

# Complaints Policy

October 2022 – Final Draft





## Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact Virtual School Victoria on 8480 0000 or [feedback@vsv.vic.edu.au](mailto:feedback@vsv.vic.edu.au).

## Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide an outline of the complaints process at Virtual School Victoria (VSV) so that students, parents/carers and members of the community (including VSV staff) are informed about how they can raise complaints and concerns about issues arising at our school
- ensure that all complaints regarding VSV 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

VSV 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 growth.

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:

- raise and discuss issues in a courteous and respectful manner
- acknowledge that the goal is to achieve an outcome that is in the affected student's best interests and acceptable to all parties
- act in good faith and respect the privacy and confidentiality of those involved, as appropriate
- recognise that all parties, including the broader school community, have rights and responsibilities that must be balanced
- recognise that schools and the Department may be subject to legal constraints on their ability to act or disclose information in some circumstances.

# Complaints and concerns process for students

VSV acknowledges that issues or concerns can cause stress or worry for students and impact their wellbeing and learning. VSV encourages 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 a Learning Advisor, Student Coordinator, Leading Teacher or Principal Class. Refer to the [Key people](#) section on the VSV website. The student can choose who they contact to raise a complaint or concern depending on the nature of the issue, its urgency and who it might concern. This person will take a concern or complaint seriously and will explain what steps can be taken to resolve the issue and provide support, or refer it on to someone who can.

Students can also ask a 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:

- Report a Concern in Wellbeing in VSV Online
- emailing [feedback@vsv.vic.edu.au](mailto:feedback@vsv.vic.edu.au)
- talking to a member of the Student Representative Council (SRC) about your concern and any suggestions you have for resolving it
- participating in various student forums held every term
- participating in our Attitudes to School Survey (for Year 4 to Year 12)

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

VSV encourages parent/carers or members of the community who may wish to submit a complaint to:

- carefully consider the issues you would like to discuss and the most appropriate person to talk to
- 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 VSV (see “Further Information and Resources” section below).

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

VSV 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 teacher, Student Coordinators, Leading Teachers or Principal Class. Where possible, school staff will work with you to ensure that your concerns are appropriately addressed.

## Making a complaint

Where concerns cannot be resolved in this way, parents/carers or community members may wish to make a formal complaint to the Assistant Principals or Principal. Note that formal complaints should be directed to a member of the school's leadership team.

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 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 their 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 Principal, Assistant Principal or their nominee 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 might not be appropriate. In this situation, a response to the complaint will be provided in writing.

A face-to-face or virtual (e.g. Webex) resolution meeting provides the best opportunity to repair relationships between complainants and the school. Complainants should be provided with an opportunity to invite a support person. Preparing a written summary of a complaint together with the complainant can be a useful strategy for ensuring that all parties understand the issues in dispute, and reach an agreement about the most important issues that need to be addressed further.

4. **Timelines:** VSV 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, VSV 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, VSV will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

Please note that unreasonable conduct (e.g. vexatious complaints) may need to be managed differently to the procedures in this policy.

## Resolution

Where appropriate, VSV 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 (respect, empathy, collaboration and growth) that are intended to support the student, parent/carer and school relationship, engagement and participation in the school community.

In some circumstances, VSV 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/carer 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 Western Victoria Region by contacting [nwvr@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:nwvr@education.vic.gov.au) or 1300 338 691.

VSV may also refer a complaint to North Western Victoria 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: [Raise a complaint or concern about your school.](#)

## 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 the VSV website
- Included in staff induction processes
- Raising a concern or complaint (plain language statement) in VSV Connect/The Hub/The Lounge
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions
- Discussed at student forums
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request
- Annual reference in school newsletter (VSV Life)

## 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

<b>Created date</b>	<b>October 2022</b>
<b>Consultation</b>	School Council – Date:  School Community – Date:
<b>Endorsed by</b>	<b>Fiona Webster</b> Executive Principal  Signature: .....
<b>Endorsed on</b>	Date:
<b>Next review date</b>	<b>October 2024</b>



# VIRTUAL SCHOOL VICTORIA