



COMPLAINTS POLICY

If another believer sins against you go privately and point out the events. If the other person listens and confesses it you have won that person back. But if you are unsuccessful take one or two others with you and go back again so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses.

Matthew 18:15-16

Purpose

God clearly identifies in Scripture that where there are problems between people, there is an appropriate format by which problems are to be solved. The school wishes to acknowledge that there are times when conflict will occur, and it wishes to deal with conflict in an appropriate manner. The following procedures are the appropriate means of addressing issues and complaints that arise in the school.

- To provide clear guidelines in the way that complaints should be addressed.
- To ensure that all complaints are given a fair and appropriate hearing.
- To ensure that all grievances are resolved in accordance with school policy and procedures and according to God's word.

Procedures

If the complaint is regarding an individual within the school community, it is recommended that the persons discuss their concerns with each other as scripture encourages (see above)

The procedure to be followed in the event of a complaint being made is summarised in the following stages:

Stage 1: Informal Action

- Parents discuss *any* concerns they have with the class teacher *in the first instance*.
- If the teacher is unable to deal immediately with the matter, clear notes are made, including complainant's name, phone number and date, and the *teacher investigates the complaint*. The teacher may also consult the principal at this stage.
- As soon as the matter has been investigated the parent is contacted and notified of the resolution *and the action to follow*
- The teacher ensures that the parent is clear what action or monitoring of the situation has been agreed *including notification by letter or email*.
- If no satisfactory solution has been found, parents are asked if they wish their concern to be considered further.

Stage 2: Referral to the Principal

- The Principal acknowledges the complaint, ~~orally or~~ in writing, within 3 working days
- A meeting is arranged with the complainant to clarify and supplement any information given.
- The Principal investigates further, interviewing witnesses as appropriate. If the complaint centres on a pupil, the pupil would normally be interviewed with a parent/caregiver present or, if this is not possible, with a member of staff who is not directly involved.
- The Principal keeps written records of meetings, telephone conversations and other documentation.

- Once all relevant facts have been established, the Principal responds ~~–If the complaint was in writing, a written response will be sent.~~
- If the complainant is not satisfied, they are advised to write to the Board of Trustees
- If the complaint is against the Principal, the Stage 2 procedures are carried out by the ~~Board Board Chair/Presiding Member of the Board of Trustees~~. See note * below. If there is a conflict of interest the Board will elect a Board member to carry out the complaint *investigation process*.

Stage 3: Review by the Governing Body

- The Board Chair/ Presiding Member acknowledges receipt of the written complaint, informing the complainant that the complaint is to be heard by a Complaints Panel of three members of the School Board within 20 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.
- *Conflicts of interest must be declared and conflicted board members must not participate in any discussion/decision making around the matter*
- *The school's insurer should be advised of any complaint as soon as possible.*
- *The Board Chair should advise the Proprietor of any matters that involve property or are of a nature sufficiently serious to warrant the Proprietor being informed.*
- The Board Chair arranges to convene a Complaint Panel elected from members of the Board of Trustees. The members should have no *conflicts of interest in relation to prior involvement with the complaint* and they should elect a Chair for the Complaints Panel. All relevant documentation regarding the complaint should be given to the members of the committee as soon as possible.
- The Chair of the ~~Committee~~ Complaint Panel will write and inform all concerned (*ie the complainant and the Panel members*) of the date, time and place of the *proposed meeting* at least 5 working days in advance *of the intended meeting*. The notification to the complainant should also inform him/her of the right to be accompanied to the meeting by a friend-support person and the right to submit further written evidence. It is the responsibility of the Chair of the ~~Committee~~ Complaint Panel to ensure that a *record of the meeting is kept*. ~~the meeting is properly minuted.~~
- Following the meeting, the Complaints Panel *investigates further, interviewing witnesses as appropriate and carefully establishing the relevant facts. Any persons who have had a complaint against them should be informed that a complaint has been made against them and should be given the opportunity to inform the Complaints Panel of their view of the situation. The Complaints Panel keeps written records of meetings, telephone conversations and other documentation.*
- After the meeting, the ~~Committee~~ Complaints Panel will consider the evidence and a written decision will be sent to the Principal and the complainant within 15 working days. *If information relating to the complaint is likely to take longer than 15 working days, the complainant will be notified of the expected timeframe for a decision to be made.*
- *The Board must exercise caution when dealing with complaints regarding staff, particularly in relation to confidentiality and processes to ensure that the principles of natural justice are met. * The Board should contact the NZSTA Employment Advisory and Support Centre in such cases. The board will need to consider relevant staff disciplinary policies, employment agreements and advice from the NZSTA Employment Adviser. If the complaint involves the Principal, the provisions of the Principals' Collective Employment take precedence over the Complaints Panel process noted above. In this situation, NZSTA will advise regarding appropriate processes.*
- *Note: a complaint regarding disregard or lack of compliance in relation to a complaint resolution should be treated as a serious matter and dealt with urgently, as a new complaint rather than as a reconsideration of the previous issue.*

When dealing with any complaint, both management and board will act in accordance with policy and procedures, completing a thorough investigation and dealing with each case fairly

and on its merits. Trustees must exercise caution particularly around confidentiality, process and natural justice

In dealing with complaints it is noted that the Board has a 'close off point' where, once they are satisfied that they have done all that could reasonably be expected, they enter into no further discussion on the matter with the complainant or other parties. The New Zealand School Trustees Association (NZSTA) notes that whilst such an approach needs to be used with caution, there are occasions when the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome and a considerable amount of time is taken up responding to repeated restating and debating of the matter. NZSTA Advisers may be consulted in matters of complaint and at what point this occurs

FORMULATED BY: Rotorua Seventh-day Adventist School Board of Trustees

APPROVED: Board Chair, Victoria Finch _____

BOT RATIFIED:

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<https://www.nzsta.org.nz/assets/Governance-support-resources/Dealing-with-complaints.pdf>