

# COMPLAINTS

## POLICY

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide an outline of the complaints process at Ballarat Specialist School so that parents and members of the community are informed of how they can raise complaints or concerns about issues arising at our school
- ensure that all complaints regarding Ballarat Specialist School are managed in a timely, effective, fair and respectful manner.

### **Scope**

This policy relates to complaints brought by parents, carers, students or members of our school community and applies to all matters relating to our school. In some limited instances, we may need to refer the complainant to another Department of Education and Training process where there are different mechanisms in place to review certain decisions, for example, expulsion appeals.

### **Implementation**

Ballarat Specialist School welcomes feedback, both positive and negative, and is committed to continuous improvement. We value open communication with our families and are committed to understanding complaints and addressing them appropriately. We recognise that the complaints process provides an important opportunity for reflection and learning.

We value and encourage open and positive relationships with our school community. We understand that it is in the best interests of students for there to be a trusting relationship between families and our school.

When addressing a complaint, it is expected that all parties will:

- be considerate of each other's views and respect each other's role and always aim to be constructive
- be focused on resolution of the complaint, with the interests of the student involved at the centre of our thinking and actions
- act in good faith and cooperation
- behave with respect and courtesy
- respect the privacy and confidentiality of those involved, as appropriate
- operate within and seek reasonable resolutions that comply with any applicable legislation and Department policy
- recognise that schools and the Department may be subject to legal constraints on their ability to act or disclose information in some circumstances.

### **Preparation for raising a concern or complaint**

Ballarat Specialist School encourages parents, carers or members of the community who may wish to submit a concern or complaint to:

- carefully consider the issues you would like to discuss
- be mindful that you may not have all the facts relating to the issues that you want to raise
- think about how the matter could be resolved
- be informed by checking the policies and guidelines set by the Department and Ballarat Specialist School as identified in the "Further Information and Resources" section later in this policy.

## Complaints process

Ballarat Specialist School is always happy to discuss with parents/carers and community members any concerns that they may have. Concerns in the first instance should be directed to your child's classroom teacher. Where possible, school staff will work with you to ensure that your concerns are appropriately addressed.

Where concerns cannot be resolved in this way, parents or community members may wish to proceed to a member of the leadership team; either the relevant Mini-School Leader or an Assistant Principal to make a complaint. To contact one of these staff members please either e-mail [ballarat.ss@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:ballarat.ss@education.vic.gov.au) or phone the front office on 5334 1302.

In the unlikely event that your concerns have not been resolved by this point, you may contact the School Principal via the administration office (details above) to make an appointment and lodge a formal complaint.

If you would like to make a formal complaint, in most cases, depending on the nature of the complaint raised, our school will first seek to understand the issues and will then convene a resolution meeting with the aim of resolving the complaint together. The following process will apply:

- 1. Complaint received:** Please either email, telephone or arrange a meeting with an Assistant Principal or Principal, to outline your complaint so that we can fully understand what the issues are. We can discuss your complaint in a way that is convenient for you, whether in writing, in person or over the phone.
- 2. Information gathering:** Depending on the issues raised in the complaint, the Principal, Assistant Principal or nominee may need to gather further information to properly understand the situation. This process may also involve speaking to others to obtain details about the situation or the concerns raised. This process is aimed to be completed in a timely manner, but will take time.
- 3. Response:** Where possible, a resolution meeting will be arranged with appropriate staff (Assistant Principal/Principal) to discuss the complaint with the objective of reaching a resolution satisfactory to all parties. If after the resolution meeting we are unable to resolve the complaint together, we will work with you to produce a written summary of the complaint in the event you would like to take further action about it. In some circumstances, the Principal may determine that a resolution meeting would not be appropriate. In this situation, a response to the complaint will be provided in writing.
- 4. Timelines:** Ballarat Specialist School will acknowledge receipt of your complaint as soon as possible (usually within two school days) and will seek to resolve complaints in a timely manner. Depending on the complexity of the complaint, Ballarat Specialist School (BSS) may need some time to gather enough information to fully understand the circumstances of your complaint. We will endeavour to complete any necessary information gathering and hold a resolution meeting where appropriate within 10 working days of the complaint being raised. In situations where further time is required, BSS will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

## Resolution

Where appropriate, Ballarat Specialist School may seek to resolve a complaint by:

- an apology or expression of regret
- a change of decision
- a change of policy, procedure or practice
- offering the opportunity for student counselling or other support

- other actions consistent with school values that are intended to support the student, parent and school relationship, engagement, and participation in the school community.

In some circumstances, Ballarat Specialist School may also ask you to attend a meeting with an independent third party, or participate in a mediation with an accredited mediator to assist in the resolution of the dispute.

### **Escalation**

If you are not satisfied that your complaint has been resolved by the school, or if your complaint is about the Principal and you do not want to raise it directly with them, then the complaint should be referred to the South West Victorian Region, Central Highlands Area Office by contacting the Community Liaison Officer at 1300 333 232

BSS may also refer a complaint to South West Victorian Region, Central Highlands Area Office if we believe that we have done all we can to address the complaint.

### **Further Information and Resources:**

For more information about the Department's *Parent Complaints* policy, including the role of the Regional Office, please see: [Parent complaints policy](#).

For access to Ballarat Specialist School Policies please refer to the schools website or contact the office for copies [www.ballaratss.vic.edu.au](http://www.ballaratss.vic.edu.au).

### **Evaluation:**

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years.

This policy was last ratified by School Council in...

**March 2020**

