EASTERN CHINESE LANGUAGE SCHOOL INC. 新金山东区中文学校

Complaints Management Policy and Procedure

Document no.	ECLS-POL-05	**Version**	1.1
Policy owner	Principal	**Approved by**	School Committee
Date approved	25/01/2026 (v1.0)	**Next review**	January 2028
Applies to	Students, parents/carers, staff, volunteers, Committee members, visitors and members of the community	**Status**	v1.0 current; v1.1 revision for endorsement

1. Purpose

ECLS welcomes feedback and takes every concern and complaint seriously. This policy gives children, families, staff and community members a clear, fair and safe way to raise a concern or make a complaint, **including about child safety**. It explains how ECLS will respond.

Our complaints process is designed to be **child-focused, easy to understand, culturally safe and accessible**, as required by Child Safe Standard 7.

2. What is a complaint?

A **complaint** is an expression of dissatisfaction, spoken or written, about an action, decision or service of ECLS, or a failure to act. It may be about a staff member, volunteer, student, policy or procedure, for example teaching and learning, student behaviour or bullying, fees, communication, lost property, or the conduct of an adult.

A **child safety complaint or concern** is any complaint, disclosure, allegation or suspicion that a child has been or may be harmed, or that an adult has behaved inappropriately towards a child, including a breach of the Child Safety Code of Conduct.

> **Child safety concerns are NOT handled through the ordinary complaints steps below.** They go straight to the Child Safety Officer or Principal and are managed under the ECLS Child Safety Policy (see section 7 below). If a child is in immediate danger, call **000**.

3. How to raise a concern or complaint

Anyone can raise a concern or complaint:

- **in person:** with the teacher, the office, the Child Safety Officer or the Principal on a school day;
- **by email:** admin@eclschool.vic.edu.au (marked "Complaint"), or directly to the Principal;
- **in writing:** using the ECLS Complaints Form (available from the office and website);
- **anonymously:** ECLS accepts anonymous complaints, but may not be able to investigate fully or reply without enough information.

Complainants may bring a **support person** (for example a family member or friend) to any meeting, and may ask for an **interpreter**. Staff who speak Mandarin or English can help families raise concerns in the language they are most comfortable with.

3.1 For students: who you can talk to

> If something at Chinese school makes you feel **unsafe, worried, upset or uncomfortable**, you can tell **any teacher you trust**, the **Child Safety Officer** or the **Principal**. You can also tell your parents or carers.
> 如果在中文学校有任何事情让你感到不安全、担心、难过或不舒服，你可以告诉任何你信任的老师、儿童安全负责人或校长，也可以告诉你的父母。

> You will be listened to and taken seriously. You will not get in trouble for speaking up.

Teachers explain this to students at the start of each year, and the *Statement of Commitment to Child Safety* poster displayed in the school shows who to talk to.

4. Who handles what

Type of concern	First contact	If not resolved
Student learning, homework, class behaviour, friendship issues	Class teacher	School Coordinator, then Principal
School-wide matters, policies, timetables, fees and refunds	Office / Operations Manager	Principal
Bullying (including online)	Class teacher or any staff member	Principal
Conduct of a staff member or volunteer (not child safety)	Principal	Chairperson of the School Committee
Any child safety concern, disclosure or allegation	Child Safety Officer or Principal (immediately)	Child Safety Policy; Victoria Police / Child Protection / CCYP as required
Complaint about the Principal	Chairperson of the School Committee	Community Languages Victoria
Complaint about the Committee or unresolved after internal steps	Community Languages Victoria (CLV)	Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria

5. Internal complaints procedure

5.1 Step 1: Raise it early and informally

Most concerns are best raised directly with the person involved (usually the class teacher), who will listen, try to resolve the matter promptly and keep a brief note.

5.2 Step 2: Formal complaint to the Principal

If the matter is not resolved, or is serious, the complainant contacts the Principal in person, by email or using the Complaints Form. The Principal (or delegate):

1. records the complaint in the **Complaints Register** on the day it is received;
2. **acknowledges** it in writing within **5 business days**, explaining how it will be handled and the expected timeframe;
3. considers the school's duty of care to any student involved, and puts interim measures in place if needed;
4. gathers information fairly: speaking with the complainant and the people involved, and giving any person complained about a fair chance to respond;
5. tries to reach an outcome that supports the best interests and wellbeing of the student and is, where possible, acceptable to all parties;
6. gives the complainant a written outcome, usually within **20 business days**, with updates if more time is needed;
7. records the outcome, any actions taken to prevent the issue happening again, and the date the complaint was closed.

5.3 Step 3: Review by the School Committee

If the complainant is not satisfied with the Principal's response, or the complaint is about the Principal, they may write to the **Chairperson**. The Committee (excluding anyone with a conflict of interest) reviews the matter. The complainant may attend and address the Committee with a support person. The Committee gives its decision in writing within **7 days** of the meeting.

5.4 Possible outcomes

An apology or expression of regret; an explanation; a change of decision; a change to a policy, procedure or practice; staff training or performance management; support for the student; or other action consistent with ECLS values.

6. External options

- **Community Languages Victoria (CLV):** if the matter cannot be resolved with the school, or the complainant is uncomfortable raising it with the school, they may complain to CLV using the CLV Complaints Form (info@communitylanguages.org.au, (03) 9349 2683).
- **Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria:** free mediation if the matter is still unresolved.
- **VCAA:** for VCE curriculum and assessment matters.
- **Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP):** for concerns that ECLS is not complying with the Child Safe Standards, or about reportable conduct.
- **Victoria Police (000 / local station) and DFFH Child Protection:** for child abuse or immediate risk.

7. Child safety complaints

When a complaint involves possible harm to a child, an allegation against an adult, or a breach of the Code of Conduct:

1. Make sure the child is safe. Call **000** if there is immediate danger.
2. Report it to the Child Safety Officer or Principal **immediately** (the same day).
3. The Child Safety Officer/Principal records it on the **Child Safety Incident Report Form** and follows the ECLS Child Safety Policy: reporting to Victoria Police and/or Child Protection where required, meeting mandatory reporting and Failure to Disclose obligations, and notifying CLV of any reportable allegation so it can be assessed and reported to the CCYP under the Reportable Conduct Scheme.
4. The child and family are supported and kept informed as far as is appropriate. Any person subject to an allegation may be stood down from contact with children while the matter is investigated.
5. The Committee is told (in de-identified form) at its next meeting. The Child Safety Officer reviews what can be learned and whether policies or practices need to change.

8. Confidentiality, fairness and no victimisation

- Complaints are handled confidentially and information is shared only with those who need to know, or as the law requires.
- Everyone involved is treated with respect and fairness, and given the chance to respond.
- No one will be disadvantaged or victimised for making a complaint in good faith. Victimisation is itself a breach of the Code of Conduct.

9. Records and reporting

- The Principal keeps a **Complaints Register** (date received, name or "anonymous", category, child safety Y/N, summary, acknowledgement date, actions, outcome, date closed).

- Complaint files are stored securely and kept under the Privacy and Records Management Policy (child safety records are kept permanently).
- A de-identified summary of complaints is reported to each Committee meeting. Trends are used to improve the school.
- Staff are trained in this procedure at induction and each year.

10. Accessibility

This policy is published on the school website and is available from the office. A short bilingual summary (English/中文) is included in the Parent Information and enrolment pack, and families who need help to make a complaint can ask any staff member.

11. Basis and references

- CLV, *Operational and Administrative Procedures Manual* (V4, 2023): s.2.3 Allegations, Concerns and Complaints and s.2.18 Complaints (internal three-step process, 7-day responses, CLV escalation, anonymous complaints, school responsibilities).
- CLV, *Student Safety and Staff Welfare Manual* (V5, 2023): Complaints Policy and Procedure; CLV Complaints Form (V3).
- Child Safe Standards (Ministerial Order 1359), Standard 7: processes for complaints and concerns are child-focused.
- ECLS Child Safety Policy (Aug 2026), based on CLS Child Safety Policy & Procedures (V7, 2024); ECLS School Charter 2026, Complaints Procedure.
- ECLS *Parent Complaints Procedure* (school website).

12. Version history

Version	Date	Change	Approved / endorsed by
1.0	25/01/2026	Policy approved	School Committee, meeting of 25 January 2026 (minute ref. _____)
1.1	October 2026	Revised and reformatted: aligned with the DE CLS Accreditation and Funding Guide, 2026 funding conditions, CLV manuals and current ECLS practice	For endorsement at the next School Committee meeting (date _____)