**CUST SCHOOL COMPLAINTS POLICY**

The purpose of our complaints policy is to provide clear guidelines for the school community in

raising and resolving concerns and complaints.

We have procedures in place that we follow to ensure that complaints are handled appropriately. Our procedures enable us to:

* maintain the best learning environment for our students
* resolve matters of concern early, if possible
* respond to feedback and concerns constructively
* deal with complaints fairly, effectively, and promptly
* take into account individual circumstances
* maintain confidentiality
* preserve school/community relationships and communication
* monitor and record complaints and concerns about student safety.

Most complaints can be resolved informally by discussions with the people concerned. See [**Guidelines for Informal Complaints**](http://cust.schooldocs.co.nz/785.htm). The school also has a procedure for making a [**formal complaint**](http://cust.schooldocs.co.nz/776.htm) if informal discussion doesn't resolve the issue.

For complaints concerning harassment, see [**Harassment**](http://cust.schooldocs.co.nz/1017.htm). For allegations of theft or fraud, see [**Theft and Fraud Prevention**](http://cust.schooldocs.co.nz/2005.htm). School employees needing to make a protected disclosure, see [**Protected Disclosure**](http://cust.schooldocs.co.nz/376.htm).

### **Guidelines for Informal Complaints**

Our primary goal is to create the best learning environment for the students of our school. We encourage open communication and prefer that parents come to us to talk through a problem rather than discuss it in the community.

These are recommended guidelines for parents making informal complaints.

1. Discuss the issue with the right person.
   * If the matter is a **general issue,**discuss it with the person concerned or a member of the management team or the principal.
   * If you have a **complaint about a staff member**, contact the person involved and discuss the matter. We ask that parents make this direct approach as soon as possible. Be prepared to make a time to discuss your complaint if the staff member is unable to talk with you straight away. Be open to listening to the other side of the story to avoid communication breakdowns.

If you do not wish to approach the person concerned, contact a member of the management team or the principal to resolve the matter. The principal or management team member may communicate with the staff member concerned.

* + If you have a **complaint about one of our students**, contact the student's class teacher or the principal to discuss the matter.
  + If the matter concerns the **principal**and you have not first resolved it by discussion, or you feel uncomfortable directly approaching the principal, contact the chairperson of the board of trustees.
  + If the matter concerns a **board member**, contact the chairperson of the board of trustees, or board member if it concerns the board chair.

If you complain to a board member, you will be encouraged to resolve the issue with the guidelines above, and the board member will inform the principal and board chair.

1. Work towards a resolution.
   * In most cases, constructive discussion will resolve the issue.
   * If you are unhappy with the outcome of your initial meeting, contact the principal, a member of the management team, or the board chair to discuss further resolution. They will consider and respond to the complaint as appropriate.

If an informal meeting does not resolve your concern or complaint, you can make a [**formal complaint**](http://cust.schooldocs.co.nz/776.htm).

If a staff member is the complainant (including complaints about colleagues), the same procedure must be followed, commencing with an initial discussion with the people concerned to try to resolve matters.

### **Formal Complaints**

If an informal meeting does not resolve your concern or complaint, you can make a formal complaint.

In the interests of fairness, any formal complaint or serious allegation must be made in writing and resolved in a timely fashion. All parties should respect confidentiality.

Follow this process:

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| **Responsibility** | **Action** | |
| **Complainant** | 1. | Put your concerns in writing, either as a signed letter or an email. Give as many details as possible, including details of efforts that have been made to resolve the issue. Include names and contact phone numbers. |
|  | 2. | Send the letter marked Confidential to the school principal or, if the complaint is about the principal, to the chairperson of the board of trustees. The contact details are available from the school office. |
| **Principal**  (if complaint is about a staff member) | 3. | Acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing or by email to the complainant. Give a copy of the complaint to the staff member concerned.  Inform the chairperson of the board of trustees. |
| **Board chair**  (if complaint is about the principal) | 4. | Acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing or by email to the complainant. Give a copy of the complaint to the principal. |

When a formal complaint is received, the school may choose to investigate it if it is deemed serious enough to warrant it after considering the initial response from the person the complaint is about. Not all complaints require an investigation but all written complaints should be disclosed to the staff concerned at the earliest opportunity.

Relevant collective employment agreement provisions for dealing with complaints and discipline must be observed including allowing representation of staff at any meeting to discuss a written complaint.