

Parent Concerns and Complaints Policy

Rationale:

Hallam Senior College encourages all members of the college community to attempt to resolve complaints and concerns efficiently and fairly through the college. This policy is developed in accordance with the Departmental policy, PARENT COMPLAINTS POLICY (INTERIM): RESOLVING PARENT ISSUES AND CONCERNS.

Parents of students attending a Victorian government school who have a complaint should, in the first instance, make the complaint to the school that their child attends, except when the complaint is about the principal of the school. Complaints about school principals should be referred to the appropriate region.

Aim

To provide, maintain and publicise a fair, effective and efficient complaint-handling process, so that complaints about events or decisions at the school can be addressed.

When addressing a complaint it is expected that parents and school personnel will:

- show respect and understanding of each other's point of view
- operate within applicable legislation
- acknowledge that their goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
- act in good faith and in a calm and courteous manner
- recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced.

All Department staff (schools, region, central office) must observe the code of conduct for Victorian public sector employees.

Implementation:

This policy covers concerns and complaints about:

- General issues of student behaviour that are contrary to Hallam Senior College's code of conduct.
- Incidents of bullying or harassment in the classroom or Hallam Senior College campus.
- Learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning.
- Communication with parents.
- School fees and payments.
- General administrative issues
- Any other school-related matters except as detailed below

These procedures do not cover matters for which there are existing rights of review or appeal, as detailed in the Victorian Government Schools Reference Guide. Those matters include:

- Student discipline matters including expulsions.
- Complaints about employee conduct or performance and complaints that should be dealt with by performance management, grievance resolution or disciplinary action.
- Complaints by the department's employees related to their employment.
- Student critical incident matters.
- Other criminal matters.

Ownership and Scope:

This policy and the procedures it outlines will continue to be developed in collaboration with Hallam Senior College's governing body, Hallam Senior College Council, and the wider school community. The policy is available on the Hallam Senior College website: www.hallamssc.vic.edu.au

Further input from Hallam Senior College community is welcome.
This policy takes effect from 11 September 2017.

Expectations:

Hallam Senior College expects a person raising a complaint or concern will:

- Do so promptly, as soon as possible after the issue arises.
- Provide complete and factual information about the concern or complaint.
- Maintain and respect the privacy and confidentiality of parties involved.
- Acknowledge that the 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 or blame.
- Recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced.

Hallam Senior College will address any concerns and complaints received from parents:

- Courteously.
- Efficiently.
- Fairly.
- Promptly, or within the timeline agreed with the person with the concern or complaint.
- In accordance with due process, principles of natural justice and the Department's regulatory framework.

Raising Concerns and Complaints:

To make a concern or complaint, parents/carers should telephone, visit or write to:

- The student's teacher or sub school leader about learning issues and incidents that happened in their class or group.
- The sub school leader if students from several classes are involved.
- An Assistant Principal about issues relating to staff members, complex student issues, school policy or management.
- The Principal about issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members or very complex student issues.

For contact details for any staff member, call the office on 9703 1266.

If you are not sure who to speak to, contact the relevant Assistant Principal or the Principal.

Help with raising Concerns or Complaints:

Personal support is most appropriate in situations where the complainant and others involved in the complaint process have emotional issues related to the complaint.

- Complainants can seek the services of an advocate when they feel they are unable to express their concern clearly. An advocate can be a friend or someone who is available through an appropriate support organisation who does not receive a fee for service.
- All parties involved in addressing a complaint may seek the services of a mediator when there is difficulty coming to an agreement.
- A complainant who wishes to use such a support service should ensure that the person at Hallam Senior College addressing the concern or complaint is aware of such intention, and is in agreement.

Managing and recording parent concerns and complaints, and information related to them

In the case of complaints which are easily and straightforwardly resolved, a brief note in the principal's/teacher's work diary will be kept.

Other concerns or complaints will be recorded as follows:

- Name and contact details (with permission) of the complainant.
- The date the concern was expressed or complaint raised.
- The form in which the concern or complaint was received (such as in person, email, telephone, writing etc.)
- A brief description of the concern or complaint.
- Details of Hallam Senior College officer responding to the concern or complaint.
- Action taken on the concern or complaint and the outcome of such action.
- Any recommendations for future improvement in Hallam Senior College's policy or procedures.

Addressing concerns or complaints:

The following points should be noted with respect to Hallam Senior College's addressing of concerns or complaints.

- Hallam Senior College will make every effort to resolve concerns and complaints before involving other levels of the Department.
- Hallam Senior College will give the complainant a copy of its complaints procedures.
- Hallam Senior College will determine whether a concern or complaint should be managed through Hallam Senior College's concerns and complaints process or through other complaints processes of the Department.

Process:

The college will determine whether a concern or complaint should be managed through the college process or via other DET complaints processes.

- All complaints will be noted and acted on promptly by the staff member who receives the complaint, or the appropriate staff member should the complaint not be able to be handled by the staff member who receives it.
- Hallam Senior College will acknowledge all complaints made in writing. It will provide the complainant with a timeline for investigating the complaint.
- The appropriate staff member (Principal, Assistant Principal etc.) will investigate all complaints and will provide a response to the complainant.
- Concerns and complaints about general school matters (such as the timing of events, school policies and facilities) will be addressed by the principal or a relevant staff member.
- Hallam Senior College will make every attempt to resolve a concern or complaint as quickly as possible. If your complaint involves many students and a range of issues, Hallam Senior College will need more time to investigate and resolve it.
- Should the complaint involve complex issues, Hallam Senior College might need to take advice from the Department's regional office which may take more time. Hallam Senior College will tell the complainant the new timeline for addressing the complaint and the reasons for any delays. In all cases, Hallam Senior College will try to resolve a concern or complaint within 20 school days.

Remedies:

If a concern or complaint is substantiated in whole or part, Hallam Senior College will offer an appropriate remedy which may include, at its discretion and depending on the circumstances:

- An explanation or further information about the issue.
- Mediation, counselling or other support.
- An apology, expression of regret or admission of fault.
- Changing its decision.
- Changing its policies, procedures or practices.
- Cancelling a debt (such as for school payments).
- Refunding a fee.

Hallam Senior College will implement the remedy as soon as practicable.

Referral of concerns or complaints:

If a person with a concern or complaint is not satisfied with the outcome determined by Hallam Senior College, they should contact the Department's South East Regional Office.

The officer from Region will ask the complainant for a complete and factual account in writing of the concern, and of the complainant's opinion of why Hallam Senior College did not resolve it satisfactorily.

Communication and Training:

Hallam Senior College will make information about procedures for addressing concerns and complaints readily available to parents and Hallam Senior College community, in clear and easy-to-understand language and, where appropriate, in a range of community languages and formats that are accessible to everyone so that no-one is disadvantaged.

The information will include:

- How a person can make a complaint.
- The person's responsibilities.
- Information to be provided by the person.
- Who the person should contact and their contact details.
- The process and timeframes for managing complaints.

Hallam Senior College's procedures for addressing concerns and complaints will be:

- Published on Hallam Senior College's website.
- Printed on a leaflet and given to a parent when their child enrolls, through the information pack.
- Printed in Hallam Senior College newsletter annually.

Hallam Senior College will:

- Brief all members of staff (including volunteers) about its procedures to address concerns and complaints annually.
- Provide staff with (or provide access to) training and support appropriate to their responsibilities under the procedures.
- Ensure all staff who manage complaints demonstrate the personal attributes outlined in the Good Practice Guide: Ombudsman Victoria's guide to complaint handling for Victorian public sector agencies.

Monitoring the parents complaint policy:

Hallam Senior College will monitor parent concerns and complaints and consider issues raised through the parent's complaint process, and any other relevant information from the parent opinion survey, when undertaking a review of Hallam Senior College's policies, procedures and operations. Hallam Senior College council will regularly review its policy and procedures to effectively address parent concerns and complaints as part of its cyclic policy and procedures review schedule.

Hallam Senior College will review its information about complaints made over time to:

- Identify common or recurring issues that may need addressing.
- Assess the effectiveness of these and other procedures and whether they are being followed.
- Use information provided to Hallam Senior College through the parent opinion survey on the views of parents.

Author	John Lyall and Policy Subcommittee
Approved by College Council (date)	September 2017
Person responsible for review	Assistant Principal and Policy Subcommittee
Next review date	September 2020 or as otherwise required by DET policy

PARENT COMPLAINT FLOWCHART

