

2.19 Complaints Policy

Purpose

- To enable concerns to be addressed quickly and efficiently so they don't escalate to complaints
- To ensure complaints are dealt with respectfully and with due consideration of all parties rights
- To ensure complaints are dealt with consistently in accordance with procedures established by the BOT
- To put in place appropriate corrective action, and/or disciplinary action, as required

Policy Statement

- The Paeroa College respects any complaints that may be raised by parents or caregivers, staff, students and community members. The school believes in high standards and in the pursuit of excellence in everything. The Board is keen to listen to and learn from any valid concerns raised about the school. The Board expects all complaints to be taken seriously and handled courteously.

A concern is:

- A minor issue that may be resolved informally directly between the parties involved, or with support. Concerns are not expected to have disciplinary, legal or industrial consequences.

A complaint is:

- Any verbal or written statement about a school practice or policy that in the opinion of the complainant is deemed to be of a serious nature that disadvantages them or the school community.
- Any verbal or written statement of a serious nature that indicates a member of the school community has acted illegally, unprofessionally, or in any manner which is harmful to another member of the school community.

Making a complaint

The Board expects the following steps to be taken by a complainant.

1. Contact the person whom the concern or complaint involves.
2. If unresolved, contact the appropriate Head of Department or Dean.
3. If still unresolved, contact the Principal.
4. If there is no satisfactory resolution from the previous steps, make a complaint in writing to the Board. Any complaint in writing must be received before the Friday preceding the monthly Board meeting or it will be held over to the next Board meeting. Any letter of complaint will be tabled at the full Board meeting unless natural justice prevents this.

There may be occasions when the steps under procedure 1 (as above) are inappropriate to follow. In these cases, it is expected the complainant will contact the Principal or Board in writing. If the complaint is in respect of the Principal, then it should be addressed in writing to the Board.

Written complaints received by the Board of Trustees

On receiving a written complaint, the Board will decide on what further action is required on a case-by-case basis. Before the Board decides to deal with a complaint it must check that the procedures outlined above have been followed. If not, it will normally return any letter of complaint to the writer and ask that they follow these first. All letters addressed to the Presiding Member of the Board are for the whole Board. The Presiding Member cannot act independently as to what action will be taken.

1. The Presiding Member acknowledges letter of complaint within 7 days of receipt and the complainant is advised of the next steps in the Board process. The latter becomes part of the correspondence that will be dealt with at the next Board meeting while the public is excluded.
2. The letter of complaint is tabled at the Board meeting and considered during public excluded time and referred to relevant parties for reporting back to the Board. The Board may decide whether to deal with the matter or to appoint a committee to investigate and recommend to the Board.
3. At public excluded meetings of the Board/committee, the reports are received, and the parties may be invited to speak to their complaint or answer questions. The Board/committee considers the evidence and/or information and comes to a decision or recommendation.
4. Depending on the delegated powers of the committee, either they or the Board come to a resolution as to how the Board will respond and/or what action will be taken.
5. The Board's response and the resolution of the complaint is communicated to the parties to the complaint in writing. This constitutes the closure of the complaints process.
6. Any of the parties may request the Board to reconsider their decision. However, for such a reconsideration to take place, there must be new relevant information.

Guidelines

1. The person about whom a complaint is made will be informed as soon as practicable and given reasonable time to respond.
2. Requests for confidentiality as to the identity of the complainant will be respected unless natural justice demands otherwise.
3. Issues that demand immediate attention e.g. allegations of serious wrongdoing, may require a special meeting of the Board to be called.
4. Resolution or dismissal of the complaint must not be discussed before all the information is available.
5. The Board will determine if there is any conflict of interest and act appropriately if there is one.
6. The Board must exercise caution when dealing with complaints regarding staff, particularly in relation to confidentiality and processes to ensure the principles of natural justice are met. It is advisable to seek independent advice in such cases. The Board will need to consider the relevant staff disciplinary policies, employment contracts and expert advice.
7. Once the complaint process is closed, the Board will not enter into any further discussion/ correspondence on the matter.
8. A complaint regarding lack of compliance in relation to the procedure will be actioned with urgency as a new complaint rather than a reconsideration of the previous issue.
9. All complaints made by the community, parents or students will be documented and reported where appropriate. All employment relations issues will be documented and reported where appropriate.
10. Insurance documents will be kept in an easily accessible location in the event the Board needs to contact them regarding indemnity.
10. All documentation relating to the complaint will be kept in a confidential manner and the complaints form will be completed.

Review schedule: Triennially

Review Date: 27/09/2022

Next Review Date: 2025

Presiding Member _____ Principal _____