



Help for non-English speakers If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact the school on (03) 9428 8955 or melbourne.girls.co@education.vic.gov.au

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Promote a strong cohesive college community that facilitates clear, equitable, respectful and inclusive communication of ideas, feedback, concerns and complaints between students, parents, staff and teachers in our college community, in keeping with our obligations and our vision and philosophy.
- provide an outline of the concerns and complaints process at Melbourne Girls' College so that students, parents and carers and members of the community are informed of how they can raise complaints or concerns about issues arising at our college.
- ensure that all complaints and concerns regarding Melbourne Girls' College are managed in a timely, effective, fair and respectful manner.

Scope

This policy relates to complaints brought by students, parents, carers or members of our college community and applies to all matters relating to our college.

In some limited instances, we may need to refer a complainant to another policy or area if there are different processes in place to the manage the issue including:

- Complaints and concerns relating to fraud and corruption will be managed in accordance with the Department's Fraud and Corruption Policy.
- Criminal matters will be referred to Victorian Police
- Legal claims will be referred to the Department's Legal Division
- recognise that Melbourne Girls' College is a Child Safe school and will, at all times, fulfil our obligations to keep children safe in accordance with our Child Safe Policy and Code of Conduct.

Melbourne Girls' College welcomes feedback 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 college community. When addressing a complaint, it is expected that all parties will:

- Be considerate of each other's views and respect each other's role.
- Be focused on resolution of the complaint, with the interests of the student involved at the centre.
- 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.

Guiding Principles

The following principles guide the implementation of this policy:

- Maintaining dignity and respect between all parties should be reflected by the conduct of all parties to a complaint
- The college is committed to providing a safe and supportive work environment where staff, students and parents are treated with respect, fairness and empathy.

Complaints and Concerns Process for Students

Melbourne Girls' College acknowledges that issues or concerns can cause worry or concern for students and impact their wellbeing and learning. MGC encourages our students to raise issues or concerns as they arise so that we can work together to resolve them.

Students with a concern or complaint can raise the issue with a trusted adult at school, for example their classroom teacher, Homegroup Teacher, Year Level Leader, Wellbeing and Inclusion Leader, or support staff at the college. The concern/complaint will be taken seriously, and steps will be taken to resolve the issue and support the student.

Students can ask their parents, carers, or other trusted adults outside school, to talk to the school about the issue on their behalf. Information about our parent and carer complaints and concerns process is outlined further below. The parent and carer process also applies to students who are mature minors, refer to: Mature Minors and Decision Making.

Further information and resources to support students to raise issues or concerns are available at:

- [Report Racism Hotline](#) (call 1800 722 476) – This Victorian Department of Education website & hotline is a 'how to guide' to report concerns and complaints relating to racism and or religious discrimination.
- [Reach Out](#) – is an anonymous online forum where young people can get support for issues they face, including forums and peer support.
- [Headspace](#) offers online support and has a number of centres around Australia.
- [Kids Helpline](#) is a 24/7 helpline is a confidential phone counselling service, connecting young people age 5-25 with qualified counsellors. Information is also available for parents (call 1800 55 1800).
- [Victorian Aboriginal Education Association](#) (VAEAI) The peak body of Aboriginal Education in Victoria, providing resources and support from early education to university with a focus on high quality and respectful educational outcomes for Indigenous students.

Complaints and Concerns Process for Parents, Carers and Community Members

Preparation for Raising a Concern or Complaint:

Melbourne Girls' College encourages parents, carers or members of the community who may wish to submit a complaint to:

- Carefully consider the issues you would like to discuss.
- Remember 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 Melbourne Girls' College.

Support Person:

Parents and carers are welcome to have a support person to assist in raising a complaint or concern with our college. Please advise us if you wish to have a support person to assist, and provide their name, contact details, and their relationship.

Raising a Concern:

Melbourne Girls' College is always happy to discuss with parents and carers and community members any concerns that they may have. Concerns in the first instance should be directed to the following:

- Student's teacher or Homegroup Teacher for learning issues occurring in class or in the homegroup.
- Year Level Leader if students from several classes are involved.
- Student Engagement and Wellbeing Leader for complex student-related issues.
- Assistant Principal for issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members or very complex students' issues. The Principal Team, which includes the College Principal, is fully informed of these issues.

We follow this process when you raise a concern with us:

- We will listen to your concerns respectfully and carefully.
- We will direct your concern to the most appropriate staff member/team.
- We will adhere to our child safe policy, student welfare and engagement policy, and other legal obligations.
- We will respect your right to confidentially raise concerns with us unless we are required to report or escalate this concern.
- We may need to gather more information about the issue.
- We will provide information about what process we will take and the next steps.
- We will work with you, wherever possible, to ensure your concerns are appropriately addressed. Many concerns can be dealt with quickly and easily; some require more time, a review of the way we are doing things or more steps. We can address this together.

Making a Complaint:

Where concerns cannot be resolved in this way, parents, carers or community members may wish to make a formal complaint to the Assistant Principal or Principal. If you would like to make a formal complaint, in most cases, depending on the nature of the complaint raised, our college 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:** the appropriate staff member will make contact, so that we can fully understand the issues. We can discuss your complaint in a way that is most convenient, whether in writing, in person, online or over the phone.
2. **Information gathering:** Depending on the issues raised in the complaint, the appropriate staff member 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.
3. **Response:** Where possible, a resolution meeting will be arranged with the appropriate members 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, a written summary of the complaint will be provided in the event of further actions. In some circumstances, the principal team 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:** Melbourne Girls' College will acknowledge receipt of the 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, Melbourne Girls' College 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, MGC will consult and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

Please note that unreasonable conduct (e.g., vexatious complaints) may need to be managed differently to the procedures in this policy.

Resolution

Melbourne Girls' College seeks, wherever possible, to resolve complaints. As appropriate, resolution may include:

- 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 college relationship, engagement, and participation in the school community.

In some circumstances, Melbourne Girls' College 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 college, 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 North-Western Victoria Region of the Department of Education by contacting nwvr@education.vic.gov.au or 1300 338 691.

Melbourne Girls' College may also refer a complaint to North-Western Victoria Region if we believe that we have done all we can to address the complaint. For more information about the Department's parent complaints process, including the role of the Regional Office, please see: [Raise a complaint or concern about your school](#).

Record Keeping and Other Requirements

To meet Department and legal requirements, our school must keep written records of:

- Serious, substantial, or unusual complaints.
- Complaints relating to the Child Information Sharing Scheme and Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme, to meet regulatory requirements – refer to Child and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes for further information.

Our college also follows Department policy to ensure that record-keeping, reporting, privacy and employment law obligations are met when responding to complaints or concerns.

Communication

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on the college website.
- Included in staff induction processes.
- Available to staff on Compass.
- Discussed at parent information nights (as required).
- Discussed at student forums and through communication tools (as required).
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request, or as required.

Further Information and Resources

The Department's Policy and Advisory Library (PAL):

- Complaints - Department's parents' website:
- Raise a complaint or concern about your school
- Report racism or religious discrimination in schools

Policy, Review and Approval

Policy reviewed last	March 2024
Consultation	March 2024
Approved by Principal	March 2024
Next scheduled review date	2 Years March 2026