



Doctrina Vitae

Bacchus Marsh
Grammar

School Board Policy

Governance

GOV - Complaints Handling Policy

Approved by the School Board 29 March 2023





Complaints Handling Policy

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1 Bacchus Marsh Grammar's Complaints Handling Policy

- 1.1.1 Bacchus Marsh Grammar (the School) welcomes feedback from all members of the School community and takes all complaints or concerns that may be raised seriously. This Complaints Handling Policy is designed to assist you to understand how to make a complaint.

2 What is a Complaint?

- 2.1.1 A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to the School, related to its services or operations, or the complaints handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.

- 2.1.2 Complaints about child abuse, grooming or other harm, or other breaches of our Child Safe Codes of Conduct, relating to conduct by:

- Current or former staff members
- Current or former students
- Other people on the School premises or at School events

Are managed differently from other complaints.

Refer to the section at the end of this policy – Complaints About Child Safety Incidents or Concerns At or Involving the School or its Staff Members – for more information.

3 Bacchus Marsh Grammar's Commitment

- 3.1.1 The School is committed to handling complaints effectively and efficiently. To manage complaints effectively, the School has established a Complaints Handling Program in line with:
- Principle 6 of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, using the Office of Child Safety's "Complaint Handling Guide: Upholding the Rights of Children and Young People".
 - The international complaints handling standard (ISO 10002:2018 Quality management – Customer satisfaction – Guidelines for complaints handling in organisations).
 - The Australian / New Zealand complaints handling standard (AS/NZS 10002:2014 Guidelines for complaint management in organisations).
 - The Australian Privacy Principles (APP).
- 3.1.2 There is no fee associated with making a complaint.
- 3.1.3 The School's Complaints Handling Program includes the establishment of an online complaints management system which allows the School to effectively capture, manage and report on complaints.
- 3.1.4 Regular analysis of complaints received and the implementation of rectification action, where deficiencies are identified, are key to the School's commitment.
- 3.1.5 Complaints may be made anonymously or using a pseudonym. If you make an anonymous complaint, we will be unable to provide you with feedback on the progress and outcome of your complaint. It may also limit our ability to fully investigate the complaint if we are unable to contact you to obtain further details.

4 Informal Complaints Resolution

- 4.1.1 The vast majority of issues causing concern in schools can be handled quickly and in an informal manner. We therefore ask that, where appropriate, you first raise your concern directly with the relevant staff member. Even if the issue is resolved informally, all staff are required to log issues through our complaints management system so that we are able to identify any systemic issues arising and take appropriate rectification action.

5 How Do I Make a Formal Complaint?

- 5.1.1 If you have been unable to resolve a matter informally, or simply wish to make a formal complaint you can do so by any of the following means:
1. Sending an email to complaints@bmg.vic.edu.au.
 2. Writing a letter to the School addressed to "The Complaints Manager".
 3. Telephoning the School and asking to speak to your child's Year Level Coordinator
- 5.1.2 All formal complaints will be logged into the School's online complaints management system and managed in accordance with the following process.

6 The School's Internal Complaints Handling Process

Step 1 - All formal complaints are logged through the School's online complaints management system where they are screened by one of the School's Complaints Officers, or in the case of complaints against the Principal or a member of the School Board by the Chair of the School Board. A complaint about the Chair of the School Board is directed to the Principal. Complaints about the Principal or a member of the Chair of the School Board will be properly investigated but they will not be dealt with by the Complaints Officer.

Step 2 – All valid complaints, except those made anonymously, will be acknowledged in writing, within 10 business days, and allocated a status, priority, and target resolution date. It is the Schools policy, where possible, to resolve all disputes within 28 days.

Step 3 – The Complaints Officer (or if the complaints is about the Principal, a member of the School Board or the Chair of the School Board, the person whom the Chair of the School Board or Director asks to investigate the complaint) will conduct an investigation into the issues raised, following principles of procedural fairness, and make a determination.

Step 4 - Following the determination, if appropriate, the Complaints Officer (or if the complaints is about the Principal, a member of the School Board or the Chair of the School Board, the person whom the Chair of the School Board or Director asks to investigate the complaint) will formulate a resolution and, except where the complaint was anonymous, provide a written response to the complainant. The matter will be closed if this response is accepted.

Step 5 - If the response is not accepted, the matter will be reviewed internally by the Principal or the Principal's delegate, who may seek additional information or submissions from the relevant parties. The Principal or their delegate seek to resolve all disputes within 28 days from the date that the review process is initiated. The matter will be closed if the response of the Principal, or their delegate, is accepted. If the complaint was about the Principal or a member of the School Board or the Chair of the School Board, the Schools consultants – GT Management Group will review the matter.

Step 6 - All complaints received will be entered into the School's Complaints Register and, where appropriate, a corrective action request will be made to address any underlying processes which the complaints investigation revealed may require improvement.

Step 7 - If the matter remains unresolved, and/or the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome or the way that the complaint has been managed, the complainant may pursue external resolution alternatives. External agencies to which complaints may be made include the Victorian Regulations and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) (vrqa.vic.gov.au) and the Victorian Ombudsman (ombudsman.vic.gov.au). For general information on mediation, counselling, advocacy, and support, refer to the Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria (disputes.vic.gov.au).

7 Process for Review of a Complaint's Resolution

- 7.1.1 Depending on the nature of the complaint, complainants may be afforded a number of avenues throughout the complaints handling process should they feel that their complaint is not being handled as they see fit, including:
- seeking alternative dispute resolution other than through the School's Complaints Handling Program, for example through counselling and mediation which involves the assistance of an independent third party who helps parties to negotiate a settlement of the complaint or dispute;
 - seeking legal advice following an outcome, should a complaint escalate to a dispute, to ensure that they know their rights relating to the issue at hand;

- making a request for an alternative investigator for the complaint where the complainant perceives a conflict of interest, or potential for conflict of interest.

7.1.2 The above alternatives should be discussed with the School to determine the most suitable avenue.

8 Reporting to the School Board

8.1.1 It is critical that the School Board, Principal and Senior Management Team are notified of serious complaints as quickly as possible, and regularly informed as to the School's performance with respect to complaints handling.

8.1.2 It's the Complaints Manager's responsibility to report to the Senior Management Team who will escalate any serious complaints to the Principal.

8.1.3 Within 3 days, the Principal may determine that the seriousness of the matter warrants involvement of the School Board and the requisite notification will be made to the Board members within 5 days of the Principal's decision.

9 Confidentiality and Privacy

The School is committed to maintaining the confidentiality of information throughout the complaints process. This includes maintaining the privacy of information relating to the person making the complaint and any person named in the complaint.

10 Complaints About Child Safety Incidents or Concerns at or Involving the School or its Staff Members

10.1.1 Complaints about or allegations of:

- breaches of the Child Safe Codes of Conduct
- child abuse, grooming or other harm of a current or former student by:
 - current or former staff members
 - current or former students
 - other people on School premises or at School events
- "reportable conduct" as defined in the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- other child safety-related staff misconduct

are managed by the School in a different manner from other complaints.

This is because of the additional confidentiality and privacy requirements surrounding these kinds of matters.

We refer to these as child safe related complaints.

If your complaint is a child safe related complaint, please make your complaint to: Senior Child Safety Officer, Deb Ogston or if this person is the subject of your complaint please notify the Principal, Andrew Neal.

For information about how the School manages child safe related complaints, as well as any child safety incidents or concerns at or involving the School or its staff members, please refer to our Procedures for Managing Child Safety Incidents or Concerns At or Involving the School or its Staff, Volunteers or Contractors, available on our public website.

11 Authorisation

Board Document No.		
Board Document Name	Complaints Handling Policy	
Approval Authority	Chair of the School Board	
Approval Signature	Cathy Jeffkins Chair of the School Board Bacchus Marsh Grammar	
Administrator	Company Secretary	Greg Gough
Approval Date	29 March 2023	
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12 History

Date	Amendment
27 May 2020	1. New policy
27 October 2021	2. Added sections 4 – 9 to provide more details.
30 November 2022	3. Added section 6 step 7 and section 10.
29 March 2023	4. Amended based on Complispace updates and recommendations following updates to the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.