
COMPLAINTS POLICY 2018-2022

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide an outline of the complaints process at Cranbourne East Secondary 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 Cranbourne East Secondary College are managed in a timely, effective, fair and respectful manner.

Objectives

Parent and guardian concerns and complaints most commonly relate to the educational or other progress of their child, to the management of an incident between students, or to the implementation of school policy. Where appropriate, the confidentiality of all parties involved will be maintained and steps will be taken by the College to achieve an outcome that is acceptable to all parties.

A 'concern' refers to an issue that is raised informally in order to improve or change a situation.

A 'complaint' is an expression of a grievance where the complainant is seeking justice.

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.

Cranbourne East Secondary 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 concerns and 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 regarding their ability to act or disclose information in some circumstances.

Preparation for raising a concern or complaint

Cranbourne East Secondary 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 Cranbourne East Secondary College (see “Further Information and Resources” section below).

Complaints process

Cranbourne East Secondary 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 your child’s HG teacher or Year Level Coordinators. 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 Assistant Principal of your child’s year level, noting that formal complaints should be directed to a member of the school’s leadership team. If your concern is still not resolved, you may then wish to make a formal complaint to the Principal. This should only be done after there is evidence that the appropriate steps have been taken and there has not been a satisfactory outcome.

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. If a parent/guardian or student has a concern or complaint it is best raised with the College in the first instance, before seeking advice from the Department Of Education.

The following process will apply:

1. **Complaint received:** It is strongly recommended that a parent or guardian email or telephone through the front office to outline the complaint so that the issue may be fully understood. Where the appropriate staff member cannot be reached at the time of call, they will attempt to return the telephone call as soon as possible. Parent or guardians may elect to write an email to the College via Compass or a letter may be dropped off to the school. If the concern cannot be readily or appropriately settled over the phone, an appointment time will be scheduled. All parent or guardians are required to ring ahead to make appointments.
2. To avoid delays and frustrations, pre-arranged appointments are a more effective manner of dealing with concerns or complaints, bearing in mind that more than 1200 students attend the College.
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. Upon receiving the complaint, the appropriate staff member will provide a timeframe for investigation of the complaint. The College will make every attempt to resolve the matter as quickly as possible. In some instances, complaints or concerns may be complex and involve many people being interviewed and many statements taken; in these situations the College

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may require more time to investigate and resolve the matter. In some instances, the College may seek advice from the Department of Education's regional office.

4. **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.

5. **Timelines:** Cranbourne East Secondary 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, Cranbourne East Secondary 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, Cranbourne East Secondary College will consult with you and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

Resolution

Where appropriate, Cranbourne East 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 student counselling or other support
- other actions consistent with the school values that are intended to support the student, parent and school relationship, engagement, and participation in the school community.

In some circumstances, Cranbourne East 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 a parent or community member is not satisfied that their complaint has been resolved by the school, or if their complaint is about the Principal, then the complaint should be referred to the Department of Education and Training on 8765 5600.

Cranbourne East Secondary College may also refer a complaint to the Department of Education & Training if we believe that we have done all we can to address the complaint.

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

Please refer to CESC Statement of Values & School Philosophy.

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