



Codes of Conduct

Complaints (General) Policy

This document provides clear and transparent information to the College community about how concerns and complaints by parents and students about the College, staff conduct, or a student's education and/or wellbeing, can be made, will be managed, and will be resolved. Concerns about child safety and reportable conduct will be addressed in accordance with the **Reporting and Responding to Child Protection Concerns** (a copy of which is available on the College's website).

Guiding Principles

We believe that resolving legitimate concerns and complaints is an important way in which the College can support the education and wellbeing of its students, and by which parents and students can otherwise provide the College with feedback to enable future improvements.

Our aim is to ensure that complaints 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 concern or complaint.

When raising a concern or complaint with the College, parents and students can expect to:

- Be treated with respect and courtesy.
- Have their concerns and complaints taken seriously, considered impartially, and dealt with on the merits.
- Have their concerns and complaints dealt with in a confidential and timely manner.
- Have access to appropriate and easily understandable information regarding the complaint resolution process being followed by the College.
- Be supported by the College during the concern or complaint handling process.
- Be kept informed of the progress and outcome of their concern or complaint.
- Not be victimised, or subjected to reprisal, for raising concerns or complaints in good faith.

In return, the College expects that parents and students will:

- Treat others (including staff) with respect and courtesy.

- Raise concerns as soon as possible after the event giving rise to the concern or complaint has occurred.
- Provide complete and factual information about the concern or complaint.
- Ask for assistance or further information as needed.
- Act in good faith to achieve a reasonable outcome.

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

Framework

The College's framework for dealing with concerns and complaints involves a three-step process, namely:

- Stage 1 – A parent or student raises a concern
- Stage 2 – A parent or student makes a complaint to the Principal
- Stage 3 – A parent or student requests a review by the Board

Our aim is for the prompt resolution of concerns, ideally without there being a need for a formal complaint to be made.

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

Stage 1 – Raise the concern

At first instance, parents and students should raise their concerns directly with the College. The College must be aware of a concern about a student's education and/or wellbeing in order to resolve it, or otherwise take reasonable steps to protect its students from harm.

We believe that an issue is often best resolved closest to its source, and encourage parents to raise concerns with their child's classroom teacher in the first instance. However, depending on the severity of an issue, and whether the classroom teacher has a conflict of interest, parents and students may choose to go directly to a senior staff member (including a member of the Executive Management Team).

The College appreciates that creating and maintaining a child safe culture requires input from the entire College community. As such, the College is best able to provide a personalised and student-centred approach to learning when parents and staff work directly and cohesively with one another, to resolve any issues or concerns and otherwise develop partnerships in the community.

Parents should consider the following prior to, and when raising a concern:

- Clearly identify the issue or problem prior to contacting the College.
- Identify the party or parties involved.
- Consider the outcome you are trying to achieve (while being realistic and open to other outcomes and solutions).
- Decide whether the issue or problem is in the nature of a concern, enquiry or grievance. This will help in finding a solution.
- If there is more than one issue or problem, write a list so that you are properly prepared.
- Make an appointment to meet with your child's class teacher or other relevant staff member (counsellor, year level coordinator) to discuss the concern - the best way to do this is to contact College Administration to arrange a mutually convenient time for a telephone call or meeting.
- Remain courteous and calm when conveying your concerns. The College is within its rights to terminate a conversation with a parent until such time that a courteous and calm conversation can continue.

Once a concern is raised, the College will record the details of the concerns including the name and contact details of the person raising the concern. The College's focus will be on understanding the nature of the problem, the party or parties involved and the nature of agreeable solutions. Where a mutually agreed outcome is not possible, the staff member handling the concern will make a decision that aligns with the College's policies, procedures and legal obligations.

Stage 2 – Make a complaint

If you are not satisfied with the way your concern has been handled, you may choose to make a complaint to the Principal. If the complaint concerns the Principal, the complaint should be made to the Board (and addressed to the Chair).

You may write to the Principal (who will then acknowledge receipt of the complaint as soon as practical, being usually within three (3) business days), or telephone the College to arrange a

meeting with the Principal. Please note that if phoning to arrange a meeting, our administration team will take your details and endeavour to confirm a meeting time as soon as it is practicable to do so.

If you arrange to meet with the Principal, you may choose 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.

Complaints to the Principal (or the Board as applicable), should ordinarily be made within one calendar month of the initial concern first being raised with the College.

When the Principal (or the Board as applicable) is dealing with a complaint, the College's objective is to achieve a resolution by:

- Clarifying the substance of the complaint, and the steps taken by the College to address the initial concern.
- Identifying whether the complaint raises an issue regarding a breach of the College's policies.
- Identifying whether the complaint raises an issue that would be more appropriately addressed under the College's **Reporting and Responding to Child Protection Concerns Policy** (a copy of which is available on the College's website).
- Communicating with the relevant parent(s), student(s) and staff in an attempt to resolve the issue by agreement (where practicable).
- Failing agreement, investigating the complaint and deciding appropriate outcomes in accordance with procedural fairness principles.

The Principal or Board (as applicable) may seek the assistance of a third party, including an independent mediator or external investigator, to assist with this stage. The Principal may also delegate the management of the complaint to another senior staff member where the Principal considers it appropriate to do so. Following the investigation, the staff member handling the concern will communicate with the parent and relevant parties, to discuss the outcome and an appropriate course of action (if any).

The College will aim to resolve complaints within fifteen (15) business days where practicable.

Stage 3 – Requesting a review

If you are not satisfied that your complaint has been adequately resolved by the Principal, you may request a review. Requests for review should be made to the Board and addressed to the Chair.

Requests must be made in writing within ten (10) business days of the date the Principal communicated the outcome to you. The grounds for the review, and in particular any concerns with the way the relevant complaint was dealt with, must be clearly identified.

The Board may delegate all or parts of the review, including to the Chair, a sub-committee or independent investigator, however any ultimate decision will still be made by the Board.

For the avoidance of doubt, the Board will not delegate to the Principal a review of a decision he or she has already made. However, if the Board is satisfied that a complaint has not been properly raised with the Principal (and the Principal does not otherwise have a conflict of interest), it may refer the matter to the Principal to make an initial decision (noting that decision would then create a right to request a review).

The College will aim to resolve requests for review within forty-five (45) business days where practicable.

Withdrawal of a complaint

A complaint can be withdrawn by a parent or student at any stage during the processes outlined in this document. A complaint can only be withdrawn by the person who made the complaint to the College.

Ideally, all complaints should be retracted in writing, however a signed and dated notation on the original record of the complaint, stating it has been withdrawn verbally, can be made by the person at the College responsible for managing the complaint.

The College will notify affected parties if a complaint is withdrawn, where considered appropriate.

Anonymous Complaints and Concerns

The College is committed to dealing with concerns and complaints in accordance with the processes outlined in this document. The College respects in some cases, complainants would prefer to remain anonymous and not put a name to the concerns. The College treats concerns about a student's education and/or wellbeing with the utmost importance, and will investigate concerns raised to the fullest extent practicable. However, anonymity can make it difficult for the College to effectively

resolve concerns and complaints (particularly where the College is being asked to accept an anonymous source's version of events) and it is therefore not encouraged. The College will maintain appropriate confidentiality, as outlined in this document, and protect the complainant's identity to the best of its ability.

Vexatious Concerns and Complaints

The College does not tolerate vexatious concerns and complaints.

Previously-addressed Concerns and Complaints

Concerns and complaints that have been previously addressed by the College, or which were not raised with the College within a reasonable period of time, will not be considered in the absence of highly relevant new information and/or evidence coming to light.

External Complaints

The College acknowledges that parents and students may also make a complaint to an external body, such as the Victorian Registration & Qualifications Authority, or take legal action if dissatisfied with the College.

However, the College encourages parents and students to raise any concerns and grievances in accordance with the procedures outlined in this document.

Confidentiality

Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained by Newhaven College at all times when dealing with a concern or complaint from a parent or student, with information only being provided to those who have a right or need to know.

Communication

This document is available to parents and students on the [College website](#).

This document is available to staff on the staff intranet. Aspects of (and updates to) this document will be addressed in the College's professional development updates, bulletins and newsletters.

Approval and Review

This document is approved and endorsed by the Principal and Board. This document will be reviewed annually.