

## Grievance Policy and Procedure (Community)

### Purpose

Rossbourne School is committed to ensuring a safe and healthy environment characterised by tolerance and support; and which also respects differing learning styles and celebrates student achievements.

Part of this commitment involves ensuring the school community has access to processes that allow for grievances to be managed appropriately, promptly, fairly and with sensitivity. The School is a working community and inevitably concerns, disputes or allegations of inappropriate or illegal behaviour arise.

This policy provides clear and transparent information about how a parent or other member of the school community (other than a student or staff member) can raise grievances about the School, staff conduct, a student's education and/or student wellbeing and about how such grievances will be managed and resolved.

The School takes all complaints and concerns received from staff, parents, students and other complaints outside of the School seriously. Our aim is to ensure that grievances are handled objectively and with sensitivity. In doing so, we will seek to identify both the specific and (where applicable) systemic issues raised by a grievance (thereby enabling future improvements to be identified and implemented).

The procedural steps outlined in this policy are intended to be practical, non-adversarial and non-legal. Steps will be implemented flexibly at the School's discretion, depending on the circumstances of each situation.

### Scope

This policy applies to all School Board members, contractors, volunteers, labour hire workers, secondees, visitors, parents/carers and other members of the school community. This policy does not apply to:

- (a) Staff grievances, which should be raised in accordance with the School's Grievance Policy and Procedure (Staff).
- (b) Student grievances, which should be raised in accordance with the School's Grievance Policy and Procedure (Student).
- (c) Concerns about child abuse, reportable conduct and other student safety and wellbeing matters, which will be addressed in accordance with the Student Safety and Wellbeing – Raising and Responding to Concerns Policy.
- (d) Legal matters, including requests for compensation, payment and redress.

To the extent that there are any inconsistencies between this policy and the School's other grievance policies and procedures, other than the Student Safety and Wellbeing – Raising and Responding to Concerns Policy, this policy shall prevail.

## Definitions

<b>Community</b>	Parent or other member of the school community (other than a staff member).
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## Framework

The School's framework for dealing with grievances involves a three-step process, namely:

- 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 School Board is requested.

Further details about these Stages are set out in Schedule 1. Common considerations when the School is managing grievances are set out in Schedule 2.

## Principles

When raising a grievance with the School, a member of the school community can expect to:

- Be treated with courtesy and respect.
- Have the grievance taken seriously, considered impartially (with consideration of any power imbalances) and dealt with on the merits.
- Have the grievances dealt with in a confidential and timely manner.
- Have access to appropriate and easily understandable information regarding the grievance resolution process being followed by the School (including this policy).
- Be supported during the grievance handling process, with a focus on maintaining the emotional wellbeing of any students involved and the School will ensure there is procedural fairness.
- Be kept informed of the progress and outcomes of the grievance.
- Not be victimized, or subjected to reprisal, for raising grievances in good faith.

In return, the School expects that a member of the school community who raises a grievance will:

- Treat others (including School staff, students and parents, both former and present) with respect and courtesy.
- Raise grievances in the appropriate forum, having regard to the below framework and as soon as possible after the event giving rise to the grievance has occurred.
- Provide complete and factual information about the grievance.
- Ask for assistance or further information as needed.
- Act in good faith to achieve a reasonable outcome.

- Be understanding and accepting of any outcome reached, being mindful that the School must sometimes manage the interests of a number of students and other individuals when making decisions, and may be privy to confidential information not known to the person raising the grievance.

Our aim is for the quick resolution of student concerns, ideally without there being a need for a formal complaint to be made. As the Board appoints the Principal to manage the day-to-day operations of the School, a review by the Chair of the School Board should be a last resort.

Timeframes listed in this policy are only a guide and can vary due to the nature of the grievance and surrounding circumstances. Where timeframes set out in this policy cannot be met, the School will strive to communicate with the affected parties about the status of the grievance, and the steps taken (or to be taken) to progress a resolution.

Please note that the processes outlined in this policy are intended to be conciliatory, non-adversarial and non-legal.

### **Recommendations for Initially Raising Concerns (Stage 1)**

At first instance, you should raise your concerns directly with the School. The School must be aware of a concern in order to address it.

The School believes that a concern is often best resolved closest to its source. The School encourages concerns to be raised with the relevant staff member.

However, depending on the nature and severity of an issue, and whether the classroom teacher has a conflict of interest, concerns may instead be raised with a senior staff member (e.g. School Section Leader, Deputy Principal; Director of Business Operations).

The following considerations are relevant prior to, and when raising a concern:

- Clearly identify the issue or problem prior to contacting the School
- Decide whether the issue or problem is in the nature of a complaint, concern, enquiry or suggestion. This will help in finding a solution.
- Identify the party or parties involved.
- Consider the practical outcome you are trying to achieve (while being realistic and open to other outcomes and solutions).
- If there is more than one concern or problem, write a list – in order of importance to you - so that you are adequately prepared.
- Consider whether there are any interim measures you would like the School to consider whilst it makes enquiries about the issue or problem.
- Make an appointment to meet with the relevant staff member to discuss the concern - the best way to do this is to contact Reception to arrange a mutually convenient time for a telephone call or meeting. When contacting Reception, please identify yourself and the student concerned, the subject of your concern, identify the person you would like to speak with, and provide a brief description of the issue you wish to speak about.

- Remain calm and courteous when conveying your concerns. The School is within its rights to terminate a conversation with the person raising the concern until such time that a calm and courteous conversation can continue.

## Management of Records

The School will maintain accurate and up to date records in relation to any complaint or grievance and any associated investigation conducted in relation to the complaint or grievance.

Records relating to a complaint or grievance will be stored securely to protect confidentiality.

The School will manage records pursuant to its privacy and confidentiality obligations.

## Confidentiality

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

## Communication

This policy will be updated every two years and is available to parents, students, staff and the school community via the School’s website. This policy (or aspects thereof) will also feature in communications via the School newsletters as required.

## Related Documents

- Student Safety and Wellbeing – Raising and Responding to Concerns
- Student Safety and Wellbeing - Staff Code of Conduct
- Grievance Policy and Procedures (Students)
- Grievance Policy and Procedures (Staff)
- Grievance and Appeals Form
- Grievance and Appeals Register
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
- Information Privacy Act 200 (Vic)
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986 (Clth)

<b>POLICY OWNER</b>	<b>APPROVED BY SCHOOL BOARD/PRINCIPAL</b>	<b>DATE APPROVED</b>	<b>VERSION</b>	<b>REVIEW DATE</b>
Principal	School Board	22 April 2026	1	22 April 2028

# Schedule 1: Further Details about the School’s Grievances Resolution Procedure

## Stage 1: Raise the Concern

	Details	Comment
Step 1	Identify the Concern	<p>Clarify your concern:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">“who, what, when, where, why, and how”.</p> <p>Identify the outcome you are trying to achieve by raising your concern.</p>
Step 2	Raise the Concern	<p>The School believes that a concern is often best resolved closest to its source and encourages concerns to be raised with the relevant classroom teacher in the first instance.</p> <p>Depending on the nature and severity of an issue and whether the classroom teacher has a conflict of interest, concerns may instead be raised directly with a senior staff member. However, that senior staff member may decide to delegate responsibility for dealing with the concern to another appropriate staff member (e.g. Principal).</p>
Step 3	Acknowledgement	<p>Once a concern is raised, the School staff will record (either by way of an electronic file note or written correspondence) the details of the concern including your name and contact details.</p> <p>The School’s focus will be on understanding the nature of the problem, the party or parties involved, and the nature of any agreeable solutions.</p>
Step 4	Outcome	<p>Where an agreeable solution is available, this will usually be communicated in writing and verbally to the student (being usually within five (5) business days of the outcome being reached).</p> <p>Where a mutually agreed outcome between the School and the person raising the concern is not appropriate, or possible, the staff member handling the concern will make a decision that best aligns with the School’s procedures and legal obligations.</p>

		This decision will be communicated in writing to you (being usually within five (5) business days of the outcome being reached), and the communication will be kept in the relevant file.
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## Stage 2: Make a Complaint

	Details	Comment
Step 1	Make a Complaint	<p>If you are not satisfied with the way your concern has been handled, you may choose to make a formal written complaint. Complaints should ordinarily be made within one (1) calendar month of the initial concern first being raised with the School.</p> <p>A formal complaint should at first instance be addressed to the Principal. If the complaint concerns the Principal, the complaint should be made to the Chair of the School Board (see Stage 3), in which case the Chair of the School Board will manage the process outlined below.</p> <p>You may lodge a formal written complaint to the Principal at <a href="mailto:principal@rossbourne.vic.edu.au">principal@rossbourne.vic.edu.au</a>.</p> <p>You may also go to Reception to arrange a meeting. Please note that if phoning to arrange a meeting, Reception staff will take your details and endeavour to confirm a meeting time as soon as it is practicable to do so.</p>
Step 2	Acknowledge receipt	The Principal will acknowledge receipt of the formal written complaint as soon as practicable (being usually within five (5) business days).
Step 3	Review of complaint	<p>When dealing with a formal written complaint, the School's objective is to achieve a resolution by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarifying the substance of the complaint, and the steps taken by the School to address the initial concern.</li> <li>• Identifying whether the complaint raises an issue regarding non-compliance with the School's procedures.</li> <li>• Identifying whether the complaint raises an issue that would be more appropriately addressed under another relevant School policy.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicating with you and relevant parent(s), student(s) and staff, in an attempt to resolve the issue by agreement (where practicable).</li> <li>Failing agreement, investigating the complaint and deciding appropriate outcomes in accordance with procedural fairness and natural justice principles.</li> </ul> <p>The Principal may delegate parts of the complaint-management process, and seek the assistance of third parties, however any ultimate decision will still be made by the Principal.</p> <p>If the Principal or delegate arranges to speak with you, you may request to have someone else present as a support person. The support person can be a relative or a friend, but please note that the role of a support person is to provide you with support and not to act as an advocate.</p>
Step 4	Outcome	<p>The Principal or delegate will aim to communicate the outcome of a formal written complaint in writing within fifteen (15) business days where practicable.</p> <p>The Principal will promptly report any formal written complaints, and relevant outcomes, to the Board. This is part of the cyclical review and risk management process at the School.</p>

**Stage 3: Request a Review**

	Details	Comment
Step 1	Request a review by the Chair of the Board	<p>If you are not satisfied that your formal written complaint has been adequately resolved by the Principal, you may request a review by writing to the Chair of the School Board via email at:</p> <p><a href="mailto:boardchair@rossbourne.vic.edu.au">boardchair@rossbourne.vic.edu.au</a> or via post:            Chair of the School Board            Rossbourne School            131 Power Street            Hawthorn VIC 3122</p>

		<p>Members of the School community who raise grievances with other Board members will be directed to follow the procedures set out in this policy (e.g. raising a complaint with the Principal or requesting a review by writing to the Chair of the School Board).</p> <p>Requests for review must be made in writing within ten (10) business days of the date the Principal communicated the outcome of your complaint in writing.</p> <p>The grounds for the 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.</p>
Step 2	Review	<p>Please note that in accordance with good governance, the Board entrusts the Principal with the day-to-day management of the School, and in particular its staff and students. The Principal is accorded significant discretion regarding such matters.</p> <p>Accordingly, any review of the Principal’s decision under this policy will be confined to the Chair of the School Board deciding whether there is evidence that the School’s procedures have not been followed, in a way likely to have meaningfully influenced the Principal’s decision, or that the Principal unreasonably exercised his or her discretion.</p> <p>The Chair of the School Board may delegate parts of the review, or seek the assistance of third parties, however any ultimate decision will still be made by the Chair of the School Board.</p> <p>For the avoidance of doubt, the Chair of the School Board will not delegate to the Principal a review of a decision they have already made. However, if the Chair of the School Board is satisfied that a complaint has not been properly raised (or dealt) with by the Principal (and the Principal does not otherwise have a conflict of interest), the Chair of the School Board may refer the matter to the Principal to make an initial decision (noting that decision would then create a right to request a review).</p>

Step 3	Outcome	<p>The Chair of the School Board will aim to communicate the outcome of a request for review in writing within forty-five (45) business days where practicable.</p> <p>The Chair of the Board will promptly report any requests for review, and relevant outcomes, to the Board.</p>
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## **Schedule 2: Relevant Considerations**

### **Withdrawal of a Grievance**

A grievance can be withdrawn at any stage during the processes outlined in this policy. A grievance can only be withdrawn by the person who made the complaint to the School.

Ideally, all grievances should be retracted in writing, however a dated notation on the School's systems, stating the grievance has been withdrawn verbally by the appropriate person can be made by a staff member at the School responsible for managing the grievance.

The School will notify affected parties if a grievance is withdrawn, where considered appropriate.

Regardless of the person's wish to withdraw a grievance, complaints that have disciplinary implications may still be followed up by the School.

### **Anonymous Grievances**

The School is committed to dealing with grievances in accordance with the processes outlined in this policy. The School respects in some cases, complainants would prefer to remain anonymous and not put a name to their grievances.

The School treats grievances about the School, a staff member, its contractors, volunteers, a student's education, enrolment and/or a student's wellbeing with the utmost importance and will investigate such grievances raised to the fullest extent practicable. However, anonymity can make it difficult for the School to effectively resolve grievances (particularly where the School is being asked to accept an anonymous source's version of events) and are accordingly discouraged.

### **Previously Addressed, Stale or Vexatious Grievances**

Grievances that have been previously addressed by the School or externally, or which were not raised with the School within a reasonable period of time (having regard to the nature of the relevant grievance), will not be considered in the absence of highly relevant new information and/or evidence coming to light.

The School does not tolerate vexatious grievances.

### **External Grievances and Redress**

The School acknowledges that grievances relating to the School can be made to an external body at any stage of the grievance process or be the subject of legal action. However, the School encourages its community to raise any grievances, and work to resolve such matters, in accordance with the procedures outlined in this policy.