MENTONE GIRLS' GRAMMAR

Complaints Handling and Resolution Policy

Help for non-English speakers.

If you need help to understand this policy, please contact the Head of Senior School or Head of Junior School.

Mentone Girls' Grammar acknowledges the Bunurong People of the South-Eastern Kulin Nations for their connection to land, sea and community, and for their custodianship of the land on which we live, learn and work. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people today.

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure Mentone Girls' Grammar School (the School) provides a clear, fair and accountable process for receiving, managing and resolving complaints. The School recognises that students, parents/guardians, staff and external stakeholders may at times have concerns about decisions, actions or interactions within the School community. We value such feedback as essential to continuous improvement and our commitment to excellence.

The School is committed to addressing complaints in a manner that is timely, transparent, respectful and efficient, ensuring procedural fairness for all parties.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to complaints made by internal and external stakeholders regarding the School's:

- Services or educational programs
- Decisions or actions
- Conduct of staff or students
- Fees or financial matters
- Treatment or interactions
- Handling of a previous complaint

This Policy outlines:

- How to make a complaint
- Informal and formal resolution pathways
- Roles and responsibilities
- Principles guiding complaint handling
- Expected timeframes
- Records management and privacy obligations
- Appeals pathways, including for international students

This Policy does not replace mandatory reporting obligations, child protection procedures, staff grievance processes, or other legislated reporting requirements.

3. Key Definitions

Complaint
An expression of dissatisfaction regarding a School product, service, decision, action, fee, treatment, or the handling of a previous complaint, raised with the intent of seeking redress or remedy. A complaint differs from a general grievance or suggestion, which may request change or improvement without necessarily seeking redress.

Complainant
Any person or entity lodging a Complaint, including parents/guardians, students, School Council members, employees, suppliers, and community members.

Unreasonable Complainant Conduct
Conduct that is vexatious, persistent or disproportionate; oriented towards conflict; significantly outside expectations of confidentiality, cooperation, courtesy and respect; or demands staff time/resources unjustified by the nature or significance of the Complaint.

Complaint Record
The official record of a Complaint, including:

- Complainant details and nature of the Complaint.
- Dates of receipt, actions taken, meetings/interviews and communications.
- Notes, evidence and documentation collected.
- Outcomes, decisions and rationale.
- Copies of written responses.
- Follow up-up actions and monitoring requirements.

4. Principles

The School manages Complaints according to the following principles:

Procedural Fairness

- Equal and respectful treatment of all parties.
- Adequate notice of process and relevant details provided to the respondent.
- Substantiation of facts; each party has a right to be heard.
- Impartial, unbiased decision-making, and protection from victimisation.

Accessibility and Participation

- Clear information about how to make a Complaint.
- Reasonable support to enable participation, including support persons.
- Information collected is used solely for resolving the Complaint.

Confidentiality and Privacy

- Information is shared strictly on a need-to-know basis.
- Records are stored securely in accordance with the School's Privacy Policy.
- Breaches of confidentiality may result in disciplinary action.

Responsiveness

- Acknowledgement and updates provided in a timely manner.
- Clear communication of process, progress, outcomes and next steps.

Efficiency

- Issues are addressed promptly to minimise escalation and delay.
- Processes are streamlined and proportionate to the nature of the Complaint.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

The Principal (or delegate) or Head of School:

- Oversee the School's complaints framework in line with legislation, policies and child safety requirements.
- Review formal Complaints, determine actions and whether investigation/external advice is required.
- Ensure procedural fairness and impartial decision-making.
- Delegate investigations to suitably trained staff while retaining accountability.
- Make final decisions on formal Complaints and issue written responses.
- Ensure secure records management and compliance with regulatory requirements.
- Escalate matters to external authorities when required (e.g., child safety, reportable conduct, legal compliance).
- Promote respectful communication and early resolution.

All Staff:

- Respond professionally and respectfully when a Complaint is raised.
- Listen actively, clarify issues and seek early resolution where appropriate.
- Assess whether a matter should be managed informally or formally.
- Record key information accurately and maintain confidentiality.
- Escalate risks, misconduct or serious allegations to senior staff (e.g., Principal, HR, Child Safety Champion).
- Communicate outcomes clearly, including next steps or avenues for review.

Students, Parents/Guardians and Community Members:

- Raise concerns respectfully and in good faith.
- Provide accurate, relevant information and supporting documents.
- Follow the appropriate complaint pathway.
- Cooperate with reasonable requests for information or meetings.
- Respect confidentiality and avoid defamatory public commentary (e.g., social media).
- Use the process for genuine concerns and respect final decisions or use appropriate appeals pathways.

Support Person

A complainant may nominate a support person (e.g., family member, friend, advocate). The support person may:

- Provide emotional support and help the Complainant feel comfortable during meetings.
- Assist the Complainant to clarify issues, take notes, and organise their thoughts.
- Ensure the Complainant understands the process, next steps, and any information provided.
- Act as an observer, helping ensure respectful and fair conduct throughout discussions.
- Request rest breaks during meetings when required by the Complainant.
- Not speak on behalf of the Complainant unless invited to do so and not disrupt the process.
- A support person must not disrupt proceedings and must maintain confidentiality.

6. How to raise a Complaint

General Complaints
Lodge via the School's Complaints Handling Form on the School website.
External parties and community members may also use this form.

Child Safety and Wellbeing Concerns
Where allegations involve child abuse or reportable conduct, the School will comply with mandatory reporting obligations and the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

Students
First raise concerns with their Class or Tutor Group Teacher, who will inform the relevant Head of Year or Head of School.

If uncomfortable doing so, students may approach the Head of Year, Head of School, Deputy Principal or Principal.

International Students
Refer to the International Student Complaints and Appeals Policy and International Student Complaint Resolution Policy.

7. Informal and Formal Complaints

Informal Complaints
Used to resolve concerns early and collaboratively (e.g., discussion, mediation, clarification). Typically raised verbally or via simple email and suited to less serious matters where there is no risk of harm.

Formal Complaints
Submitted in writing through an established procedure (e.g., web form/email). Formal matters are documented and may require investigation, evidence gathering and written outcomes. Suitable for issues that are serious, ongoing, systemic, or not resolved informally.

Examples

- *Informal*: minor staff or student grievances; misunderstandings about communication, schedules, excursions, homework expectations or processes; operational or service issues (e.g., canteen, uniform supply, timetabling, car park procedures); initial academic concerns.
- *Formal*: unresolved Informal Complaints (or older than 14 business); serious misconduct; risks to child health, safety or wellbeing; allegations of abuse; repeated bullying/harassment (including cyber); breaches of law (e.g., privacy, discrimination, child safety); inappropriate discipline; privacy breaches; workplace sexual harassment; WHS breaches; systemic/governance issues; International Student Complaints (including from Homestay Providers), where applicable.

8. Timelines

Informal Complaints: resolved within **14 business days during term time**. If unresolved, escalate to the Formal Complaints Process.

Formal Complaints: a formal written response will be provided within **30 business days during term time** from the date the written Complaint is received.

If an investigation extends beyond this period due to complexity or external involvement, the School will provide reasonable updates.

9. Informal Complaints Process

1. **Receipt and triage** by the relevant staff member, Head of Year/Head of School, or appropriate leader.
2. **Clarify** issues and seek early resolution (e.g., discussion, mediation, clarification).
3. **Record** relevant information at a level of detail appropriate to the nature and seriousness of the matter.
4. **Advise** the Complainant by providing a written summary provided upon request or where an action plan is required.
5. **Escalate** if unresolved within **14 business days during term time** and refer to the Formal Complaints Process.

This process may be facilitated by a member of the Senior Management Team (SMT), Human Resources, the Head of School or Head of Year, depending on the nature of the issue.

10. Formal Complaints Process

1. **Receipt and allocation**
   - The Principal or delegate will review the Complaint and determine the appropriate course of action.
   - The Principal or delegate may delegate investigation to a specialist staff member or SMT member.
2. **Investigation**
   - Collect relevant information and evidence; offer each party an opportunity to be heard.
   - Ensure impartiality, confidentiality and procedural fairness.
   - Maintain a written record of meetings, interviews and correspondence in secure School systems (e.g., confidential OneDrive and relevant Synergetic records).
3. **Outcome and written response**
   - Provide a **written response within 30 business days during term time** outlining the decision, reasons and any actions/remedies.
   - Advise of avenues for appeal or further review where applicable.
4. **Follow up and monitoring**
   - Implement agreed actions promptly.
   - Monitor as required and close the Complaint record when complete.

11. Investigations

Investigations are conducted fairly, impartially and objectively. Decision makers remain neutral and base findings on facts and evidence. All parties are treated respectfully and afforded procedural fairness, including the opportunity to respond to concerns.

12. Unreasonable Complainant Conduct

Where conduct is unreasonable (e.g., vexatious, abusive, persistently repetitive without new information, or disproportionate demands on resources), the School may:

- Set communication boundaries or nominate a single point of contact.
- Limit frequency/length of communications to what is reasonable and necessary.
- Decline to engage on issues already decided unless new, relevant information is provided.
- Take steps to ensure safety and wellbeing of staff and students, including ceasing contact where required.
- Where appropriate, refer the matter to external authorities.

13. Authority to Issue Written Responses

Only the Principal (or delegated representative) is authorised to provide the final written response to the Complainant and any other relevant parties for Formal Complaints.

Informal Complaints: outcomes are generally advised verbally with a written summary provided upon request or where a documented action plan/summary is required.

Formal Complaints: receive a written response outlining the outcome, reasons and next steps.

Content of written responses usually includes:

- A summary of the Complaint.
- Investigation findings.
- Reference to relevant legislation, policies or procedures considered.
- The School's decision and reasons.
- Options for appeal or further review (where applicable).

14. Appeals and Final Reviews

Domestic Students / Community

- The Principal's written response constitutes the School's final decision.
- If a Complainant believes that procedural fairness was not observed, they may request a review of the process by writing to the President of the School Council within 14 business days during term time of receiving the decision. This review focuses solely on whether the proper process was followed; it does not reassess the facts. The Principal's substantive decision remains final.

Student Appeals to External Bodies

- After internal processes are exhausted, a student may contact the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) for independent advice and guidance.
- Where an external appeal is upheld, the School will implement the outcome promptly and provide written confirmation to the Complainant.

International Students

- Refer to and apply the School's International Student Complaints and Appeals Policy.
- If unresolved after informal and formal processes, an independent panel comprising School Council members will be convened to review and decide.
- The international student's enrolment remains active during the complaints and appeals process.
- International students may contact the International Students' Ombudsman for a free, independent and impartial external review.
- Where an external appeal is upheld, the School will implement the outcome promptly and provide written confirmation.

15. Records Management

Complaint Records are maintained in secure School systems (e.g., OneDrive, Synergetic) in accordance with the School's Privacy Policy and applicable recordkeeping standards, including those set by the Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) and any other relevant regulatory or statutory requirements.

Where a Complaint involves a staff member or parent, a copy of the written response will be stored in Synergetic under the relevant profile.

16. Privacy and Access to Information

The School will not collect personal information that is unnecessary for addressing a Complaint. Access to investigation information may be declined where:

- There is a reasonable belief it may pose a serious threat to an individual's safety or to public health/safety.
- Access would unreasonably impact another person's privacy.
- The request is frivolous or vexatious.
- The information relates to ongoing/anticipated legal proceedings and is not otherwise discoverable.
- Disclosure would prejudice negotiations.
- Providing access would be unlawful or is restricted by law or a court/tribunal order.
- The information contains evaluative content generated in a sensitive decision-making process.
- Access would prejudice appropriate action or enforcement activities.

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17. Review

This Policy will be reviewed biannually, or earlier where required by law, regulation or changes to School operations. Feedback from Complaints will inform continuous improvement of School policies and practices.

18. References and Related Policies

Mentone Girls' Grammar Complaints Form – via the website
Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
Child Safety and Wellbeing Response and Reporting Procedures
Child Safety and Wellbeing Raise a Concern form – via the website
International Student Framework

19. Governance

Policy Number	POL_SCH_COMP_5		
Policy Owner	Principal	Policy Approver	SMT/GRCC/Council
Approval Date	February 2026	Next Review	February 2028
Review frequency	Every 2 years		
Policy Management	This policy is administered by the Principal		

Revision History

Document Number	Review Period	Review Outcomes	Approval
POL_SCH_COMP 1	October 2014	Original Version	RCM/Council
POL_SCH_COMP 2	unknown	Scheduled Review	RCM/Council
POL_SCH_COMP 3	August 2020	Scheduled Review	RCM/Council
POL_SCH_COMP 4	August 2022	Scheduled Review	RCM/Council
POL_SCH_COMP_5	December 2025 - February 2026	Review and update in line with current procedures	• SMT – 18 Feb. 26 • GRCC – 25 Feb. 26 • Council – 24 March 26 (scheduled)