COMPLAINTS POLICY

HELP FOR NON-ENGLISH SPEAKERS

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact Stawell Secondary College on 03 5358 1700 or stawell.sc@education.vic.gov.au.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide an outline of the complaints process at Stawell Secondary College so that students, 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 and concerns regarding Stawell Secondary College are managed in a timely, effective, fair and respectful manner.

SCOPE

This policy applies to complaints brought by students, parents, carers, or members of our school community and covers all matters concerning our school.

In some limited instances, we may need to refer a complainant to another policy or area if there are different processes in place to 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 the Victorian Police
- Legal claims will be referred to the Department's Legal Division
- Complaints and concerns relating to child abuse will be managed in accordance with our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures (link here).

POLICY

Stawell Secondary College welcomes feedback, both positive and negative, and is committed to continuous improvement. We value open communication with our school community and 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 students' best interests to have 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 roles.
- be focused on resolving the complaint, with the student's interests 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.

Complaints and concerns process for students

Stawell Secondary College acknowledges that issues or concerns can cause stress or worry for students and impact their wellbeing and learning. Stawell Secondary College 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 it with a trusted adult at school, for example, their classroom teacher, Year Level Coordinators, Wellbeing staff, Koorie Education Support Officers, or Education Support staff. This person will take your concern or complaint seriously and explain what steps we can take to resolve the issue and support you.

You can also ask your parent, carer or another trusted adult outside of the school to talk to us about the issue instead. Information about our parent/carer complaints and concerns process is outlined further below. The parent/carer process also applies to students who are mature minors, refer to: Mature Minors and Decision Making.

Other ways you can raise a concern or complaint with us include:

- talking to a school captain
- talking to a member of the Student Leadership group
- participating in our Attitudes to School Survey

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

- Report Racism Hotline (call 1800 722 476) – this hotline enables students to report concerns relating to racism or religious discrimination.
- Reach Out
- Headspace
- Kids Helpline (call 1800 55 1800)
- Victorian Aboriginal Education Association (VAEAI)

Complaints and concerns process for parents, carers and community members

Preparation for raising a concern or complaint.

Stawell Secondary College encourages parents, carers or members of the community who may wish to submit a complaint to:

- Consider the issues you would like to discuss.
- Remember, you may not have all the facts about the issues 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 Stawell Secondary College

Support person

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

Raising a concern

Stawell Secondary College is always happy to discuss any concerns parents/carers and community members may have. Concerns in the first instance should be directed to the most appropriate person, including your child's teacher, Year Level Coordinators, Assistant Principal or Principal via the general office. Where possible, school staff will work with you to ensure that your concerns are appropriately addressed.

Our school also offers interpreting and translation services to parents and carers with limited or no English language skills, to help them communicate their concerns.

Making a complaint

Where concerns cannot be resolved in this way, parents 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 its nature, our school will first seek to understand the issues and then convene a meeting to resolve the complaint together. The following process will apply:

1. **Complaint received:** Please email, telephone, or arrange a meeting through the front office with the Assistant Principal or Principal to outline your complaint so that we can fully understand the issues. We can discuss your complaint in a way that is convenient for you, whether in writing, in person or over the phone.

2. **Timelines:** Stawell Secondary College will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 2 school days, and will seek to resolve complaints within 15 school days. Depending on the complexity of the complaint, some complaints may take more than 15 school days. We will endeavour to complete any necessary information gathering and, where appropriate, hold a resolution meeting within 10 working days of the complaint being raised. In situations where

further time is required, Stawell Secondary College will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

3. **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.

4. **Response:** Where possible, a meeting will be arranged with the Assistant Principal/Principal to discuss the complaint and reach 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 case you would like to take further action. In some circumstances, the Principal may determine that a resolution meeting would not be appropriate. In this situation, a written response to the complaint will be provided.

   In some instances, the school, in consultation with the region, may suggest mediation, conciliation, or other alternative methods of resolving the complaint, based on the complexity and urgency of the issues raised.

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

Resolution

Where appropriate, Stawell Secondary College 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 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, Stawell Secondary 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 school, or if your complaint concerns the principal and you do not want to raise it directly with them, you may contact the

department by phone on 1800 338 663, via the Enquiries form, or by email at enquiries@education.vic.gov.au.

Stawell Secondary College may also refer a complaint to the South West Wimmera Region Office if all parties believe they have done all they can to address it.

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.

Review of complaints

Stawell Secondary College will consider whether complaints relating to child safety identify any causes or systemic child safety risks, and take steps to address those risks and continuously improve our child safety practices.

Record keeping and other requirements.

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

- All identified 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 school 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 school website
- Included in staff induction processes.
- Included in our staff handbook/manual.
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions.
- Annual reference in the school newsletter
- Hard copy available from the school administration upon request

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

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

- Complaints - Parents

The Department's parents' website:

- Raise a complaint or concern about your school
- Report racism or religious discrimination in schools

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	Oct 2026
Consultation	School Council/School Community
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	Feb 2027

HISTORY OF CHANGES

Date	Summary of changes
Feb 2025	New Logo Inclusion of a summary of changes table
Oct 2026	Inclusion of the following information to align with DET Policy Updates - Raising a concern - inclusion of: interpreting and translation services - Updated information regarding timelines. - Review of Complaints - Additional Information in Response