

Complaints

Objectives

- 1 To ensure that there is clear policy and process when dealing with complaints regarding the school.
- 2 To ensure the school enables those involved in the school community to express their concerns so that explanation or resolution can be obtained.
- 3 To ensure that all complaints are dealt with fairly and with regard to natural justice.

Principles

- 1 Any staff member or trustee member may receive a complaint.
- 2 To ensure that complaints are dealt with at an appropriate level, the complaint or complainant should be directed to the person who most directly manages the person or area the complaint is about.
- 3 Every effort should be made by all concerned to resolve matters among those directly involved, and the complaint should be referred to higher levels only if this is unsuccessful.
- 4 Complaints can be verbal or written (including via email), however more serious complaints should be in writing.
- 5 Complaints should be dealt with in a timely manner, ie receipt of the complaint should be acknowledged immediately and the procedures should be initiated without unnecessary delay. The complainant should be advised of the likely response time and kept regularly informed of the progress of the complaint, including the outcome.

Procedures

Who deals with a complaint

- 1 Initially the complaint should be directed to the person who most directly manages the person or area the complaint is about.
- 2 If the complaint involves the immediate safety of a student or staff member, it should be referred promptly to the Principal or other Senior Leadership Team member.
- 3 Complaints regarding the conduct or competence of staff members should be referred to the Principal. Where a formal written complaint regarding an employee is received, the procedures will follow those laid down in the relevant employment agreement. Serious misconduct by staff is investigated by the Board of Trustees following a preliminary investigation by the Principal. See DHS Staff Investigation Guidelines
- 4 Complaints regarding the Principal should be referred to the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees.
- 5 Complaints regarding NZQA assessments should follow the process outlined in the Assessment Handbook.

- 6 If a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of an investigation by the Principal they may refer their complaint to the Board of Trustees.

When a written complaint is received

- 1 Decide who is the most appropriate person to deal with the complaint and forward the letter or email. Confirm that the person the complaint was forwarded to has received it.
- 2 If dealing with the complaint, contact the complainant to acknowledge receipt of the complaint; provide the complainant with a copy of these procedures; confirm that the complainant wishes to make a complaint if this is not clear; clarify details of the complaint if necessary.

Investigating a complaint

- 1 Clarify details of the complaint with the complainant and ask what actions they would like taken.
- 2 Inform complainant of what actions will be taken to investigate the complaint and when they should expect to hear back.
- 3 Information should be gathered from others with relevant facts. Keep a record of interviews and meetings.
- 4 Make a decision based on the balance of probabilities with the evidence that is available. Consider all possible resolutions and possible unintended outcomes.
- 5 Those who are affected should be kept informed about progress and outcomes.
- 6 The outcome of the complaint should be made in writing to the complainant.
- 7 Written records of complaints should be held on file by the individual, department, or committee that investigates the complaint. These records should be available on request by the Principal or Board of Trustees.

Some possible outcomes from a complaint

- 1 No further action
- 2 Explanation
- 3 Written or verbal apology
- 4 Financial or other compensation or reparation
- 5 Mediation by school or external mediators
- 6 Modification to a school guideline, procedure, policy, or structure
- 7 Professional development of staff
- 8 Restorative justice process
- 9 Formal discipline processes . staff and student

Adopted by the Board of Trustees on 11 February 2020