

# COMPLAINTS POLICY

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide an outline of the complaints process at Diamond Valley College 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 Diamond Valley College 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.

## POLICY

Diamond Valley College 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:

- raise and discuss issues in a courteous and respectful manner
- acknowledge that the goal is to achieve an outcome that is in the affected student's best interests and acceptable to all parties
- act in good faith and respect the privacy and confidentiality of those involved, as appropriate
- recognise that all parties, including the broader school community, have rights and responsibilities that must be balanced
- recognise that schools and the Department may be subject to legal constraints on their ability to act or disclose information in some circumstances.

## Types of concerns and complaints

These procedures cover concerns and complaints about:

- general issues of student behaviour that are contrary to Diamond Valley College's code of conduct
- incidents of bullying or harassment in the classroom or college grounds
- learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
- communication with parents

- college fees and payments
- general administrative issues
- any other school-related matters except as detailed below.
- Issues relating to staff members or complex student issues

#### **Types of concerns and complaints NOT covered**

**These procedures do not cover matters for which there are existing rights of review or appeal.**

Those matters include:

- student discipline matters involving expulsions
- complaints about employee conduct or performance and complaints that should be dealt with by performance management, grievance resolution or disciplinary action
- complaints by DET employees related to their employment
- student critical incident matters
- other criminal matters..

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

Diamond Valley 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 Diamond Valley College.

#### **Complaints process**

Diamond Valley College 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

- the student's teacher or homegroup teacher about learning issues and incidents that happened in their class or group
- the year level or Sub School Coordinator if students from several classes are involved
- the appropriate Assistant Principal about issues relating to staff members or complex student issues
- the Principal about issues relating to College policy, school management, staff members or very complex student issues.

If you are not sure who to contact ask to speak to the Junior( 7-9 ) or Senior ( 10-12 ) Assistant Principal.

Complainants can seek the services of an advocate when they feel they are unable to express their concern clearly. An advocate can be a friend or someone who is available through an appropriate support organisation.

All parties involved in addressing a complaint may seek the services of a mediator when there is difficulty coming to an agreement.

Diamond Valley College will ensure that the complainant is aware of these supports. A complainant who wishes to use these support services should ensure the person addressing the concern or complaint is aware of their intention and is in agreement.

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 make a formal complaint to the Principal.

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 through the front office with the 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.
3. **Response:** Where possible, a resolution meeting will be arranged with the 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:** Diamond Valley College will acknowledge receipt of your complaint as soon as possible (usually within 48 hours) and will seek to resolve complaints in a timely manner. Depending on the complexity of the complaint, Diamond Valley 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, Diamond Valley College will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

## Resolution

Where appropriate, Diamond Valley College may seek to resolve a complaint by:

- an explanation
- an acknowledgement of each other's perspective and agreement on ways to manage differences
- an apology or expression of regret
- an admission of fault
- a change of decision
- a change of policy, procedure or practice
- agreement on what constitutes acceptable behaviour
- an undertaking that unacceptable behaviour will change
- the waiving of debt related to school fees and payments
- a refund of parent payments
- the provision of counselling or other support.

Remedies should be implemented as soon as possible.

In some circumstances, Diamond Valley 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.

#### **Complaint dismissed**

A complaint can only be dismissed:

- after it has been investigated
- if an investigation has determined that the complaint cannot be substantiated.

#### **Complaint unresolved**

A complaint is considered to be unresolved if the complainant does not agree on a course of action and/or a remedy, or if the remedy cannot be implemented. In such cases, a school must involve its regional office to assist in resolving the complaint.

### **ADDRESSING CONCERNs OR COMPLAINTS**

All complaints will be noted and acted on promptly by the staff member who receives the complaint.

All complaints made in writing will be acknowledged and the complainant will be informed of the timeline for the investigation.

Should the complaint involve complex issues advice may be sought from external organisations to Diamond Valley College. The complainant will be informed if this alters the agreed timeline. In all cases, Diamond Valley College will try to resolve a concern or complaint within 20 school days.

## Escalation

If a person with a concern or complaint is not satisfied with the outcome determined by Diamond Valley College, they should contact the North Western Victoria Regional Office of D.E.T.

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

## FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

### *Intranet Supporting Documents*

- [Communication Policy](#)

### *External Links*

- [www.education.gov.au/about/contact/parent complaint](http://www.education.gov.au/about/contact/parent_complaint)
- [www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au/www./html/93-complaint-handling-guide-for-the-victorian-public-sector.asp](http://www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au/www./html/93-complaint-handling-guide-for-the-victorian-public-sector.asp)

## REVIEW PERIOD

This policy was reviewed by college Council in 2018 and should be reviewed by May 2022 or earlier if deemed necessary