

POLICY 7 - COMPLAINTS

The Rotorua Girls' High School Board complaints policy is intended to provide a clearly laid out process for dealing with and resolving concerns and complaints against staff, students or anyone acting in the name of the Board. It is important that the concerns of students, staff, parents/whanau and members of the school community are recognised and resolved in order to assure the best educational outcomes for students and facilitate confidence in School processes.

- 7.1. The school will endeavour to respond to concerns and complaints in a fair and consistent manner, mindful of the principles of natural justice, the relevant employment contracts, legislation and school expectations as set out in Board of Trustees policies, school rules and procedures.
- 7.2. The Board of Trustees, as the School's governing body, deals with all complaints relating to the Principal, Board members and breaches of school policy.
- 7.3. The Principal, as manager and professional leader of the school, deals with all concerns and complaints relating to school employees, students and all aspects of school operation.
- 7.4. The Board delegates full responsibility of ensuring processes are in place and operating effectively and adequately to the Principal.
- 7.5. In complying with the policy, the Principal shall not fail to:
 - Implement and maintain robust procedures to meet the policy requirements,
 - Ensure that the process for concerns and complaints are clearly communicated,
 - Report to the Board as set out in 9.6 and 9.7.
- 7.6. The Principal shall maintain a register of complaints and resolutions, and shall report to the Board monthly outlining numbers of complaints, resolution success figures, and any areas of concern for Board deliberation.
- 7.7. The Principal will report all serious complaints or serious wrongdoings to the Board Chairperson. A serious complaint or serious wrongdoing is defined as:
 - Unlawful, corrupt, or irregular use of public funds or resources, or
 - An act or omission to act or a course of conduct that:
 - is oppressive, improperly discriminatory, grossly negligent or constitutes gross mismanagement
 - constitutes a serious risk to public health or public safety or the environment
 - constitutes an offence or is a serious risk to the maintenance of law
- 7.8. A copy of the Complaints Policy is available from the school office and website.

PROCEDURE A. CONCERNS

A concern is any verbal or written statement about a minor issue. Concerns will normally follow the process set out below, unless there are culturally specific circumstances that require a different process.

- A.1. For Students
 - Students are encouraged to talk directly to their teachers whenever a problem arises. They should approach the teacher at a suitable time (e.g. at the end of the lesson) or make an appointment. Issues dealt with as soon as they occur are usually straightforward to solve. If the concern is not resolved, students should approach their Year Level Dean.
- A.2. For Parents/Whanau
 - If the concern about a classroom matter, the complainant should contact the teacher directly and discuss the matter with him or her. Teachers wherever possible, will return calls within 48 hours and the school will try to respond to concerns within five working days.
 - If the complainant does not feel comfortable discussing the concern with the teacher directly or the concern does not involve a particular teacher, then phone or write to one of the following:
 - The Year Level Dean for personal concerns
 - The Deputy Principal or Assistant Principal for general progress and personal concerns
 - The subject's Curriculum Learning Leader for subject concerns

- The Truancy Officer for concerns about absences
- The Executive Officer for financial concerns
- The Wellness Centre Staff for personal and family concerns
- The Careers Advisor for concerns about careers and course selection
- The Senior Leadership Team (Principal and Deputy Principals) for concerns about staff performance or conduct.

A.3. For the School Community

- If the concern is about a student, contact their Year Level Dean or the Principal.
- If the concern is about a staff member or a volunteer, for example coaches and parent helpers, contact the person directly and discuss the matter with him or her.
 - If the complainant does not feel comfortable discussing the concern with the person directly or is not satisfied with the response, then contact their Assistant Principal in charge of extra curriculum activities to discuss.
- If the concern is about the Principal or a Board member contact the person directly and discuss the matter with him or her.
 - If the complainant does not feel comfortable discussing the concern with the person directly or is not satisfied with the response, then contact the Board Chairperson.

A.4. If the response provided by the school does not fully address the concern, the complainant can take the matter further by making a formal complaint (refer Procedure Q - Complaints).

PROCEDURE B. COMPLAINTS

A complaint is:

- Any statement, letter or report about school practice or policy that in the opinion of the complainant is deemed to disadvantage them unfairly.
- Any verbal or written statement that indicates a member of the school community (staff member, student or a Board member), has acted illegally, unprofessionally, or in any manner which is harmful to another member of the school community.

B.1. Where possible a complaint should be in writing and should include:

- the complainant's name and contact details,
- the full circumstances of the complaint, including names of any witnesses,
- if applicable, the details of any efforts already made to resolve the matter, and
- signed by the complainant.

Unsigned or anonymous complaints will be disregarded.

B.2. If a complaint involves the Principal, a Board member, or a breach of school policy, the complaint must be in writing and either e-mailed or delivered to the school office in a sealed envelope addressed to the Board Chairperson.

- A discussion with the Board Chairperson or a Board member will not be considered a complaint.

B.3. All other complaints should be e-mailed or delivered to the school office in a sealed envelope addressed to the Principal or to the Acting Principal if the Principal is absent.

B.4. Complaints will be acknowledged in writing and within 3 days of the Principal or Board Chairperson receiving the complaint.

B.5. Depending on the nature of the complaint, the Principal may refer the complaint to the Board or in consultation with the Board to another agency for investigation.

B.6. The Principal or Board Chairperson will discuss the complaint with the complainant before deciding what further action should be taken. The complainant may have a support person at this meeting.

B.7. Complaints will be investigated by interviewing the complainant and obtaining written statements from all other persons who have relevant information to provide about the incident.

- The investigator must keep a record of the process used.

B.8. Complaints will generally be treated in confidence. However, in the interests of natural justice any person who is the subject of a complaint must have the opportunity to hear and respond to all of the details of the complaint.

- The person is entitled to have a support person or legal representation.
- B.9. When the Principal is the subject of a complaint:
- The Board Chairperson will discuss the complaint with the Principal in the first instance to maintain Board and Principal Relations.
 - If the matter is raised at a Board meeting it will be discussed 'in-committee' and will remain confidential.
- B.10. If there is a dispute between the Principal and the Board, the Principal will discuss the matter with the Chairperson. Any discussion will be 'in-committee'.
- If the matter is not resolved, the Principal may initiate a mediation process. Legal proceedings are a last resort and only if mediation is not successful.
- B.11. When a complaint is referred to the Board, the Board may appoint a Sub-Committee to manage either the internal and / or independent investigation.
- The Board should seek legal and / or industrial advice and advise the school's insurer.
- B.12. The person who is the subject of the complaint and the complainant must be informed of the outcome of the investigation.
- A written response will be made to both parties within 14 days following the Board meeting within which the complaint was considered
- B.13. When the Board have reached a decision regarding a complaint and conveyed their decision to the complainant and the person who was the subject of the complaint, the Board will not enter into further discussion, investigation or correspondence about the same complaint, unless there is additional relevant, overwhelming and compelling evidence that was not presented to the Board in the original investigation.
- B.14. Employees may report any information regarding serious wrongdoing to the Board of Trustee Chairperson or any other government agency by following the School's Protected Disclosures Procedures (refer to Procedure R). Serious wrongdoing is defined in clause 7.7 of the Complaints Policy.