

Complaints Procedures

Definition

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the standards of service, actions or lack of action by staff, or actions directly affecting student achievement or well-being.

Procedures are required to ensure that complaints from staff, students, parents/caregivers or members of the public are dealt with fairly, with due seriousness and with a degree of uniformity.

Principles

- A distinction is made between a concern and a complaint. A concern can be defined as a cause of worry, whilst a complaint can be defined as an expression of dissatisfaction
- Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints. The underlying principle is that concerns ought to be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures.
- The requirement to have a complaints procedure need not in any way undermine efforts to resolve the concern informally. In most cases the class teacher or the individual delivering the service in the case of extended school provision, will receive the first approach. It would be helpful if staff were able to resolve issues on the spot, including apologising where necessary. The school may also wish to meet with parents if that would help resolve the issue. Similarly, parents may be given details of support organisations who may be able to impartially discuss their concerns with them.
- The formal procedures will need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

Procedures

- a. Complainants are encouraged to discuss minor concerns directly with the individuals/staff members involved. It is not uncommon for misunderstandings to arise that can easily be resolved through direct discussion.
- b. Should the complainant not be comfortable with that approach, complaints may be referred to the Principal.

- c. A complainant making a complaint, or raising a concern, of a serious nature must present the complaint in writing. Copies are to be provided to the principal and individuals involved with the complaint / concern.
- d. A written confirmation will be sent to the complainant within 3 working days, acknowledging receipt of the written complaint and outlining the process to be followed.
- e. The Principal will act upon the concerns expressed in the complaint, and will arrange any meetings deemed necessary to the investigation.
- f. The Principal will exercise discretion in terms of immediately notifying the BOT of the complaint (based on the seriousness of the complaint). All complaints will be commented on by the Principal at the next BOT meeting.
- g. If the complaint to the Principal is not resolved to all parties' satisfaction, it will be referred to the BOT.
- h. Where the complaint concerns a staff member, it will become the responsibility of the Principal / BOT to investigate and seek advice if needed and will report back to the full Board. The BOT will then take such action as is deemed necessary. Any action taken under this policy will comply with the individual staff member's employment contract. Advice to guide this process may be sought from the Ministry of Education, NZSTA and/or other employment advisors.
- i. Where the complaint concerns students, the Principal and BOT Chair will identify Board members to be included in the investigation. This group will report back to the full Board who will take such action as is deemed necessary.
- j. Where possible, the complainant and other individuals involved in the complaint, will be informed in writing of the processes to be undertaken regarding the complaint (see process section below).
- k. The BOT is (subject to any legal requirement) committed to protecting the confidentiality of all involved. Accordingly, all BOT discussions regarding complaints will be held 'in-committee'.
- l. Should the complaint also be investigated by a third party (e.g. Police, ERO) the school investigation should continue as normal, however, (unless the BOT decides otherwise) the findings and proposed actions should not be finalised or communicated prior to the third party findings and their recommended actions being received by the BOT.
- m. The complaint should be dealt with as quickly as possible, however, care must be taken not to short circuit the investigation or the consideration process undertaken by the BOT.

Process

1. Written complaint received by Principal – from complainant.
2. Copy sent to individuals involved in the complaint.
3. Written acknowledgement sent to complainant (within 3 working days) outlining receipt of written complaint, and process to be followed.
4. Principal to determine if BOT need to be advised immediately.
5. All complaints will be tabled at the next BOT meeting (in-committee).
6. If complaint resolved, Principal to summarise findings and actions and write to all parties involved.
7. BOT to be advised of outcomes at next monthly meeting.
8. If complaint not resolved to all parties satisfaction, complaint can be escalated to full BOT or designated sub-group.
9. BOT to conduct investigation and undertake any interviews deemed necessary.
10. Full documentation to be kept on the investigation including interviews undertaken subject at all times to confidentiality requirements.
11. The BOT will consider the findings of any external party involved in the investigation.
12. Full BOT to determine findings and actions required.
13. Findings and actions to be communicated in writing to all parties involved.