

## Complaints Policy

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*Alphington Grammar 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.*

### **Purpose:**

At Alphington Grammar School we are committed to providing a safe and supportive work and learning environment for all employees and students. We acknowledge that employees, students and parents, or people from the wider community, can sometimes feel aggrieved about something that is happening at the School which appears to be discriminatory, is unfair, unjust or unreasonable, constitute harassment or cause concern.

An employee, student, parent or community member can have a complaint about any decision, behaviour, act or omission (whether by the Principal, members of the leadership team or other staff/students or parents) that they feel is discriminatory or unreasonable.

Sometimes the aggrieved person can address the issue by raising the complaint directly with the person involved with the issue. However, that is not always possible, and sometimes several attempts at local or face-to-face resolution have been attempted or have taken place with little success. Whilst most issues can be resolved through direct discussion with the parties involved, there may be instances in which to take up the issue with the other person on a face-to-face basis is not possible.

In line with our stated School values, we aim to treat all persons within the School or wider community with **respect** and in a manner mindful of the **diverse** nature of our School. We acknowledge our overarching **responsibility** in responding to all matters concerning complaints, grievances and concerns with **integrity**, and **we endeavour** to provide a satisfactory outcome within the scope of these guidelines.

Alphington Grammar School endorses the guiding principles of the National Safe Schools Framework which states that Australian Schools should:

- affirm the rights of all members of the school community to feel safe and be safe at school;
- acknowledge that being safe and supported at school is essential for student wellbeing and effective learning;
- accept responsibility for developing and sustaining safe and supportive learning and teaching communities that also fulfill the School's child protection responsibilities;
- encourage the active participation of all school community members in developing and maintaining a safe school community where diversity is valued;
- actively support young people to develop understanding and skills to keep themselves and others safe; and
- commit to developing a safe school community through a whole-school and evidence-based approach.

The School recognises that these principles are especially important when dealing with all aspects of complaint handling as harmonious relationships underpin successful schooling.

### **1. What is a Complaint?**

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

## 2. Alphington Grammar School's Commitment:

- 2.1. Alphington Grammar School is committed to handling complaints effectively and efficiently. To manage complaints effectively, we have established a Complaints Handling Program in line with both the international complaints handling standard (ISO 10002:2014 Quality management – Customer satisfaction – Guidelines for complaints handling in organizations), and the Australian/New Zealand complaints handling standard (AS/NZS 10002:2014 Guidelines for complaint management in organizations).
- 2.2. Our Complaints Handling Program includes the establishment of an online complaints management system which allows us to effectively capture, manage and report on complaints. Regular analysis of complaints received and the implementation of rectification action, where deficiencies are identified, are key to the School's commitment. Our internal complaints handling process are available at no cost.

## 3. How Do I Make a Complaint:

- 3.1. We ask that, where appropriate, you first raise the matter directly with the relevant staff member.
- 3.2. If that is not appropriate or the issue was not addressed to your satisfaction, please contact our Complaints Manager on (03) 9497 4777 or at [info@ags.vic.edu.au](mailto:info@ags.vic.edu.au)
- 3.3. 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:
  - sending an email addressed to "The Complaints Manager" at [info@ags.vic.edu.au](mailto:info@ags.vic.edu.au)
  - writing a letter to the School addressed to "The Complaints Manager," or
  - telephoning the School and asking to speak to the Complaints Manager.
- 3.4. Please note that the Complainant may choose to be anonymous or use a pseudonym, however this may impact the School's ability to investigate the complaint, and to take appropriate action to resolve the issue.

# CHILD SAFETY COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

*(Compliant with Ministerial Order No. 1359 and Victorian Child Safe Standards)*

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## 1. Purpose

This policy outlines the processes by which **Alphington Grammar School** manages complaints, concerns and reports relating to:

- Child safety and wellbeing
- Allegations of child abuse or child-related misconduct
- Breaches of the Child Safe Standards
- Concerns regarding staff, volunteers, contractors or other members of the school community

The policy ensures that complaints are:

- Taken seriously
- Responded to promptly and fairly
- Managed in a culturally safe, child-focused and trauma-informed manner
- Handled in compliance with **Ministerial Order No. 1359** and relevant Victorian legislation

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Members of the School Council / Governing Authority
- The Principal and leadership team
- All staff (teaching and non-teaching)

- Volunteers and contractors
- Students
- Parents, carers and members of the school community

This policy applies to complaints received in relation to school activities, including online environments and school boarding premises (if applicable).

### 3. Legislative and Regulatory Framework

This policy supports compliance with:

- Ministerial Order No. 1359
- Victorian Child Safe Standards
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)
- Reportable Conduct Scheme
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)

### 4. Policy Statement

Alphington Grammar School:

- Has **zero tolerance for child abuse**
- Promotes a culture where children feel safe to speak up
- Ensures complaints processes are accessible, transparent and child-focused
- Supports complainants and protects them from victimisation or reprisal
- Manages complaints confidentially and fairly
- Takes immediate action where a child is at risk

### 5. Alignment to Ministerial Order 1359

This policy addresses:

- **Clause 9** – Child safety complaints processes
- **Clause 7** – Reporting and responding to suspected child abuse
- **Clause 10** – Risk management
- **Clause 8** – Child empowerment
- **Clause 11** – Implementation and review

### 6. Guiding Principles

#### 6.1 Child-Centred Approach

- The safety and wellbeing of the child is paramount
- The child's voice is heard and respected
- Children are informed about complaint processes in age-appropriate ways

#### 6.2 Cultural Safety

- Complaints processes are culturally safe for Aboriginal children
- Inclusive of children from diverse backgrounds
- Respectful of disability and additional needs

#### 6.3 Procedural Fairness

- All parties are treated respectfully
- Allegations are assessed objectively
- Decisions are evidence-based

## 7. What Is a Complaint?

A complaint may relate to:

- Child abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, neglect)
- Grooming behaviours
- Inappropriate conduct
- Breach of the Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Failure to act on child safety concerns
- Unsafe school environments

Complaints may be made verbally or in writing.

## 8. How to Make a Complaint

Complaints can be made to:

- The Principal
- The Child Safety Officer
- A member of the Leadership Team
- Any trusted staff member
- The School Council (where appropriate)

Children may:

- Speak to a trusted adult
- Use a written form
- Use an anonymous reporting option

Information about how to complain is:

- Published on the School website
- Included in student handbooks
- Communicated in induction materials
- Displayed in student-friendly formats

## 9. Immediate Safety Response

If a complaint indicates that a child is in immediate danger:

- Emergency services (000) will be contacted
- The child will be protected from further harm
- Mandatory reporting obligations will be met immediately

## 10. Reporting Obligations

Where a complaint relates to suspected child abuse:

The School will:

- Comply with mandatory reporting requirements
- Notify Child Protection or Victoria Police where required
- Comply with Failure to Disclose and Failure to Protect obligations
- Notify the Commission for Children and Young People under the Reportable Conduct Scheme (where applicable)

Internal investigations will not delay external reporting.

## 11. Complaint Handling Process

### Step 1 – Acknowledgement

- Complaint acknowledged within 2 working days
- Complainant informed of next steps

### **Step 2 – Risk Assessment**

- Immediate safety risk assessment conducted
- Interim protective measures implemented if required

### **Step 3 – Investigation**

- Conducted by Principal or delegated senior staff
- May involve external investigators where appropriate
- Child interviewed in trauma-informed manner
- Procedural fairness afforded

### **Step 4 – Outcome**

- Findings documented
- Corrective actions implemented
- Disciplinary action where required

### **Step 5 – Communication**

- Complainant informed of outcome (within privacy constraints)
- Ongoing support offered

## **12. Support for Children and Complainants**

The School will:

- Provide wellbeing support
- Offer counselling
- Allow a support person during interviews
- Protect from retaliation or victimisation

## **13. Confidentiality and Records Management**

- Complaints are handled confidentially
- Information shared only on a need-to-know basis
- Records stored securely
- Records retained in accordance with Public Record Office Victoria standards
- Child safety complaint data analysed for trends

## **14. Anonymous Complaints**

Anonymous complaints will be:

- Assessed on available information
- Investigated where sufficient information exists

## **15. Protection from Victimisation**

The School prohibits:

- Retaliation
- Intimidation
- Discrimination against complainants

Disciplinary action will be taken if victimisation occurs.

## **16. Continuous Improvement**

The School will:

- Review complaint data annually
- Report de-identified trends to School Council
- Incorporate findings into risk management processes

- Review this policy at least every two years

## **17. Responsibilities**

### **Governing Authority**

- Ensure compliant complaints processes
- Monitor child safety complaint data
- Oversee Reportable Conduct Scheme compliance

### **Principal**

- Ensure complaints are managed appropriately
- Ensure reporting obligations are met
- Provide resources for training

### **Child Safety Officer**

- Support complaint handling
- Provide guidance on child-safe practice
- Maintain complaint register

### **Staff and Volunteers**

- Report concerns immediately
- Cooperate with investigations

## **18. Communication and Accessibility**

This policy is:

- Publicly available
- Written in accessible language
- Provided in child-friendly summaries
- Available in translated formats upon request

## **19. Review Schedule**

This policy will be reviewed:

- Every two years
- Following any serious incident
- Following legislative changes
- Following VRQA audit recommendations

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## **APPENDIX A – CHILD SAFETY COMPLAINT FLOWCHART (Summary)**

1. Concern Raised
2. Immediate Safety Check
3. Mandatory Reporting (if required)
4. Risk Assessment
5. Investigation
6. Outcome & Action
7. Record Keeping
8. Review & Monitoring

**APPENDIX B**  
**CHILD SAFETY COMPLAINT / CONCERN REPORT FORM**  
(Confidential – Child Safe Standards)

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**Section 1 – Complainant Details**

<b>Field</b>	<b>Details</b>
Name (optional if anonymous)	
Relationship to School	<input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/> Parent/Carer <input type="checkbox"/> Staff <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer <input type="checkbox"/> Contractor <input type="checkbox"/> Other
Contact details	
Preferred method of contact	
Date of report	
Time of report	
If the complainant is a <b>student</b> , was a support person offered?	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

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**Section 2 – Child Details (if applicable)**

<b>Field</b>	<b>Details</b>
Child's Name	
Year Level	
Date of Birth (if known)	
Parent/Carer Name	
Is the child of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background?	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say
Does the child have additional needs?	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Disability <input type="checkbox"/> Medical Condition <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural Needs <input type="checkbox"/> Other

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**Section 3 – Details of the Concern / Complaint**

- Nature of concern (tick all that apply):
    - Suspected child abuse
    - Grooming behaviour
    - Inappropriate conduct
    - Breach of Code of Conduct
    - Failure to report
    - Online safety concern
    - Other
  - Description of incident/concern:  
(Include dates, times, location, people involved. Attach additional pages if required.)
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- Is the child currently safe?
    - Yes
    - No
    - Unsure

If “No” or “Unsure”, describe immediate risk:

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#### **Section 4 – Alleged Person Responsible (if known)**

<b>Field</b>	<b>Details</b>
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Name

Position / Role

Relationship to child

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#### **Section 5 – Actions Taken So Far**

Has this been reported elsewhere?

- Victoria Police
- Child Protection
- CCYP (Reportable Conduct)
- Principal
- Other

Details:

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#### **Section 6 – Mandatory Reporting Assessment (Staff Use Only)**

- Mandatory report required
- Report made to Child Protection

Date:

Time:

Reference number:

- Police notified

Event number:

- Reportable Conduct Scheme notification required
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#### **Section 7 – Risk Assessment (Staff Use Only)**

Immediate protective actions implemented:

- Staff member stood down
  - Supervision arrangements adjusted
  - Student safety plan developed
  - Parent notified
  - Other
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#### **Section 8 – Investigation Outcome (Leadership Use Only)**

Findings:

Outcome:

Corrective/disciplinary action taken:

Date closed:

Principal signature:

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#### **Privacy Statement**

This information will be handled confidentially in accordance with privacy legislation and child safety obligations. Information may be shared with relevant authorities where required by law.