

Concerns and complaints policy

Outcome statement

This policy provides staff members, parents/caregivers, and the wider school community with clear guidelines for raising and resolving concerns and complaints. All complaints, concerns and incidents are attended to promptly, respectfully and professionally and seek to bring effective resolution to all parties concerned.

We encourage open communication and prefer that you come to us to talk through any issues rather than discussing them in the community. We have procedures in place to ensure that complaints and concerns are handled appropriately. Our procedures enable us to:

- maintain a safe environment for our students and staff
- treat all people fairly, transparently, and with dignity and respect
- resolve matters of concern early, if possible
- respond to feedback and concerns constructively
- deal with complaints fairly, effectively, and in a timely manner
- take into account individual circumstances
- maintain confidentiality
- preserve and enhance school and community relationships
- monitor and record complaints and concerns about student safety and wellbeing

Most concerns can be resolved informally through discussions with the people concerned. See Guidelines for Raising Concerns. The school also has a procedure for making a formal complaint if informal discussion doesn't resolve the issue

Scoping

In order to maintain a safe and comfortable environment for all students, staff and visitors, an accessible procedure for handling complaints and grievances will be implemented and maintained to provide an open and fair way of resolving issues and will comply with all relevant legislation.

Delegations

The board delegates to the principal full responsibility of ensuring processes are in place and operating effectively and adequately. In the event of a complaint or grievance concerning the principal, responsibility lies with the board.

Expectations and limitations

We will be able to manage your concerns and complaints more effectively if you raise them with us promptly. Complaints about events that occurred more than three months earlier, do not involve you or your children, or which have been made anonymously, will not usually be formally investigated.

In complying with the policy, the principal shall not fail to:

- implement and maintain robust procedures to meet the policy requirements
- ensure that the process for complaints or grievances is clearly communicated
- report to the board as follows:
 - When receiving a complaint, the board must ensure that the complainant has previously followed the school's concerns and complaints procedure and that the complaint has been escalated to board level correctly.
 - Should the board receive a complaint regarding the principal or determine that any policy violation may have occurred, the board in the first instance will consider whether this may be dealt with in an informal manner (as per the employment agreement provisions that apply to the principal).
 - Where the board considers the degree and seriousness of the concern or any violation sufficient to warrant initiating a disciplinary or competency process, the board shall seek the support and advice in the first instance from an NZSTA adviser to ensure due process is followed.

Procedures/supporting documentation

Guidelines for raising concerns

Making a formal complaint

Harassment

Theft & Fraud Prevention

Protect Disclosure

Monitoring

The principal shall maintain a register of complaints and resolutions and report to the board at least quarterly per annum outlining numbers of complaints, resolution success figures and any areas of concern for board deliberation.

Legislative compliance

Employment Relations Act 2000

Guidelines for Raising Concerns

Our primary goal is to create the best learning environment for the students of our school. We encourage open communication and prefer that you come to us to talk through any concerns rather than discussing them in the community.

1. Discuss the issue with the right person.
 - If you have a general concern about the school or its programmes, discuss it with the person involved or with a member of the management team or the principal.
 - If you have a particular concern about a staff member or a school activity, contact the person involved to discuss the matter privately. We ask that you make this direct approach as soon as possible. Be prepared to make a time to discuss your concern if the person involved is unable to talk with you straight away. Be open to listening to the other side of the story to avoid communication breakdowns.
 - If you do not wish to approach the person involved, contact a member of the management team or the principal to discuss your concern. The principal or management team member may communicate with the person involved.
 - If you have a concern about your own child or one of our other students, contact the student's class teacher or the principal to discuss the matter.

If your concern relates to another student, you must not approach that student directly.

- If you have a concern about **another parent, caregiver, or member of the school community** on a school related matter, raise this with the principal.
- If the matter concerns the **principal** and you have not first resolved it by discussion, or you feel uncomfortable directly approaching the principal, contact the board chair.
- If the matter concerns a **board member**, contact the board chair, or deputy chair if it concerns the board chair.

If you approach a board member with your concerns you will be asked to follow the guidelines above, and the board member will inform the principal and board chair.

2. Work towards a resolution.
 - In most cases, constructive discussion will resolve your concerns.

If you are unhappy with the outcome of your initial meeting, contact the principal, a member of the management team, or the board chair to discuss further resolution.

If this process does not resolve your concern, you can make a formal complaint.

The school monitors, records, and responds appropriately to any concerns about a student's safety and welfare.

See our flowchart for an overview of the concerns and complaints process

Making a formal Complaint

If your concerns have not been resolved, or for more serious matters, you can make a formal complaint.

Formal complaints may be about an employee of the school, a parent or caregiver, a student, or any matter within the school's responsibility.

In the interests of fairness, any formal complaint or serious allegation must be made in writing and resolved as quickly as possible given the details and the steps that need to be considered.

All parties should respect confidentiality, including avoiding the use of social media to promote a point of view.

To make a complaint:

Put your specific complaint(s) in writing with as many facts and details as possible, including the names of people involved and dates of events, together with any steps you have taken to resolve the matter and your preferred contact details.

The letter or email should be marked "confidential" and sent to:

- the principal, if the complaint is about a staff member, student, parent or caregiver, or other member of the school community
- the board chair, if it is about the principal
- the deputy chair, if it is about the chair.

Contact details for the principal, board chair, and deputy chair are available at the school office or online.

When your complaint is received:

The principal, board chair, or deputy chair will check that your complaint has come to the correct person and then send you an acknowledgement of receipt, usually within a week. You may be asked for further details about your complaint, to assist in determining the appropriate investigation process.

The principal (if the complaint is about a staff member, student, parent or caregiver, or other member of the school community) will:

- inform the board chair of any complaints about staff members, students, parents or caregivers, or other members of the school community
- take steps to resolve the complaint in accordance with their delegated authority and the relevant school policies, including undertaking a preliminary assessment of the complaint:

- More general complaints or those which are unlikely to lead to disciplinary action against a staff member will be resolved informally.
- Potentially sensitive matters or more serious complaints which could lead to disciplinary action against a staff member may be referred to the board for consideration in-committee, with a view to determining the required level of board or chair involvement.
- follow the general guidelines for Investigate a Formal Complaint or Serious Allegation
- take appropriate advice from advisors such as NZSTA
- report to the board in accordance with school policy.

The board chair (if the complaint is about the principal) will:

- undertake a preliminary assessment of any complaints about the principal
 - More general complaints or those which are unlikely to lead to the board taking action against the principal will be promptly discussed with the principal at an informal meeting, usually held within a week of receipt of the complaint, where the potential resolution can be considered.
 - The process for managing complaints which appear more serious and could lead to the board taking action against the principal will be determined by the board at an in-committee meeting usually held within a week of receipt of the complaint. The complaint will then be promptly disclosed to the principal together with an indication of the proposed process for managing the complaint.
- follow the general guidelines for Investigate a Formal Complaint or Serious Allegation
- take appropriate advice from advisors such as NZSTA.

The deputy chair (if the complaint is about the chair) will:

- call an in-committee board meeting to discuss any complaints about the chair and determine an appropriate process for resolution
- take appropriate advice from advisors such as NZSTA.

Subject to the privacy of the person or people concerned, we will keep you informed about the process and the expected timeframe for any investigation, and will provide you with written confirmation when the matter is concluded.

Relevant collective employment agreement provisions for dealing with complaints about staff members must be observed, including protecting the staff member's dignity and mana, advising them of their right to seek support and representation before responding to complaints, and giving them a reasonable opportunity to take that advice.