

Documentation and Self Review

Complaints Policy

Rationale

Suggestions, concerns and complaints are important to the Board and staff of Northern Health School. It is the Board's responsibility to ensure that these are handled in a fair, consistent and equitable way, mindful of natural justice principles, and in accordance with the relevant employment agreements, legislation, and Codes of Conduct. It is important that the feedback from students, staff, families and members of the school community is considered in a timely manner to ensure the best educational outcomes for our students and to assist us to continuously improve and provide effective service to all involved with our school.

Purpose

To ensure concerns and complaints are:

- addressed effectively and efficiently
- dealt with respectfully and with due consideration of all parties' rights
- dealt with consistently in accordance with procedures established by the Board and management

To put in place procedures to ensure continuous improvement, appropriate corrective action, and/or disciplinary action, as required.

Definitions

A concern:

A minor issue that may be resolved informally and directly between the parties involved, such as concern about learning progress, lack of student engagement, teacher's or leader's communication style, an angry outburst. Concerns are not expected to have disciplinary, legal or industrial consequences.

A complaint:

- 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. In distinguishing between a concern and a complaint, a complaint would have the potential to result in formal/disciplinary action being taken against the employee, if the allegations were substantiated.

Guidelines

In all cases the Board will act as a good employer. The Board's actions shall be to resolve the concern/complaint as efficiently as possible with the most direct personal relationship possible.

In dealing with any concern or complaint, the School will act in accordance with the relevant conditions of the current employment agreement(s) as well as all relevant legislation pertaining to the nature of the concern/complaint.

Initial Steps – common to both categories

- a) The Complainant will follow the process set out in Appendix 1
- b) The person receiving the complaint (Recipient) must first determine whether the complaint is a concern (minor) or a complaint (serious). This will determine the process pathway for the complaint. This will be reviewed by their leader/manager. The right of appeal is available if there is fresh evidence presented that was not considered previously.
- c) The person receiving the complaint will then determine whether the complaint involves individuals (staff, pupils or employees of the School) or School policies or systems to ensure the correct pathway is followed.
- d) The complainant will be advised of the complaint category and told of the process pathway.
- e) A Complaints file (of all serious complaints) will be kept by the Principal.

Concerns

Follow Appendices 1 and 2

Where a concern is unable to be resolved through informal discussion, or the concern reoccurs, the issue should be referred to the Board and **Appendices 3 and 4 followed.**

Complaints

All complaints will be referred to the Principal who will follow the complaints procedures and if of a serious nature, inform the Board Presiding Member immediately.

Appendices 3 and 4 will be followed.

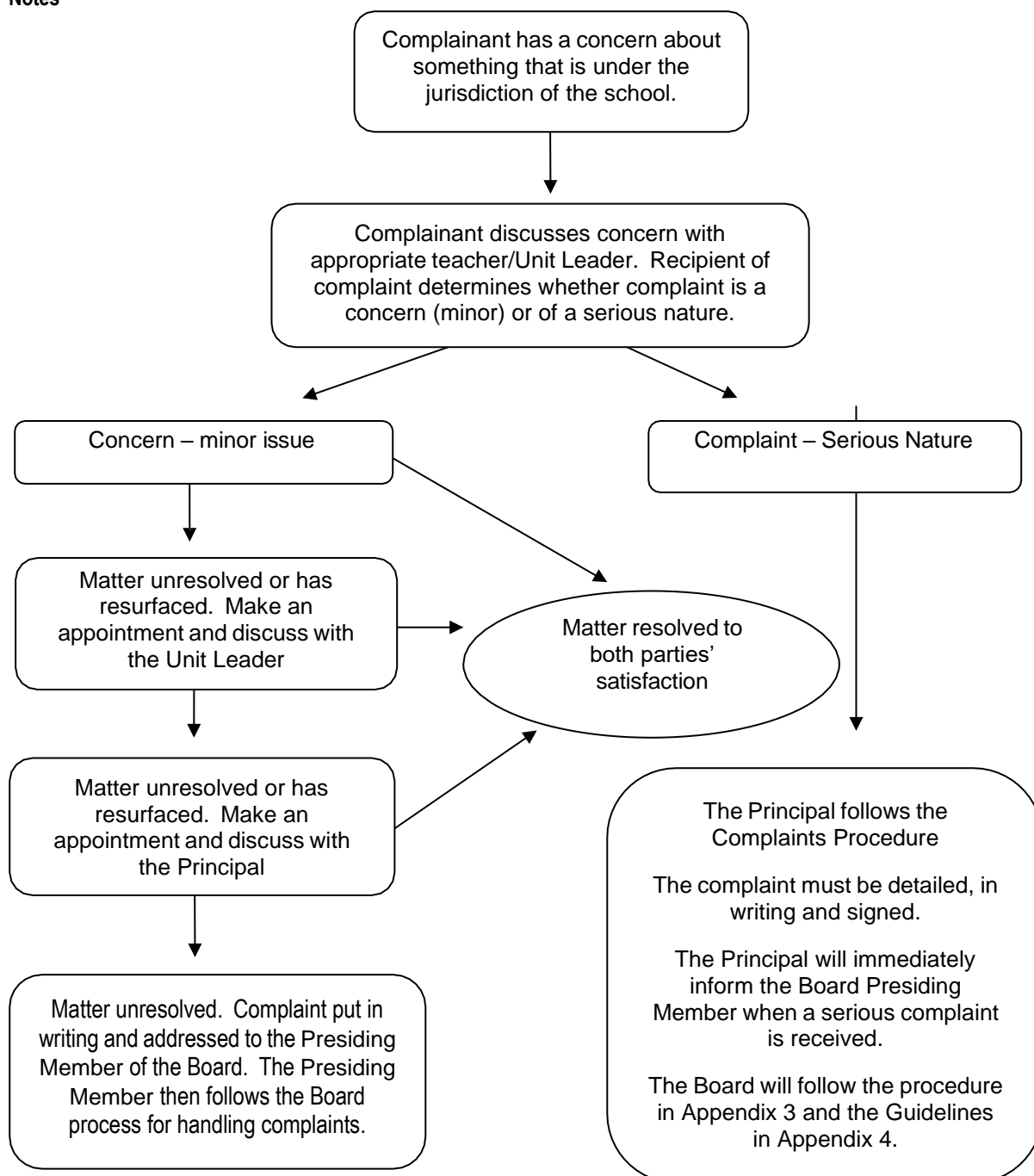
In the case of a complaint against the Principal the Complainant will be referred to the Board Presiding Member who will follow **Appendices 3 and 4.**

Complainants have a right of appeal to the Northern Health School Board if dissatisfied with the outcomes of the complaints process.

Adopted	_____ May 2024 _____
Presiding Member	_____
Review Date	_____ May 2027 _____

Northern Health School Complaints Procedure for Students/Parents/Caregivers/Staff Making a Concern or Complaint

Notes



1. While minor issues may be able to be discussed in a quick informal chat with a staff member, the preferred option is to arrange a time to discuss the matter in order that both parties give the matter proper attention.
2. If the Complaints Procedure has not been followed the Board will normally return any letter of complaint to the writer and ask that they follow the procedure first.
3. All parties to a complaint may bring a support person to any meeting where the issue is to be discussed.

Northern Health School

Detailed Procedure (internal) for dealing with Concerns and Complaints

Teacher or Deputy Principal receives a written or verbal concern or complaint

Teacher or DP asks if this is a:

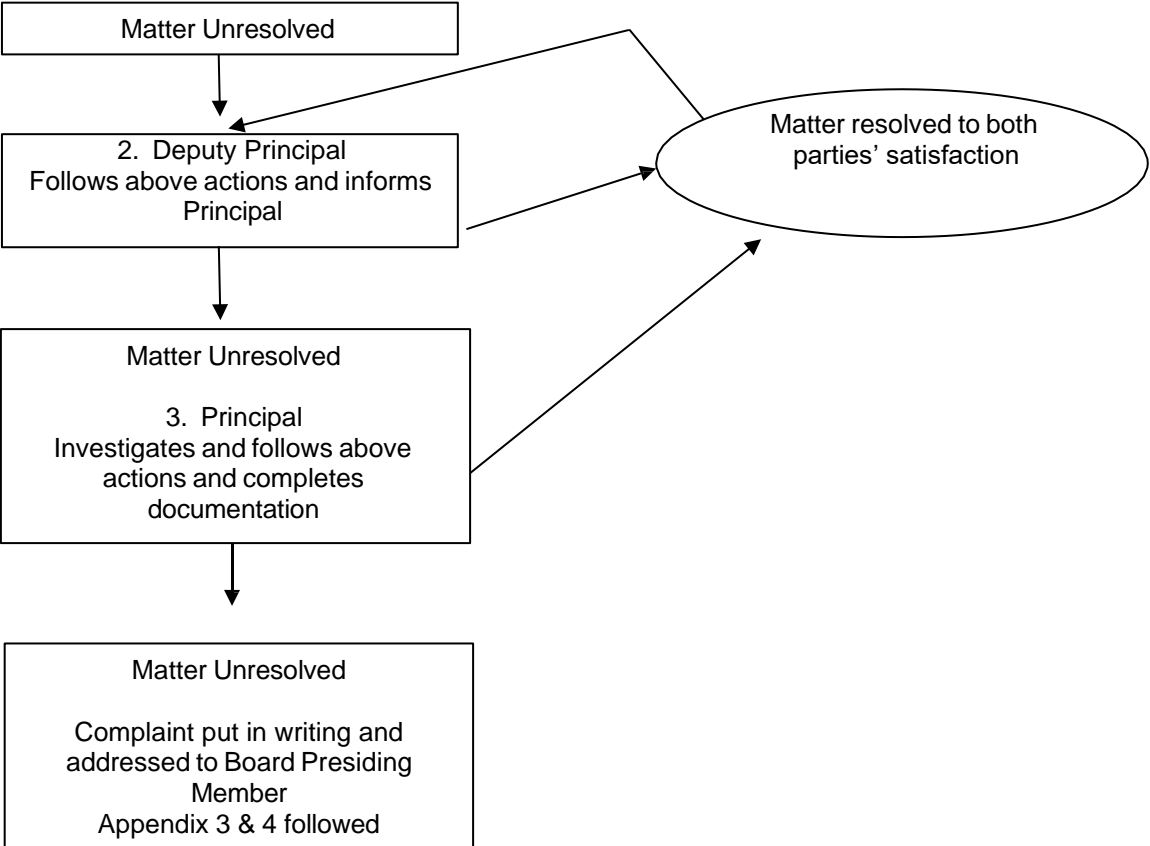
1. Concern – may be written or verbal. A minor issue that is not expected to have disciplinary, legal or industrial consequences and may be resolved informally and directly between the parties involved.
2. Complaint – a serious matter that may have disciplinary, legal, industrial consequences. These must be referred immediately to the Principal.

Concern

Options for Referral



1. Teacher	2. Deputy Principal	3. Principal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concern discussed with staff member and/or student and caregivers who are given opportunity to respond and offered support. Options considered and implemented. HR is available to provide advice and support if required. Consultation, investigation and follow up Response given to complainant Report of outcomes written 		



Northern Health School Complaints Procedure for Board Receiving a Complaint

Letter of complaint is acknowledged by the Presiding Member and the Complainant advised of the next steps in the Board process. The letter becomes part of the correspondence that will be dealt with at the next Board meeting while the public is excluded. If the Complaints Procedure (for concerns) has not been followed the Board will normally return any letter of complaint to the writer and ask that they follow the procedure first.

Letter is tabled at Board meeting (with the public excluded) and referred to relevant parties for reporting back to the Board. The Board decides the appropriate response pathway or directs it back to Appendix 1. The Board decides whether to deal with the matter as a whole or appoint a Subcommittee to investigate and recommend to the Board.

At the meeting of the Board/Subcommittee the reports are received, and the parties may be invited to speak to their complaint or answer questions. The Board/Subcommittee considers the evidence and/or information and comes to a decision or recommendation.

Depending on the delegated powers of the Subcommittee 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.

The Board's response is communicated to the parties to the complaint. This may be managed either publicly or confidentially depending on the case.

Any of the parties may request the Board 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.

Northern Health School Guidelines for Board in dealing with Serious Complaints

1. Issues of a serious nature, e.g. allegations of physical abuse, gross, serious or sustained poor performance, dishonesty, verbal abuse, harassment, undermining Board policy, etc may require a special meeting of the Board to be called.
2. All letters addressed to the Presiding Member of the Board are for the whole Board. The Presiding Member cannot decide independently as to what action will be taken unless delegated authority to do so by the Board.
3. Subject to agreement between the parties, resolution or dismissal of the complaint will not occur before all the information is at hand.
4. Conflict of interest will be determined on a number of issues, including the relationship to anyone involved in the complaint.
5. 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 contact the regional NZSTA personnel/industrial adviser in such cases. The Board will need to consider the relevant staff disciplinary policies, employment agreements and expert advice from the NZSTA adviser.
6. In the case of complaints against staff the Board's insurance company should be informed of possible future actions.
7. The Board recognises that not all complainants will be satisfied with the outcome of a complaint. After one reconsideration, if the Board is confident of its decision, it will refuse to enter into further discussion/correspondence. In making such a decision the NZSTA helpdesk can assist by giving an objective assessment of a Board's processes in dealing with the complaint.
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 as a reconsideration of the previous issue.
9. Board members need to be clear in their mind of the difference between a complaint they have as a parent (i.e. regarding their own child) and a complaint they have as a Board member (e.g. obstruction of staff preventing them carrying out Board work.) In the first instance they are required to follow the normal procedures and are excluded from decision making due to conflict of interest. The latter case is dealt with as an agenda item for the whole Board (possibly with the public excluded).
10. Board members need to be clear in their actions when a parent, community member or student makes an approach to them directly about a concern and/or complaint. The Board member must advise the complainant of the correct procedures to follow and direct them to these procedures.