



Tapawera Area School
Te Kura a Rohe of Tapawera

Complaints Handling Policy

Intent

To help the Board, parents, staff and pupils manage potentially difficult conflict situations effectively through a clear understanding of procedure.

Foundation Principles

- Concerns should be dealt with at the earliest possible time.
- Matters should be raised directly with the person concerned if possible.
- Issues can most often be resolved through effective communication.
- Situations should be dealt with at the lowest possible level.
- An informal meeting should be the first initiative. If necessary a formal meeting may be arranged with a mediator present.
- The care of children whilst at school is the responsibility of the teaching staff.
- Parent helpers on camp/school trips assume the same responsibilities as a staff member for the duration of the event under the direction of the staff member responsible.
- Mandatory reporting obligations will be complied with.
- Acknowledgement of receipt of the complaint will be made by letter at the earliest possible time.
- STA and NZEI advice will be sought by the Board.
- Staff members will be advised of their right to seek advice from whom ever.
- Written complaints require opportunity to provide written responses.
- Access to and use of a support person is encouraged.

However in instances where further action may be required the procedure is as follows:

1 Complaint against a staff member

- a. If the staff member has been approached and the matter not resolved the complainant should arrange a meeting with the principal. Professional mediation may be employed if requested.
- b. If a satisfactory conclusion is not reached, the complainant should send a written report to the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees. The matter will then be discussed at the next Board meeting, the complainant may request speaking rights at this meeting.
- c. The staff member must be notified immediately about the receipt of the complaint
- d. The Board will treat complaints impartially and in accordance with principles of justice.
- e. Nothing in this policy undermines the right of staff to pursue a grievance in accordance with Collective Agreement should such grounds exist

2 Complaint against the Principal

- a. The Principal should first be spoken to by the complainant, with support if necessary.
- b. If concerns remain unresolved, he/she should speak to the Chairperson, who will endeavour to resolve the matter. Professional mediation to be employed if requested by any party.
- c. If a satisfactory conclusion is not reached, the parent should send a written report to the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees. The matter will then be discussed at the next Board meeting – the complainant may request speaking rights at this meeting.
- d. The board will treat complaints impartially and in accordance with principles of justice.
- e. Nothing in this policy undermines the right of staff to pursue a grievance in accordance with Collective Agreement should such grounds exist.

3 Complaint against a Trustee

- a. The Trustee should first be approached.
- b. If a satisfactory conclusion is not reached, the complainant should send a written report to the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees. The matter will then be discussed at the next Board meeting – the complainant may request speaking rights at this meeting.
- c. The Trustee must be notified immediately about the receipt of the complaint.
- d. The Board will treat complaints impartially and in accordance with principles of justice.

4 Complaint against a Pupil

- a. Any complaint about a pupil should be addressed through a staff member.
- b. If the staff member believes the situation warrants a formal interview, the parents of the child will be asked to be present.
- c. Should there be a conflict of interest between parties concerned a neutral member of the school staff or Board of Trustees should be asked to attend.

5 Complaint against a Parent

- a. Any complaint about a parent should be addressed first through the Principal.
- b. If the complainant believes the situation warrants a formal interview, the parent will be asked to be present.
- c. Should there be a conflict of interest between parties concerned a neutral member of the school staff or Board of Trustees should be asked to attend.
- d. In the event that the Principal and staff are unable to resolve the matter it will be referred to the Board of Trustees for consideration.
- e. If the matter is considered to require legal intervention the Police may be involved.
- f. In this instance the Boards decision will be final and no further communication will be entered into.

Additional points of Reference

- STA Helpdesk
- NZEI/PPTA Field Officer
- Procedure for Dealing with Complaints
- NZPF

Appendix

The Chairperson acknowledges the letter of complaint in writing and the complainant is advised of the next steps in the Board process. The letter becomes part of the correspondence to be dealt with at the next Board meeting whilst the public is excluded.

Public Excluded Meeting

- a. Letter is tabled at the Board meeting and referred to relevant parties for reporting back to the Board. The Board decides whether to deal with the matter as a whole or appoint a committee to investigate and recommend to the Board.
- b. At the meeting of the Board/Committee the reports are received and the parties may be invited to speak to their complaint or answer questions. The Committee/Board considers the evidence and/or information and comes to a decision or recommendation.
- c. Depending upon the delegated powers of the Committee either way they or the Board as a whole come to a resolution as to how the Board will respond and/or what action will be taken.
- d. The Board's response is communicated to the parties to the complaint. This may either be publicly or confidentially depending upon the case.
- e. Any of the parties may request the Board to reconsider their decision – however normally for such a reconsideration to take place new information that would have been relevant to the Board's deliberations must be produced.

Notes and Explanations

- a. All letters addressed to the Board are for the whole board; the Chairperson cannot decide independently as to what action will be taken.
- b. Resolution or dismissal of the complaint must not be discussed before all the information is to hand.

- c. The Board must exercise caution when dealing with complaints regarding staff, particularly in relation to confidentiality and process. It is advisable to contact the NZSTA adviser.
- d. Conflict of interest will need to be considered where the complaint involves the actions of any Trustee.
- e. If the complaint procedure has not been followed the Board will normally return any letter of complaint to the writer and ask that they follow the procedure first.
- f. The Board needs to formally receive a complaint in order to act upon it. If a complaint is serious enough for the Board to deal with it is serious enough to be put in writing. If you have concerns about expressing the matter clearly in writing, please discuss the matter in confidence with the Board Chair or other delegated member.
- g. The Board recognises that not all complainants will be satisfied with the outcome of a complaint. After one reconsideration, if the Board is confident of its decision, it will refuse to enter into further discussion/correspondence. In making such a decision the NZSTA helpdesk can assist by giving an objective assessment of a Board's process in dealing with the complaint.
- h. A complaint regarding lack of compliance in relation to an agree complaint resolution will be treated as a serious matter and actioned with urgency as a new complaint rather than as a reconsideration of the previous issue.
- i. In the event of a conflict of interest where parents have run out of options, parents are advised to contact the Principal for advice – if and only if there is a conflict of interest. Aim is to deal with any concerns at an earlier as possible time, and that situations should be dealt with at the lowest possible level.

Review schedule: Triennially

Signed

Date