

MANGAWEKA SCHOOL

POLICY: Complaints

Why have this policy and what is it for?

Mangaweka School's philosophy encourages active participation and dialogue between parents, students, teachers and Principal for their mutual benefit. While it would be ideal for all dialogue to be positive, from time to time concerns and complaints regarding the operation of the school at all levels will arise. There needs to be guidelines and procedures in place so that these concerns can be voiced and acted upon at the appropriate level in a constructive and objective manner.

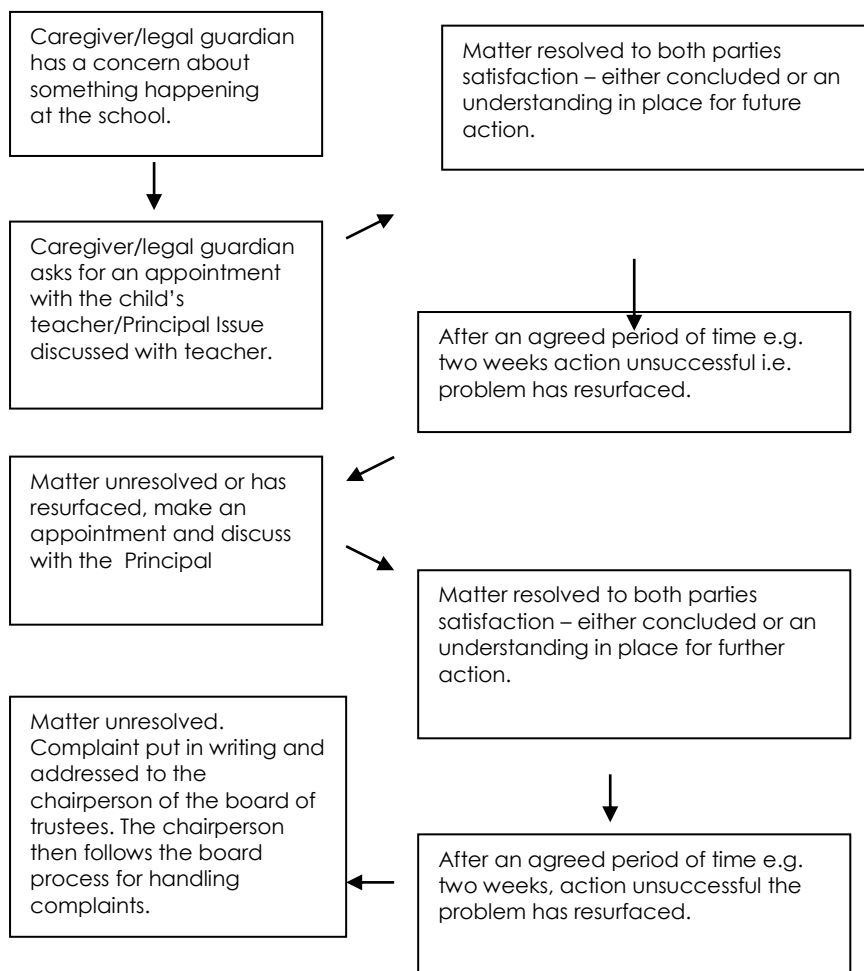
How will we do it?

The Board of Trustees acknowledges that its role within the school is one of governance. The Board acknowledges that the role of the principal within the school is one of management and he/she is therefore responsible for the day to day administration and professional leadership within the school.

The Board acknowledges that the teaching staff is responsible for the management of their classroom learning programmes and pupils learning needs with professional advice and leadership from the Principal.

Procedures:

For day to day school issues



Stage One: Community Process Notes:

1. While minor issues may be able to be discussed in a quick informal chat with a staff member, normally in order for both parties to give the matter full attention, arranging a time to discuss the matter is the preferred option.
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. The board needs to formally receive a complaint in order to act on it. If a complaint is serious enough for the board to deal with, it is serious enough to be put in writing. If you have concerns about expressing the matter clearly in writing please discuss the matter in confidence with the board chair (or other delegated board member) to enable them to assist you with this.
4. All parties to a complaint may bring a support person to any meeting where the issue is to be discussed.

Letter of complaint is acknowledged by the chairperson 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.

Letter is tabled at board meeting (with the public excluded) and referred to relevant parties for reporting back to the board. The board decides whether to deal with the matter as a whole or approves a committee to investigate and recommend to the board.

At the meeting of the board/committee the reports are received and the complainant 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.

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.

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

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 boards' deliberation must be produced.

Shaded area denotes “public excluded” meetings.

Stage Two: Board Process

Guidelines:

1. Issues of serious matter, e.g. allegations of physical abuse, may require a special meeting of the board to be called.
2. All letters addressed to the chairperson of the board are for the **whole board**. The chairperson cannot decide independently as to what action will be taken.
3. Resolution or dismissal of the complaint must not be discussed before all the information is to hand.
4. Conflict of interest will be determined on a number of issues including whether the complaint involves the actions of any trustees.
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 contracts and expert advice from the NZSTA adviser.
6. 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 regarding the decision.
The NZSTA helpdesk can assist by giving an objective assessment of the board's processes in dealing with a complaint.
7. A complaint regarding lack of compliance in relation to an agreed complaint resolution will be treated as a new complaint rather than as a reconsideration of the previous issue.
8. Trustees 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 trustee (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).
9. When any of the parties request the Board to reconsider their decision the Board will take advice from NZSTA on the need to use an independent investigation

Procedures for complaints regarding the Principal or Board of Trustees matters

Where issues or concerns raised with the Principal have not been addressed using the criteria set out in the flow chart above then the formal process of writing to the Board chair applies.

Where issues or concerns regarding the Board of Trustees or its deliberations need to be raised then the party(ies) concerned shall use the provisions for 'deputations' and 'petitions' set out in the current edition of "Model Standing Orders; for meetings of public bodies"

Complaints about School Processes

Parents may complain to a school or the Ministry of Education about the school's complaints process or process for managing stand-down s and suspensions.

Reference: Ministry of Education website:

<http://www.minedu.govt.nz/NZEducation/EducationPolicies/Schools/StanddownsSuspensionsExclusionsExpulsions/PartTwo/Section3ActionsOfLastResort/ManagingComplaints.aspx>

Contact the Senior Adviser for the school at Ministry of Education (06) 349 6357.

Conclusion

It is intended that with clear communications and procedures, an emphasis on objectivity mutual resolution and conciliation that good relations between parents and school will be maintained.

Review: annually

BOT Chair Principal

Last Reviewed: **10th February 2016** Review Date: **10th February 2017**