11. Concerns and Complaints Process

Outcome statement

All complaints, concerns and incidents are attended to promptly, respectfully and professionally and seek to bring effective resolution to all parties concerned.

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.

Guidelines:

- All concerns/complaints will be treated in the strictest confidence. In the case of an employee, the investigation will be confidential to the parties concerned.
- Where issues of staff competence or discipline have been identified the Principal may initiate competency or disciplinary procedures in accordance with relevant provisions of the Collective Agreement.
- Where a complainant does not feel that their concern/complaint has been dealt with satisfactorily, they may forward their concern/complaint to the Board in writing. The complaints procedure must have been followed up to this point.
- In the case of a complaint or concern that could proceed further, the Principal/BOT will seek advice from NZSTA and NZEI.
- All parties to a complaint may bring a support person to any meeting where the issue is to be discussed.
- A record will be kept of concerns/complaints and resolutions reached for serious matters or where the matter could reoccur.
- As a caregiver, a Board member may submit a complaint but will not take part in any investigation process. This also applies if a Board member has a personal interest.

Expectations and limitations

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 and posted on the school website (if applicable)
- Ensure that the complainant has previously followed the school's concerns and complaints procedure before escalating to board level

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.

The board shall advise its insurance agent of any complaint escalated to the board.

Once the dispute Resolution Scheme comes into effect, in the event that a serious dispute is not able to be resolved, the board shall advise the parent of their right to apply to the Chief Referee for the dispute to be resolved by a dispute resolution panel.

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

Education and Training Act 2020
Relevant employment agreements
Relevant professional standards

C4 Concerns and complaints process

Advice for students, staff, parents, whānau and community

Starting Point

Your concern or problem involves a classroom matter or a particular staff member.

Write a note or phone the staff member concerned to make a suitable time to discuss the issue. Indicate before the discussion what the concern is about.

Talk with the relevant staff member about the issue. Be prepared to listen to their point of view. This may require more than one meeting and/or involve the associate principal.

Provide feedback to the staff member as to whether you were satisfied or not to ensure the concern or problem is settled.

Issue resolved?

No → Your concern or problem does not involve a classroom matter or particular staff member or has not been resolved by visiting the staff member.

Yes

Write a note or phone the staff member concerned to make a time to discuss the concern or problem. Indicate before the discussion what the concern is about and the steps you have taken to remedy it.

Discuss with the principal, be prepared to listen to their point of view also and provide feedback to ensure the concern or problem is settled. The concern may be referred back to the staff member(s) particularly where this process has not been followed to date.

Issue resolved?

No → Your concern or problem has not been resolved by visiting the staff member or the principal or it involves the principal or board.

You now have a complaint.

Write to the board outlining your problem, concern or complaint in detail and all actions taken to date. The presiding member (chair) will need to ensure the correct process has been followed before the board will consider this matter, and may direct you back to the staff member or principal. Include your name, signature and contact details. Your complaint will be acknowledged along with an expected timeframe for resolution.

Unless there are exceptional circumstances, the board will not accept any complaint unless it is in writing, signed and a reasonable attempt has been made to resolve the issue through this process. Once the board has considered and resolved the complaint, the board will endeavour to convene a follow-up contact within 1 month.

Issue resolved?

No → (back to Starting Point)

Yes

No further action is required

SAMPLE

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Board complaints checklist

Once a letter of complaint has been received, the board's presiding member (chair) should ensure the following process is followed:

	Notes/date completed
1. Presiding member ensures the process has been followed as outlined in the concerns and complaints procedure or is a genuine complaint against the principal or board.	
2. Presiding member verifies with the principal that any staff (or others) identified in the complaint are aware of the situation and that there has been discussion and attempts to reconcile.	
3. If the complaint or action is employment related or has potential industrial relations implications, presiding member contacts NZSTA employment advisory and support centre. For all other complaints, contact NZSTA governance advisory and support centre.	eradvice@nzsta.org.nz govadvice@nzsta.org.nz
4. Presiding member alerts the school's insurance broker.	
5. Presiding member acknowledges the letter of complaint within 7 days and advises the board process, or redirects the complainant to principal, syndicate leader or staff member as appropriate. Presiding member reports to the board without names or detail at the next meeting.	
6. Once confirmed as a legitimate complaint to the board, presiding member forwards it confidentially to all board members for consideration. Any member who has a conflict of interest should declare and take no further part in the process around this matter.	
7. Board requests principal to present full written report to the board outlining all actions taken, advice received, meetings held and justified decisions made.	
8. Board determines if the principal's report fully satisfies it of full and fair process. If so, the board supports the principal and advises the complainant.	
9. If not satisfied, the board meets and discusses in public excluded business, determines whether or not to formally meet the complainant and delegates responsibility to members of the board as deemed appropriate.	
10. Board delegates meet with the complainant and discuss the complaint more fully - clarifying, investigating and verifying. Support persons should be confirmed as welcome to attend this meeting.	
11. Board delegates report back to full board and recommend actions/decisions.	
12. Board considers recommendations, records and formally minutes decisions.	
13. Board advises complainant in writing of its provisional decisions and factors considered in reaching them, within 21 days of complaint receipt, unless otherwise agreed by all parties. Complainant is given opportunity to comment before the board's final decision is reached and given.	
14. Board advises complainant of their right to apply for dispute resolution if they are dissatisfied with the outcome.	
15. Board aims to convene follow-up meeting within 1 month of step 9.	

Reviewed: May 2026	Next review: May 2028
Signed: 	

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