



Complaints & Grievances (Parent & Community) Policy

Purpose

CSV Limited and its schools, Casey Grammar School, Balcombe Grammar School and Clyde Grammar (collectively referred to as “CSV”) are committed to providing accessible, fair and timely processes, for managing complaints and grievances. CSV takes all complaints and grievances seriously and aims to ensure that concerns, complaints and grievances are handled objectively and with sensitivity.

CSV is a working community and inevitably concerns, complaints, grievances, disputes or allegations of inappropriate behaviour arise. The purpose of this policy is to provide clear and transparent information about how these matters can be raised, and how they will be managed and resolved.

Scope

Students, parents and other members of the school communities are entitled to make a complaint under this policy if they perceive they have experienced behaviour by staff, students or other school community members, or encountered a school process or decision that is unsatisfactory or not in accordance with CSV policies, values and expectations.

This policy does not apply to the following:

- Staff complaints and grievances, which should be raised in accordance with the *Complaints & Grievances (Staff) Policy*.
- Concerns about child abuse, reportable conduct and other student safety and wellbeing matters, which will be addressed in accordance with the *Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy*.
- Decisions or policies of the Board, which will be addressed by the Board in the proper course of its business.

Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, a *concern*, *complaint* and *grievance* are different ways in which a member of the School community may raise an issue with CSV. These terms may be used interchangeably in some contexts.

A *concern* is an informal expression of an issue, question or dissatisfaction that a person would like the School to consider or address. Concerns are generally raised and resolved at the earliest opportunity, often through discussion, clarification, explanation or an agreed course of action.

A *complaint* is a more formal expression of dissatisfaction regarding a School decision, action, behaviour, process or outcome, where the person raising the matter is seeking a response, review or resolution.

A *grievance* generally refers to a complaint involving a perceived unfairness, significant concern, adverse impact, or allegation that a policy, process, expectation or obligation has not been appropriately applied. Depending on the circumstances, a grievance may require a more formal assessment or investigation process.

CSV will determine the most appropriate process for managing each matter based on its nature, seriousness, complexity and circumstances, rather than the terminology used by the person raising the matter.

CSV LTD

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Casey Grammar School

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Clyde Grammar

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Guiding Principles

When raising a concern with CSV, a member of the school community can expect to:

- Be treated with respect and courtesy.
- Have their concerns taken seriously, considered impartially (with consideration of any power imbalances), and dealt with on the merits.
- Have their concern dealt with in a confidential and timely manner.
- Be supported by CSV during the complaints handling process, with a focus on maintaining the safety and wellbeing of any students involved.
- Be kept informed of the progress and outcome of the complaint.
- Not be victimised, or subjected to reprisal, for raising complaints in good faith and in accordance with this policy.

In return, CSV expects that a member of the school community who raises a concern will:

- Treat others with respect and courtesy. This expectation applies to verbal communication, written communication, tone, body language and conduct.
- Raise concerns in the appropriate way, having regard to this policy, and as soon as practicable after the event giving rise to the grievance has occurred.
- Provide complete and factual information about the concern.
- Act in good faith to achieve a reasonable outcome.
- Be understanding and accepting of any outcome reached, being mindful that CSV must sometimes manage the interests of other individuals (including students) when making decisions and may be privy to confidential information not known to the person raising the grievance.
- Recognise that CSV entrusts qualified educators and other professionals to make academic, disciplinary, extracurricular, pastoral and wellbeing decisions in accordance with their professional responsibilities.
- Recognise that just as CSV will seek to respect the privacy of the complainant, CSV will also respect the privacy of other members of the School community. This means there are limits to what information CSV will share when issues arise. This should not be interpreted as CSV not taking an issue seriously or seeking to withhold information from a complainant.

Resolution Framework

CSV aims for the prompt resolution of all concerns, ideally without the need for a formal complaint to be made. CSV's framework for resolution of a complaint involves a three-stage process. Each stage is intended to be practical and non-adversarial.

Stage 1: A concern is raised with the school.

Stage 2: A formal written complaint is made to the Principal.

Stage 3: A review by the Chair of the Board is requested.

The procedural steps for each stage will be implemented at CSV's discretion, depending on the circumstances of each situation.

Stage 1: Raising a Concern

Concerns should always be raised directly with the relevant CSV School. The School must be aware of a concern and of its substance in order to address it.

CSV believes that a concern is often best resolved closest to its source. Where a concern relates to a student, it should be raised with the relevant teacher in the first instance. However, depending on the nature and severity of an issue, and whether the relevant teacher has a conflict of interest, concerns may instead be raised with an alternate senior staff member. For guidance on who to contact in the first instance please see **Appendix A**.

When raising a concern:

- Clearly identify the issue or problem prior to contacting the School.
- Identify the party or parties involved.
- Consider the practical outcomes sought, while being realistic and open to alternate outcomes.
- Consider whether there are any interim measures that may be appropriate whilst the School reviews the complaint.
- Where possible, request a face-to-face meeting rather than relying solely on written communication.
- Remain courteous and calm. Complainants are encouraged to pause; review and reconsider correspondence associated with their grievance if emotions are heightened.

Acknowledgement

Whilst CSV is committed to dealing with all concerns in a timely manner, response timeframes can vary due to the nature of the grievance and surrounding circumstances. Staff may not be able to respond immediately, particularly when raised outside of school hours or during term breaks but will do so as soon as practicable.

Investigation

When dealing with a concern, CSV's objective is to achieve a resolution by understanding the nature of the issue, the party or parties involved, and the nature of any agreeable solutions.

CSV will determine the appropriate process for assessing and investigating each concern on a case-by-case basis. Investigation will be undertaken by the most appropriate staff member, or by an independent third party where CSV considers this to be appropriate or necessary. All investigations will be conducted in a fair and impartial manner.

The nature and extent of any investigation will depend on factors including, but not limited to, the seriousness of any allegation, the information available, the potential risks to individuals or CSV, any legislative and/or child safety obligations.

Parents acknowledge that CSV has the discretion to determine the appropriate steps to investigate a concern. This may include discussing the matter with a parent-complainant's child or other students, where it is considered appropriate to do so. CSV retains the right to conduct these discussions without prior notification to the parent.

Ensuring Procedural Fairness

Where a complaint has been lodged against a person, that person will be informed of the nature and content of the grievance and will have the right to respond. Procedural fairness requires that allegations are not assumed to be substantiated until appropriately investigated.

Whilst sanctions, where applicable, will not be determined until an investigation has been completed, the Principal retains the right to suspend a student and/or staff member should the matter under investigation be of sufficient severity and/or involve safety concerns.

Outcome

Complaints may be resolved in a variety of ways and will depend on the nature and circumstances of the complaint, the findings of the review, and the outcome sought by the complainant. As it is neither practical nor appropriate to prescribe every possible outcome, CSV will determine the most appropriate and proportionate outcome on a case-by-case basis, having regard to its policies, legal obligations, the principles of procedural fairness, and the needs of the School community as a whole.

Where a mutually agreed outcome between CSV and a complainant is not appropriate, or possible, the person handling the concern will make a decision that best aligns with CSV's policies, procedures and/or legal obligations.

Where appropriate, CSV will communicate the outcome of the complaint in writing (usually within three (3) business days of the outcome being reached).

Stage 2: Formal Complaint

Where a complainant is not satisfied with the way their concern has been handled, a formal written complaint may be made. Formal Complaints should be made as soon as practicable after an outcome of Stage 1 has been communicated, or, ordinarily, within one calendar month of the initial concern first being raised with the School.

Formal complaints should be addressed to the Principal. Where the complaint concerns the Principal, the complaint should be made to the Chair of the Board.

The Principal will acknowledge receipt of the formal written complaint as soon as practicable, usually within three (3) business days.

The Principal's objective is to determine whether the initial concern was managed appropriately, the investigation was conducted fairly and in accordance with CSV policies and procedures, and whether the outcome was reasonable in the circumstances.

The Principal may determine that no further investigation is required where satisfied that the complaint has been appropriately addressed. Where it is determined that further investigation is required, it should not be assumed, nor is it implied, that the outcome will be reversed. Further review will focus on whether the process and outcome were appropriate.

The Principal will aim to communicate the outcome of a request for review in writing within fifteen (15) business days where practicable.

Stage 3: Review by the Chair of the Board

Where a complainant is not satisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by the Principal, or where the Principal is the subject of the complaint, a formal request for review to the Chair of the Board may be made.

You may request a review by writing to the Chair of the Board via email at chair@csv.vic.edu.au.

Requests for review must be made in writing within ten (10) business days of the date the Principal communicated the outcome of the complaint in writing. The grounds for review, and in particular any concerns you have with the way the relevant complaint was dealt with, must be clearly identified in the request for review.

In accordance with good governance principles, the Board delegates responsibility for the day-to-day management of each School, including the management of staff and students, to the Principal. The

Principal is afforded appropriate discretion to make operational decisions within the scope of their authority. This does not limit or diminish the Board's governance responsibilities or its authority to exercise appropriate oversight of decisions made by the Principal.

In reviewing a decision of the Principal under this policy, the Chair of the Board will ordinarily consider whether there is evidence that CSV policies or procedures have not been followed in a way likely to have meaningfully influenced the Principal's decision, or that the Principal exercised their discretion in a manner that was unreasonable having regard to the available information. The Chair may also consider the substance of the complaint, the decision made and any other matter the Chair considers relevant or necessary to ensure the Board properly discharges its governance responsibilities.

The nature and scope of the review will be determined by the Chair having regard to the circumstances of the complaint and the grounds for review. Nothing in this policy limits the ability of the Chair or the Board to undertake further enquiries, consider additional information, or refer a matter to the Board where this is considered appropriate or necessary.

The Chair of the Board may determine that no further investigation is required where satisfied that the Principal has acted within their delegated authority, relevant policies and procedures have been followed and the decision was made fairly and reasonably having regard to the information available. Where it is determined that further investigation is required, it should not be assumed, nor is it implied, that the outcome will be reversed. Further review may determine whether the Principal's actions, together with the outcome, were appropriate and the decision stands.

The Chair of the Board will aim to communicate the outcome of a request for review in writing within forty-five (45) business days where practicable.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

A complaint may be withdrawn in writing at any stage during the processes outlined in this policy. A complaint can only be withdrawn by the complainant.

CSV will notify any affected parties where a complaint is withdrawn.

Anonymous Complaints

CSV is committed to dealing with complaints in accordance with this policy, however, anonymous complaints will be accepted at the discretion of the School Principal or the Chair of the Board having regard to the nature and seriousness of the complaint, and whether there is sufficient information for an investigation to be conducted.

Whilst CSV respects that in some cases complainants would prefer to remain anonymous; in doing so they may limit CSV's ability to investigate or resolve the issues raised and is therefore discouraged.

CSV may nevertheless continue to investigate a complaint where it is considered necessary to discharge its legal obligations, duty of care, child safety responsibilities or other obligations.

Previously Addressed, Stale or Vexatious Complaints

Complaints that have been previously addressed (by CSV or externally), or which were not raised within a reasonable period of time (having regard to the nature of the relevant complaint) will not be considered unless highly relevant new information and/or evidence comes to light.

CSV may decline to investigate, or may cease investigating, complaints that are frivolous, vexatious, lacking in substance, repetitive, or constitute an abuse of process.

Confidentiality

Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained by CSV at all times when dealing with a complaint, with information only being provided to those who have a right or need to know.

Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed and may be limited where disclosure is required to comply with legal obligations, protect the safety or wellbeing of any person, or ensure procedural fairness.

Support Persons

Complainants may request to have someone else present during any discussions associated with their complaint as a support person.

The role of a support person is to provide support; they must not act as an advocate.

Related Policies

Parent Code of Conduct

Complaints & Grievances (Staff) Policy

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Whistleblower Protection Policy

Privacy Policy

Review

This policy is to be reviewed every two (2) years, as a minimum.

Last review September 2026.

Next review to be undertaken before September 2028.

This policy is subject to change without notice at the sole discretion of CSV Limited.

Printed hardcopies or downloads of this policy are considered uncontrolled.