

Concerns and Complaints Policy

Policy statement

Timaru Girls' High School respects any concerns that may be raised by parents or caregivers, staff, students and community members. The School believes in high standards and is keen to listen to and learn from any valid concerns raised about the School. To ensure that all concerns are dealt with effectively and fairly the standard process outlined should be adhered to.

Procedures

Making a complaint

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

1. Contact the person whom the concern is related.
2. If unresolved, contact the Dean of the appropriate Form.
3. If still unresolved, contact the Principal.
4. If there is no satisfaction from the previous steps, make a complaint in writing to the Board of Trustees. Any complaint in writing must be received before the [day of the week] preceding the monthly Board meeting or it will be held over to the next Board meeting. Any letter of concern 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 and is unsatisfactorily resolved after contact then it can 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 Chairperson of the Board are for the whole Board. The Chair cannot act independently as to what action will be taken.

1. The Chair acknowledges letter of complaint within a fortnight 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. (At 'public excluded' meetings) Letter of complainant is tabled at the Board meeting and referred to relevant parties for reporting back to the Board. The Board decides whether to deal with the matter as a whole or appoint a committee to investigate and make recommendations to the Board.
3. (At 'public excluded' meetings) At the meeting 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. (At 'public excluded' meetings) Depending on the delegated powers of the committee, either they or the Board as a whole come to a resolution as to how the Board will respond and/or what action will be taken.

5. The Board's response is communicated to the parties to the complaint in writing.
6. Any of the parties may request the Board to reconsider their decision. However, normally for such a reconsideration to take place, new information that would have been relevant to the Board's deliberations must be produced.

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 identity of complainant will be respected unless natural justice demands otherwise.
3. Issues of a serious matter, e.g. allegations of physical abuse, 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 to hand.
5. Conflict of interest will be determined on a number of issues, including whether the complaint involves the actions of any Trustee.
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 external personnel/industrial advice in such cases. The Board will need to consider the relevant staff disciplinary policies, employment contracts and expert advice.
7. The Board recognises that not all complainants will be satisfied with the outcome of a complaint. Once reconsidered, if the Board is confident of its decision, it will refuse to enter into any further discussion/correspondence.
8. A complaint regarding lack of compliance in relation to an agreed complaint resolution will be treated as a serious matter and actioned with urgency as a new complaint rather than a reconsideration of the previous issue.

Adopted by: Board of Trustees May 2012
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Next review: May 2014

Policy last audited: May 2013