

## COMPLAINTS POLICY



### Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact Endeavour Hills Specialist School on 91 13 4100

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide an outline of the complaints process at Endeavour Hills Specialist School so that parents/carers 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 Endeavour Hills Specialist School 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 (Department) process where there are different mechanisms in place to review certain decisions, for example, expulsion appeals.

### POLICY

Endeavour Hills Specialist School provides highly individualised programs of learning for students with disability and high needs who have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder with a language disorder and/or an intellectual disability. The school welcomes students from 5 to 18 years of age.

School participation maximises life opportunities for children and young people by providing them with a comprehensive learning program and access to support networks. It also helps to develop important skills, knowledge and values that set them up for further learning and active participation in their local community.

Endeavour Hills Specialist School 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:

- be considerate of each other's views and respect each other's role
- be focused on resolution of the complaint, with the interests of the student involved at the centre
- act in good faith and cooperation
- behave with respect and courtesy
- respect the privacy and confidentiality of those involved, as appropriate
- operate within and seek reasonable resolutions that comply with any applicable legislation and Department policy
- recognise that schools and the Department may be subject to legal constraints on their ability to act or disclose information in some circumstances.

### Preparation for raising a concern or complaint

Endeavour Hills Specialist School encourages parents/carers and members of the community who may wish to submit a complaint to:

- carefully consider the issues they would like to discuss
- remember they may not have all the facts relating to the issues of concern
- think about how the matter could be resolved
- be informed by checking the policies and guidelines set by the Department and Endeavour Hills Specialist School (see "Further Information and Resources" section below).

### Support person

Complainants are welcome to have a support person to assist at any time in raising a complaint with our school. The name, contact details, and relationship between the support person and the complainant should be provided to the school.

To ensure families are able to engage positively and fully with the school, translation services can be made available where needed or requested.

### Complaints process

Endeavour Hills Specialist School is always keen to discuss with parents/carers and community members any concerns that they may have. Concerns in the first instance should be directed to the Principal. Where possible, we will work closely with the complainant to ensure that their concerns are appropriately addressed.

Where concerns cannot be resolved in this way, parents/carers and community members may wish to make a formal complaint to the Principal.

In the case of a formal complaint, and depending on the nature of the complaint raised, we 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:** Email or arrange a meeting with the Principal through the office staff to outline your complaint so that we can fully understand what the issues are. We will discuss complaints in a way that is most convenient for the complainant, 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 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, an agreed written summary of the complaint will be produced in the event of further action. 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:** Endeavour Hills Specialist School will acknowledge receipt of your complaint as soon as possible (usually within two school days) and will seek to resolve complaints in a timely manner. Depending on the complexity of the complaint, Endeavour Hills Specialist School may need some time to gather enough information to fully understand the circumstances of the 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, Endeavour Hills Specialist School will consult with the complainant and discuss any interim solutions to the dispute that can be put in place.

Please note that vexatious, querulous, frivolous or malicious complaints may need a customised strategy which does not adhere to this policy.

## Resolution

Where appropriate, Endeavour Hills Specialist School 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 school values that are intended to support the student, parent/carer and school relationship, engagement, and participation in the school community.

In some circumstances, Endeavour Hills Specialist School may organise a meeting with an independent third party, or a mediation session with an accredited mediator to assist in the resolution of the dispute.

## Escalation

If the complainant is not satisfied that the complaint has been resolved by the school, or if the complaint is about the Principal and you do not want to raise it directly with them, then the complaint should be referred to the South Eastern Victoria Region by contacting 1300 338 738 or [sevr@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:sevr@education.vic.gov.au).

Endeavour Hills Specialist School may also refer a complaint to South Eastern Victoria Region if we believe that we have done all we can to address the complaint.

For more information about the Department's parent complaints process, including the role of the Regional Office, please see: [Raise a complaint or concern about your school](#).

## COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- available publicly on school website
- included in staff induction processes
- included in our staff handbook
- included in enrolment packs
- discussed at information sessions
- annual reference in school newsletter
- hard copy available from office staff upon request.

## FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following Department policies and guidelines

- [Complaints - Parents](#)
- [Raise a complaint or concern about your school](#)

The following school policies are also relevant to this policy:

- Statement of Values and School Philosophy

## POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	February 2023
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	February 2024