COMPLAINTS & CONCERNS, PARENTS POLICY

Rationale

- The underlying premise of the complaints management policy is that parent concerns and complaints are best and most effectively managed at the school level.
- This policy does not apply to matters about which there are existing rights (and processes for) review and appeal, such as matters relating to serious employee misconduct, student critical incidents and criminal activities.
- Complaints are an important way for the community to provide information and feedback to a school.
- When addressing parent/guardian concerns or complaints, DET and its schools must:
  - abide by relevant regulatory and legislative frameworks
  - maintain confidentiality
  - balance the rights and responsibilities of all parties
  - ensure all parties are aware of their right to advocacy
  - act in a manner that seeks to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties.

Purpose

- To ensure Point Cook Senior Secondary College responds to parent concerns and complaints in an effective and timely manner.
- To ensure the school complies with the legislative requirements of
  - Education and Training Reform Act 2006
  - Education and Training Reform Regulations 2007
  - Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
  - Information Privacy Act 2000
- To ensure the school complies with DET policy and guidelines in relation to parent complaints and concerns.

Definition

A ‘concern’ is an area of interest because of its importance and effect which is raised informally.
A ‘complaint’ is an expression of grievance or resentment where the complainant is seeking redress or justice.

Implementation

- The school will differentiate between ‘a concern’ and ‘a complaint’.
- Parents will be regularly informed of the school’s procedures about how to make a complaint.
- Concerns and complaints will be addressed in line with the Department’s 2006 Dignity and Respect Statement. The statement says that:
  “The Department is committed to providing safe and supportive work environments where diversity is valued and everyone is treated with respect, fairness and dignity. Discrimination, sexual and other forms of harassment, bullying, violence and threatening behaviour are unacceptable. All employees, students, parents and visitors in schools and other Departmental workplaces are expected to act accordingly. The Department (which includes schools) and School Councils, will act to ensure that the safety, security, health and wellbeing of all employees, students, parents and visitors in schools and other Departmental workplaces are protected.”
- When addressing concerns and complaints the school will:
  - maintain the confidentiality of all parties, in line with Departmental policy and legislative requirements
  - acknowledge that their common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
  - act in good faith and in a calm and courteous manner
- show respect and understanding of each other’s point of view and value difference, rather than judge and blame
- recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced

- The Principal will ensure that parents are aware of their right to advocacy when communicating the issues involved in their complaint and in negotiating an outcome.
- The school will endeavour to build positive relationships with parents and the school community.
- As Point Cook Senior Secondary College wishes to prevent the complainant from having to repeat the complaint over and over, the first person he/she deals with will:
  - listen to the complainant carefully and with an open mind
  - treat them with respect and courtesy, take them seriously and let them have their say
  - make it clear that the complaint will be taken seriously
  - explain the procedures for resolving complaints
  - state what can be done, not what cannot be done
  - ask the complainant if the matter is a complaint or a concern
  - take notes
  - if the complaint involves complex issues which are difficult to understand on first hearing, ask the complainant to put the complaint in writing
  - check the facts to make sure they are clear and beyond doubt
  - make a mutually convenient time to meet, if a further meeting is required
  - give the complainant their name and ensure the complainant’s name is known and used
  - summarise the first contact and especially the action the complainant can expect e.g. “Thank you for the information. We have agreed that you and the Principal will meet on ...
  - The issues you’d like to discuss are .......

- In dealing with complaints, the school will:
  - maintain the confidentiality of all parties, in line with DET policy and legislative requirements
  - acknowledge that their common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
  - act in good faith and in a calm and courteous manner
  - endeavour not to apportion blame
  - recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced
  - have a strategy for recognising a stalemate
  - act courteously, fairly, efficiently, promptly and in accordance with DET’s policy and guidelines and the legislative framework

- If the complaint cannot be resolved by the complainant, school and Regional Office working together, the complainant may refer the complaint to the Deputy Secretary, Office for Government School Education, as per advice provided on DET’s parent complaints website.
- For further information on managing parent complaints and concerns please refer to the document Addressing Parents’ Concerns and Complaints Effectively: Policy and Guides April 2009.
- If international students are enrolled, the school will maintain an international student’s enrolment (to comply with student visa conditions) and appropriate student welfare support arrangements until the relevant complaints or appeals process is resolved. For further information, see: ISP Quality Standards and School Resources - International Student Program Quality Standards for Schools, Quality Standard 8 - Complaints and appeals.

**Evaluation**

- This policy will be reviewed as part of the school’s three-year review cycle or if guidelines change (latest update mid-April 2015).

This policy was ratified by School Council on **18 August 2016**

References: