



William Colenso College
Board of Trustees

16. COMPLAINTS POLICY

The following Complaints Process has been approved and adopted by the Board of Trustees of William Colenso College.

Rationale: To provide clear guidance to parents, caregivers, staff and BOT members as to the appropriate responses to complaints. This Policy is a clearly set out policy for handling complaints..This policy will protect individuals from unfair criticism or wrongful accusations from students, parents, community members, or other staff. It will also set out a pathway for addressing justifiable complaints of inappropriate behaviour, unprofessional conduct, or illegal acts.

Purposes:

- To see that complaints are given due attention.
- To ensure that complaints are handled in such a way as to be considered fair and just to both parties (and with reference to the relevant Collective or Individual Employment agreement).
- To protect students from inappropriate behaviour or unprofessional conduct on the part of a staff member.
- To protect staff from unjustifiable complaints.
- To ensure the school takes the appropriate action in the case of a complaint.

Guidelines:

1. All complaints should be acted on as prescribed in the Complaints Procedures and documented in the Complaints Register.
2. Principles of natural justice will be followed in the investigation of all complaints. The Principal is entrusted to disregard malicious or vexatious complaints, but must note receipt of the complaint and be accountable for his/her actions.
3. If the complaint is against a staff member:
 - Existing guidelines for standards of behaviour as found in the Teachers Council and PPTA Code of Ethics, and in relevant Collective Employment Agreements, will be taken into account in any complaint
 - The staff member must be informed of the complaint in the first instance by the Principal and be reminded of the procedures that will follow.

4. The complaint will be investigated by an appropriate nominee who will recommend a course of action based on written conclusion to the Principal who with reference to others (Senior Management Team, Board of Trustees) will decide on a course of action. This will be detailed in the complaint file.

- The Principal will inform the staff member of the decision within seven days (or earlier if possible) of that decision being made. This decision will be in writing.

- If the complaint is found to have no foundation, no record of the complaint will be placed in that staff member's file. No further action that would prejudice that staff member will be taken.

5. The complaints register will be updated and the complaint file will be stored in a locked and secure place and be the responsibility of the Principal.

6. Complaints about the Principal, individual members of the Board of Trustees, or Board actions should be made to the Presiding Member of the Board, who will be responsible for ensuring that the procedures appropriate to the particular complaint are followed.

7. Complaints about the Board Chairperson will be addressed and discussed by the Board as a whole.

Process:

1. Teacher receives concern about another teacher from a parent:

- Decline to be drawn into discussion
- Advise parent to raise matter with teacher concerned or HOL or SLT

2. Senior Staff member receives concern about another teacher:

- Listen, do not jump to any conclusions
- Undertake to investigate
- Use judgment to decide the most appropriate response, action or person to pass the concern onto. Notify the staff member that a concern has been raised and to whom the concern has been passed onto.

3. Senior Staff member who is investigating and handling the concern:

- Discusses with teacher concerned
- Gives an opportunity to respond
- Resolves to find a common perspective
- Take any appropriate action
- Reports back to parent (if appropriate)
- Reports to Principal

4. If teacher concerned feels a matter has not been dealt with fairly or appropriately:

- he /She may ask another staff member to either act as a support person / mediator
- If there is still dissatisfaction, teacher should then refer to PPTA / NZEI / Counsellor

5. General guidelines for whom to refer to:

- Curriculum / Subject Matter (HOL)
- Pastoral / Discipline of students (Dean)
- Staff concerns / Behaviour / Attitude / Attendance of staff / Complaints (SLT)
- Complaint from parent to BOT member (Principal)
- Principal Complaint (BOT Presiding Member)

Procedures:

In the first instance, concerns will be treated as 'informal complaints':

A) Informal Complaint (concern): Usually verbal (a telephone call, an email, or face to face meeting) to express concern, mild dissatisfaction or to request some specific (low level, remedial) action.

(i) Contact (by telephone/email/meeting) to any of the following:

- the subject teacher
- form teacher
- Head of Department or teacher in charge of subject
- Dean
- Senior Leadership Team

(ii) Explain the nature of the situation

(iii) Discuss how things can be remedied

(iv) Agree on a course of action

(v) Await implementation

(vi) School to initiate a follow-up discussion to confirm positive outcome.

B) Formal Complaint:

If the concern/informal complaint cannot be resolved or if neither party is satisfied with the outcome, or if it is of a more serious nature, a **formal complaint** should be lodged. This should be in writing, addressed to the Principal, or if it is a complaint about the Principal, it should be addressed to the Board Presiding Member.

(i) A letter expressing the nature of the issues, concern, problem, dissatisfaction – preferably itemising the things that are not acceptable. The complainant must stipulate that the complaint is formal.

(ii) The complaint is investigated and a meeting held to explore solutions and agree on actions to be taken.

(iii) At this stage the Principal must notify the Board Chairperson of the complaint.

(iv) Remedial action implemented and documented in a reply from the Principal.

(v) If the outcome of steps (iv) is deemed unsatisfactory, then the complainant has the right to forward the complaint (in writing) to the Presiding Member of the Board of Trustees.

(a) The complaint is investigated and a meeting held to explore solutions and agree on actions to be taken. This will involve a sub-committee of the Board.

(b) Remedial action implemented and documented in a reply from the Presiding Member of the Board.

Ratified by the Board of Trustees

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| Review Date: March 2025 |
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