



Complaint Handling Policy Statement

Aitken College welcomes feedback from all members of the College community and takes all complaints or concerns that may be raised seriously. This policy provides information about how concerns and complaints by parents and students can be made, as well as how complaints will be managed and resolved.

What is a Concern or Complaint about?

A concern or complaint may be about the College, staff conduct, or a student's education and/or wellbeing.

Concerns about student safety will be addressed in accordance with the College's Child Protection Program, and in particular the *Reporting and Responding to Child Safety Concerns Policy Statement*.

Aitken College's Commitment

To manage concerns and complaints effectively and efficiently, we have established a Complaints Handling Program in line with both the international complaints handling standard (ISO 10002:2014 Quality management - Customer satisfaction – Guidelines for complaints handling in organizations), and the Australian/New Zealand complaints handling standard (AS/NZS 10002:2014 Guidelines for complaint management in organizations). Our program includes the establishment of an online complaints management system which allows us to effectively capture, manage and report on concerns and complaints. Regular analysis of concerns and complaints received and the implementation of rectification action, where deficiencies are identified, are key to Aitken College's commitment.

The focus of this commitment is on the prompt resolution of concerns, ideally without a need for a complaint to be made, in a non-adversarial and productive manner. Please note that the timeframes in this policy are indicative only.

The College is committed to student safety. Concerns and complaints that may give rise to child abuse or reportable conduct will be managed in accordance with the College's legal obligations and the *Reporting and Responding to Child Safety Concerns Policy Statement*.

What can you expect from the College

When raising a concern or complaint with the College, parents and students can expect to:

- Be treated with respect and courtesy.
- Have their concern or complaint taken seriously, considered impartially, and dealt with on the merits.
- Have their concern or complaint dealt with and resolved in a timely manner.
- Have access to appropriate and easily understandable information about the complaints process.
- Be kept informed of the progress and outcome of their concern or complaint.

Our expectations

- Treat others (including College staff) with respect and courtesy.
- Raise concerns as soon as possible after the event giving rise to the concern. Be aware that any delay in raising concerns may make it more difficult for the College to effectively investigate the matter.
- Provide complete and factual information about the concern or complaint, to the best of your ability.
- Ask for help or further information if needed.
- Act in good faith to achieve a reasonable outcome.

Complaint Resolution Framework

The College should always be your first point of contact if you have a concern about your child's education and/or wellbeing. Teaching and learning works best when students, parents and teachers communicate with each other directly, and work together to resolve issues.



Informal Resolution by raising Concerns

The vast majority of issues causing concern in schools can be handled quickly and in an informal manner. In most cases these issues can be resolved through informal discussions with appropriate staff members.

In the first instance, students and parents are requested to attempt to informally clarify or resolve the issue:

- Students are encouraged to politely approach the appropriate staff member (subject teacher, Homeroom Teacher, Assistant Head of School, Head of House or Head of School) to request a discussion about the issue.
- Parents are encouraged to communicate with the appropriate staff member (subject teacher, Homeroom Teacher, Assistant Head of School, Head of House or Head of School) by telephone call, email or pre-arranged meeting. The purpose will usually be to seek clarification of an issue or request reconsideration of a decision.

To assist students and parents in resolving their concerns, the College recommends the following:

- Clearly identify the issue or problem before contacting the College.
- Identify the party or parties involved.
- Consider the outcome(s) you are trying to achieve (while being realistic and open to other outcomes and solutions).
- Decide whether the issue or problem is in the nature of a concern, enquiry or grievance. This will help in finding a solution.
- If there is more than one issue or problem, write a list.
- Remain courteous and calm when conveying your concerns. Staff are within their rights to terminate a conversation until such time that a courteous and calm conversation can continue.

Staff members may request time to consider the matter and will respond in due course by telephone, email, letter or in a mutually arranged meeting, whichever is deemed most appropriate. We aim to provide a response in a reasonable timeframe.

If an issue is able to be resolved informally, staff will keep a record of discussions and keep copies of all correspondence on the student's file. Staff are required to log issues through our complaints management system so we are able to identify any systemic issues arising, and take appropriate rectification action.

If agreement is not possible, the staff member dealing with the concern will make a decision as to how best to resolve the concern in a way that aligns with the College's policies and obligations.

Formal Resolution by making a complaint

If you have been unable to resolve a matter informally, or simply wish to make a formal complaint you can do so by any of the following means:

Writing a letter to the College or sending an email to admin@aitkencollege.edu.au addressed to the relevant Complaint Officer (see options below)

Topic of Concern	Complaint Officer
Discipline	Homeroom Teacher/Assistant Head of School/Head of House/Head of School
Subject assessments	Subject teacher/Assistant Head of School/Head of Faculty/Head of School
Awards or Colours	Head of School



School fees and charges	Finance Manager
Privacy concerns	Deputy Principal
Enrolment issues	Registrar
Administration of Child Protection Program*	Deputy Principal or Principal

If a complaint concerns the Principal, it should be sent to the College Board (and addressed to the Chair).

*NOTE: The *Reporting and Responding to Child Safety Concerns Policy Statement* sets out the procedure that should be followed to raise a concern about student safety.

Step 1 – All valid complaints will be acknowledged by the relevant Complaint Officer, as soon as practicable. The relevant staff member may choose to schedule a meeting. It is our target, where possible, to resolve all complaints within 14 days.

<p>Possible Outcomes of a Complaint</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Agreed resolution of the dispute or grievance ➤ Agreed course of action towards a satisfactory outcome ➤ Confirmation of a decision consistent with College policy and obligations ➤ Arrangement for a subsequent meeting after further investigation of the matter ➤ Referral of the matter to a more senior staff member

Step 2 – All formal complaints are logged through our online complaints management system where they are screened by the Deputy Principal or Principal, or in the case of complaints against the Principal by the Chair of the College Board.

Step 3 – If the complainant is not satisfied with the complaints process or initial outcome, they may request a review by the Deputy Principal who shall conduct an investigation into the issues raised, following principles of procedural fairness, and make a further determination.

Step 4 - Following the determination, if appropriate, the Deputy Principal shall formulate a resolution and provide a written response to the complainant.

Step 5 - If the Deputy Principal's response is not accepted the complainant may wish to request a review by the Principal. The matter will be reviewed by the Principal, who may seek additional information from the relevant parties. The Principal seeks to resolve all complaints within 14 days from the date that the further review process is initiated, where practicable.

Requests for review of a decision by the Principal should be addressed to the Chair of the College Board. As a general rule, however, the Principal's decision is regarded as final.

Step 6 - All complaints received will be entered into our Complaints Register and, where appropriate, a corrective action request will be made to address any underlying processes which the complaints investigation revealed may require improvement.

Step 7 – The College acknowledges that in some cases parents may remain dissatisfied with the outcome of certain complaints and requests for review.

If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of a request for review, you may choose to contact the relevant authorities, such as the Victorian Registration & Qualifications Authority, Victorian Institute of Teaching, or Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP), depending upon the nature of your concern or complaint.

Withdrawal of a complaint

A complaint can be withdrawn by a parent at any stage during the processes outlined in this policy. A complaint should preferably be retracted in writing, however a signed and dated notation on the original written complaint that it has been



withdrawn verbally can be made by the person at the College responsible for managing the complaint (being either the Deputy Principal, the Principal, the Chair or the Board).

The College will notify relevant parties if a complaint is withdrawn.

Anonymous concerns and complaints

The College is committed to dealing with concerns and complaints in accordance with the processes outlined in this policy. The College respects that some people do not feel comfortable putting a name to their grievances, and will always investigate concerns and complaints relating to child abuse and reportable conduct to the fullest extent practicable. However, anonymity can make it difficult for the College to effectively resolve concerns and complaints (particularly where the College is being asked to accept an anonymous source’s version of events) and is therefore not encouraged.

Vexatious and stale concerns and complaints

The College does not tolerate vexatious concerns and complaints. Stale concerns and complaints that have been previously dealt with by the College will not be revisited in the absence of highly relevant new information coming to light.

Monitoring and review

The College documents, records and monitors concerns and complaints, including:

- Action taken to resolve a concern or complaint, and the relevant outcomes.
- Whether the concern or complaint raises a serious compliance issue, and any action that will be taken by the College to eliminate the associated risks.

Communication

This document is available to the College community and public on the College website.

Revision History

Version	Date	Reviewed/Updated by (name)	Position/Title
1	09/01/2019	Josie Crisara Kim Forward	Principal Deputy Principal
2	06/02/2020	Josie Crisara Kim Forward	Principal Deputy Principal
3	18/11/2020	Josie Crisara Kim Forward Amy Schembri (together with RK Lawyers)	Principal Deputy Principal Compliance Manager
3.1	29/03/2021	Josie Crisara College Board	Principal