

Avalon Boarding Pty Ltd - Complaints & Grievances Policy

1. Purpose

Avalon College is committed to providing a clear, fair, and accessible complaints and grievances process to ensure that all concerns raised by students, parents, staff, and the wider school community are addressed appropriately. This policy aligns with **VRQA standards, Ministerial Order No. 1359**, and the principles of **procedural fairness**.

This policy is consistent with the expectations outlined in the **Avalon College Acceptance & Enrolment Policy (AC-ENR-001)**, **Enrolment Agreement (AC-ENR-002)** and **Avalon College Refund Policy (AC-ENR-004)**.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Current students and their families.
- Staff, volunteers, and contractors.
- Any member of the Avalon College community who wishes to lodge a complaint or grievance.

This policy applies to complaints made by or in relation to any student, staff member, volunteer, contractor, visitor, or service provider connected to Avalon College.

3. Guiding Principles

Avalon College ensures that:

- Complaints are handled **fairly, promptly, and confidentially**.
- All parties are treated with **respect and without bias**.
- Complaints are resolved at the **lowest appropriate level** before escalation.
- There is **no victimisation** or disadvantage for making a complaint.

4. General Complaints & Grievances Process

4.1 Informal Resolution

- Individuals are encouraged to resolve concerns directly through open communication.
- If a concern relates to boarding house matters, students or parents are encouraged to initially raise the issue with the Senior Boarding House Supervisor before proceeding to a formal complaint.
- If the matter remains unresolved, it can proceed to a formal complaint.

4.2 Lodging a Formal Complaint

- Formal complaints must be submitted in writing to the **Managing Director** or designated officer.
- Complaints can be submitted via:
 - **Email:** admin@avaloncollege.vic.edu.au
 - **Complaint Form** (available on the Avalon College website)
 - **In-person submission** to administration
- Complaints are acknowledged within **three working days**.

4.3 Investigation & Resolution

- A designated staff member will investigate the complaint within **10 working days**.
- Parties may be asked to provide additional information.
- Outcomes will be communicated in writing.
- Where necessary, an **independent mediator** may be engaged.

4.4 Escalation Process

If a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome, they may escalate their complaint to:

- **Avalon College Managing Director** for internal review.

- **VRQA or other relevant regulatory authorities**, including the Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria (<https://www.disputes.vic.gov.au>) for external review.

4.5 Child Safety Complaints and Reporting Procedures

This policy includes procedures for managing complaints or concerns relating to child abuse, including:

- Physical abuse, sexual abuse, grooming, emotional abuse, neglect, family violence, and online exploitation
- Alleged breaches of the **Child Safety Code of Conduct (AC-CSP-002)**
- Misconduct by staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, or other adults involved in the College environment

All such complaints must be taken seriously and acted upon promptly and thoroughly, in line with **Ministerial Order No. 1359** and Avalon College's **Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy (AC-CSP-001)**.

Response process includes:

1. **Immediate safety assessment** of the child or student involved
2. **Notification of the Child Safety Officer or Managing Director**
3. **Mandatory reports** made to Victoria Police or Child Protection, if required
4. **Recordkeeping** using the Child Safety Concern Form
5. **Monitoring and ongoing support** for the affected child or student
6. **Alternative complaint manager** will be appointed if the primary staff member (e.g., Child Safety Officer) is unable to act due to conflict of interest or absence.

These responsibilities do not displace any individual's obligation to report child abuse to external authorities. Any staff member or volunteer may contact external agencies directly.

4.6 Legal and Ethical Reporting Obligations

All College staff and volunteers are required to:

- Report concerns in accordance with the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic), including Failure to Protect and Failure to Disclose offences
- **Make mandatory reports** if they are a mandated notifier and form a reasonable belief of abuse
- **Cooperate with law enforcement** and external investigations
- Ensure that no staff member is required to make a judgment about the truth of an allegation – **all complaints must be treated objectively**
- Never place the burden of reporting on a victim or affected child.

5. Supportive and Inclusive Practice

All complaints are managed with respect for privacy, cultural sensitivity, and inclusiveness.

The College will:

- Offer culturally safe and appropriate support, especially for Aboriginal students, international students, and students with disability or diverse identities (LGBTIQ+);
- Ensure all students and families can access information in a format and language they understand;
- Promote a trauma-informed, non-judgmental environment for students disclosing harm.

6. Confidentiality & Record-Keeping

- All complaints and outcomes are **documented and stored securely**.
- Access is restricted to authorised personnel only.
- Records are maintained in compliance with **privacy laws**.
- Child abuse complaints and related reports will be securely stored in line with **PROV retention standards**.
- Staff are encouraged to document all concerns and disclosures. This policy does not prohibit or discourage note-taking or external reporting.

7. Responsibilities

7.1 Managing Director

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Approved by: Avalon College Managing Director

- Oversees complaint resolution processes.
- Ensures procedural fairness and regulatory compliance.

7.2 Staff & Complaint Investigators

- Address complaints in a **timely, impartial, and professional manner**.
- Maintain confidentiality and accurate records.

8. Communication & Accessibility

This policy is available via:

- Avalon College **website**.
- Staff induction and training programs.
- Student and parent handbooks.
- Complaint forms available at the administration office.

9. Policy Review

This policy is reviewed **annually** or after any significant complaint to ensure continued effectiveness.