

Tokoroa Central School Complaints Procedure for Board of Trustees Receiving a Complaint

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. 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. They decide whether to deal with the matter as a whole or appoint a committee to investigate and recommend to the board.

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.

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 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 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.

Tokoroa Central School
Guidelines for Board of Trustees
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 chairperson of the board are for the whole board. The chairperson 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. 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.)
10. Trustees need to be clear in their actions when a parent, community member or student makes an approach to them directly about a concern &/or complaint. The trustee must advise the complainant of the correct procedures to follow and direct them to these procedures.