carer process also applies to students who are mature minors, refer to: [Mature Minors and Decision Making](#).

Other ways you can raise a concern or complaint with us include:

- talking to a member of the student representative council about your concern and any suggestions you have for resolving it
- participating in our Attitudes to School Survey

Further information and resources to support students to raise issues or concerns are available at:

- [Report Racism Hotline](#) (call 1800 722 476) – this hotline enables students to report concerns relating to racism or religious discrimination
- [Reach Out](#)
- [Headspace](#)
- [Kids Helpline](#) (call 1800 55 1800)
- [Victorian Aboriginal Education Association](#) (VAEAI)

## Complaints and concerns process for parents, carers and community members

### Preparation for raising a concern or complaint

Sherbrooke Community 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.

### Support person

You are welcome to have a support person to assist you in raising a complaint or concern with our school. Please advise us if you wish to have a support person to assist you, and provide their name, contact details, and their relationship to you.

### Raising a concern

Sherbrooke Community 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 your child's classroom teacher (or Home Group teacher for wellbeing issues). Where possible, school staff will work with you to ensure that your concerns are appropriately addressed.

Time should then be allowed for strategies agreed between the school and families to be implemented.

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 Principal or assistant Principal, to outline your complaint so that we can fully understand what the issues are.
2. **Information gathering:** Depending on the issues raised in the complaint, the Principal or assistant Principal 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 Principal or Assistant Principal to discuss the complaint with the objective of reaching a resolution satisfactory to all parties. 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:** Sherbrooke Community School will acknowledge receipt of your complaint as soon as possible (usually within 48 hours) and will seek to resolve complaints in a timely manner. Depending on the complexity of the complaint, Sherbrooke Community 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, Sherbrooke Community School will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

## Resolution

Where appropriate, Sherbrooke Community 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, Sherbrooke Community 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 a parent or community member is not satisfied that their complaint has been resolved by the school, or if their complaint is about the Principal, then the complaint should be referred to the North-East Victoria Region (NEVR) by contacting 1300 333 231.

Sherbrooke Community School may also refer a complaint to NEVR if we believe that we have done all we can to address the complaint.

## FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

For more information about the Department's *Parent Complaints* policy, including the role of the Regional Office, please see: [Parent complaints policy](#).

## Record keeping and other requirements

To meet Department and legal requirements, our school must keep written records of:

- Serious, substantial or unusual complaints

- Complaints relating to the Child Information Sharing Scheme and Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme, to meet regulatory requirements - refer to Child and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes for further information

Our school also follows Department policy to ensure that record-keeping, reporting, privacy and employment law obligations are met when responding to complaints or concerns.

## COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on school website
- Included in staff induction processes
- Included in transition and enrolment packs
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions
- Annual reference in school newsletter
- Discussed at student forums/through communication tools
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

## FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

The Department's Policy and Advisory Library (PAL):

- [Complaints - Parents](#)

The Department's parents' website:

- [Raise a complaint or concern about your school](#)
- [Report racism or religious discrimination in schools](#)

## POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	March 2023
Consultation	
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	March 2025

### **Parent concerns and complaints procedure**

Schools need to know if you have any concerns about your child's education. Teaching and learning works best when parents and schools work together to solve any problems.

With this in mind, the procedure for parents/carers with students at Sherbrooke Community School who have concerns over their learning and development are as follows:

- Carefully consider the issues you would like to discuss.
- Contact your child's classroom teacher to arrange a meeting. Most concerns are best dealt with by those who have the most contact with your child at school.
- Meet with the relevant teacher to outline your concerns.
- Allow some time for your concerns to be considered and for any strategies agreed at the meeting to be implemented.
- At the conclusion of this process, if you feel that your concerns have not been resolved, please contact the Assistant Principal who will investigate to determine if school can be of further assistance.

Sherbrooke Community School welcomes constructive feedback, and is committed to continuous improvement. We value open communication with our families and are committed to understanding complaints and addressing them appropriately.

Procedure for front office staff for parent enquiries for Principal/Assistant  
Principal:

When parents request a meeting with the Principal or Assistant Principal:

- Ask parent/carer what their enquiry is regarding: "And what is this regarding?"
- Tell them you need to know so you can ensure the appropriate member of staff can respond: "We need to know so we can make sure it gets passed on to the appropriate member of staff."
- Let the parent/carer know that you will pass the message on and the appropriate staff member will respond as soon as they are able to: "I'll make sure this gets to "person" and they will get back to you as soon as they are able to."