

TRENTHAM SCHOOL STATEMENT OF INTENT

CONCERNS & COMPLAINTS

Reviewed by Staff – April 2019

Reviewed by BOT – April 2019

Ratified by BOT – May 2019

Next review date – September 2021

PURPOSES

To provide staff members, parents/caregivers, and the wider school community with clear guidelines for raising and resolving concerns and complaints.

To ensure that complaints and concerns are handled appropriately and our procedures enable us to:

- maintain a safe environment for our students and staff
- treat all people fairly, transparently, and with dignity and respect
- resolve matters of concern early, if possible
- respond to feedback and concerns constructively
- deal with complaints fairly, effectively, and in a timely manner
- take into account individual circumstances
- maintain confidentiality
- preserve and enhance school and community relationships
- monitor and record complaints and concerns about student safety and well-being.

GUIDELINES

1. Most concerns can be resolved informally through discussions with the people concerned. The school also has a procedure for making a formal complaint if informal discussion doesn't resolve the issue.
2. We will be able to manage concerns and complaints more effectively if you raise them with us promptly.
3. Complaints about events that occurred more than three months earlier, do not involve you or your children, or which have been made anonymously, will not usually be formally investigated.

Guidelines for Raising Concerns

Our primary goal is to create the best learning environment for the students of our school. We encourage open communication and prefer that you come to us to talk through any concerns rather than discussing them in the community.

1. Discuss the issue with the right person.
 - If you have a **general concern about the school or its programmes**, discuss it with the person involved or with a member of the leadership team or the principal.

- If you have a **particular concern about a staff member or a school activity**, contact the person involved to discuss the matter privately. We ask that you make this direct approach as soon as possible. Be prepared to make a time to discuss your concern if the person involved 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 involved, contact a member of the leadership team or the principal to discuss your concern. The principal or leadership team member may communicate with the person involved.
 - If you have a **concern about your own child or one of our other students**, contact the student's class teacher or the AP, DP or principal to discuss the matter.
 - If your concern relates to another student, you must not approach that student directly.
 - If you have a concern about another **parent, caregiver, or member of the school community** on a school related matter, raise this with the AP, DP or principal.
 - 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 board chair.
 - If the matter concerns a **board member**, contact the board chair, or deputy chair if it concerns the board chair.
2. If you approach a board member with your concerns you will be asked to follow the guidelines above, and the board member will inform the principal and board chair.
 3. Work towards a resolution. In most cases, constructive discussion will resolve your concerns.
 4. If you are unhappy with the outcome of your initial meeting, contact the principal, a member of the leadership team, or the board chair to discuss further resolution.

If this process does not resolve your concern, you can make a formal complaint.

[Flow Chart Concerns & Complaints Process](#)

Formal Complaints

If your concerns have not been resolved, or for more serious matters, you can make a formal complaint.

Formal complaints may be about an employee of the school, a parent or caregiver, a student, or any matter within the school's responsibility.

In the interests of fairness, any formal complaint or serious allegation must be made in writing and resolved as quickly as possible given the details and the steps that need to be considered.

All parties should respect confidentiality, including avoiding the use of social media to promote a point of view.

To make a complaint:

Put your specific complaint(s) in writing with as many facts and details as possible, including the names of people involved and dates of events, together with any steps you have taken to resolve the matter and your preferred contact details.

The letter or email should be marked "confidential" and sent to:

- the principal, if the complaint is about a staff member, student, parent or caregiver, or other member of the school community
- the board chair, if it is about the principal
- the deputy chair, if it is about the chair.

Contact details for the principal, board chair, and deputy chair are available through the school office.

When your complaint is received:

The principal, board chair, or deputy chair will check that your complaint has come to the correct person and then send you an acknowledgement of receipt, usually within a week. You may be asked for further details about your complaint, to assist in determining the appropriate investigation process.

The principal (if the complaint is about a staff member, student, parent or caregiver, or other member of the school community) will:

- inform the board chair of any complaints about staff members, students, parents or caregivers, or other members of the school community
- take steps to resolve the complaint in accordance with their delegated authority and the relevant school policies, including undertaking a preliminary assessment of the complaint:
 - More general complaints or those which are unlikely to lead to disciplinary action against a staff member will be resolved informally.
 - Potentially sensitive matters or more serious complaints which could lead to disciplinary action against a staff member may be referred to the board for consideration in-committee, with a view to determining the required level of board or chair involvement.
- follow the general guidelines for Investigate a Formal Complaint or Serious Allegation
- take appropriate advice from advisors such as NZSTA if required
- report to the board in accordance with school policy.

The board chair (if the complaint is about the principal) will:

- undertake a preliminary assessment of any complaints about the principal
 - More general complaints or those which are unlikely to lead to the board taking action against the principal will be promptly discussed with the principal at an informal meeting, usually held within a week of receipt of the complaint, where the potential resolution can be considered.
 - The process for managing complaints which appear more serious and could lead to the board taking action against the principal will be determined by the board at an in-committee meeting usually held within a week of receipt of the complaint. The complaint will then be promptly disclosed to the principal together with an indication of the proposed process for managing the complaint.
- follow the general guidelines for Investigate a Formal Complaint or Serious Allegation
- take appropriate advice from advisors such as NZSTA.

The deputy chair (if the complaint is about the chair) will:

- call an in-committee board meeting to discuss any complaints about the chair and determine an appropriate process for resolution
- take appropriate advice from advisors such as NZSTA.

Subject to the privacy of the person or people concerned, we will keep you informed about the process and the expected timeframe for any investigation, and will provide you with written confirmation when the matter is concluded.

Relevant collective employment agreement provisions for dealing with complaints about staff members must be observed, including protecting the staff member's dignity and mana, advising them of their right to seek support and representation before responding to complaints, and giving them a reasonable opportunity to take that advice.

Investigation process

Your views are important to us, and all complaints are taken seriously. However not all complaints will require a formal investigation. In determining whether a formal investigation may be required, the principal,

board chair, and/or board may consider any preliminary response from the person the complaint is about, and any action the school has taken previously, including meetings and correspondence. There may be other processes which can more constructively address general concerns, opinions, and views about the school.

A full documentary record of any formal complaint is completed and stored confidentially in a secure location.

Investigate a Formal Complaint or Serious Allegation

Depending on the nature of the complaint, the preliminary steps may include:

- asking you for more details about your concerns so that they can be properly investigated
- referring you back to the person or people you have complained about to explore options for informal resolution
- referring the matter to the board for consideration at an in-committee meeting, so that the board can determine the next steps
- taking appropriate advice from advisors such as NZSTA.

Not all complaints require an investigation but all written complaints will be disclosed to the person concerned at the earliest opportunity, either as part of a preliminary or informal process or together with an explanation of the process for investigation and resolution of the complaint.

- If your formal complaint **does not** justify a formal investigation, the principal or board will consider the issues raised and all of the relevant information, and provide you with a written response.
- If your formal complaint **does** justify a formal investigation, then subject to the privacy of the person or people concerned, we will keep you informed about the investigation process and the expected timeframes, and will provide you with written confirmation when the matter is concluded.

The NZ School Trustees Association (NZSTA) or legal counsel should be contacted for advice before proceeding to investigate. The school's insurer should be notified early in the process and kept informed of progress. Consult with external agencies as appropriate (e.g. Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children, and/or police) to ensure any actions do not undermine other investigations.

The Employment Relations Act provides for confidential resolution of employment disputes in certain circumstances, the terms of which are usually recorded in a settlement agreement.

The school will not include in any settlement agreements any terms which would be inconsistent with the school's statutory obligations, including the Education Council's mandatory reporting requirements, or when they would be contrary to a culture of child protection, such as when the conduct at issue concerns the safety or well-being of a child.

Board members with a potential conflict of interest will not take part in the investigation. If the complaint is against the principal or the principal has had significant involvement in the alleged events giving rise to the complaint, the principal will not take part in the investigation process.