

**GOLDEN BAY HIGH SCHOOL**  
**PUTTING THINGS RIGHT - CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY**

**RATIONALE**

Self-managing schools have a direct responsibility for the quality of teaching and learning, and for the promotion of a positive school climate. It is important to have an agreed process that is seen to be fair by students, parents and teachers, and to implement the process in accordance with being a good employer and the requirements of the employment contracts.

The policy is designed to instil confidence in students, parents and teachers that all parties will be dealt with fairly.

**DEFINITIONS**

For the purposes of this policy, a **concern** is anything a person wishes to raise with the school. This can be done in an informal and confidential way. The matter may just require clarification, or some modification or school procedures. If the matter cannot be resolved at this level, the person with the concern may make a formal **complaint**.

**POLICY STATEMENT**

1. Each concern or complaint will be dealt with as close to its source as possible.
2. The BOT delegates the responsibility for dealing with initial concerns and formal complaints about all personnel, except the Principal, to the school Senior Leadership Team.
3. The BOT is responsible for dealing with concerns and complaints about the Principal, and with complaints that the Principal has investigated, and deems serious.
4. Advice for parents and students on what to do when they have a concern or wish to make a formal complaint will be publicised at the beginning of each year.
5. The principles of natural justice will be followed i.e. the person about whom a formal complaint is made must have the opportunity to
  - know who made the complaint
  - hear the details of the complaint
  - respond to the complaint.
6. In addition, the person(s) making a decision on dealing with a complaint must pay due regard to all parties without bias.
7. All perspectives will be heard before decisions are made.
8. The interests of all people will be taken into account.
9. People who raise a concern that needs an answer, or who make a formal complaint, will be informed of any outcomes in a timely manner.
10. Records will be kept of all formal complaints received, detailing the process followed and any outcomes that result.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

This policy should be read in conjunction with

- Advice for Students and Parents with a Concern
- Guidelines for Dealing with Complaints
- Disciplinary Procedures - Teachers and Principal

## **PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH PEOPLE WITH CONCERNS OR COMPLAINTS**

Check that you are an appropriate person to deal with the complaint. If you are not help the person with the concern or complaint to determine who an appropriate person would be. If you are, then the following steps should be followed:

- 1) Listen actively. Ask questions to clarify the complainants' facts, feelings, etc
- 2) Take notes.
- 3) Read back what you have written and ask if this is an accurate representation of their complaint or concern. Modify these notes until they accurately reflect the substance of the complaint or concern.
- 4) Keep the tone investigative - do not express sympathy, outrage, etc at this point - you have only one side of the story or one point of view.
- 5) Tell anyone making a formal complaint that you will have to use their name (in the interests of natural justice).
- 6) Tell the person you will get back to them with what action (if any) has been taken.
- 7) Arrange for a time to review the effectiveness of any actions taken.

Keep in mind that it is often difficult for people to express concerns and complaints. They may be nervous, embarrassed, upset, or angry. By concentrating and listening carefully, and not being defensive, you will gain a greater understanding of the situation.

## **DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES - TEACHERS AND PRINCIPAL**

1. In cases of allegations of abuse by an employee the complaint must be made in writing. The respondent will be advised that they are entitled to contact their union delegate or lawyer. Appropriate steps are outlined in the Secondary Teachers' Collective Agreement, part 3.4; the Support Staff in Schools Collective Agreement, part 7.13; or the School Caretakers and Cleaners Collective Agreement, part 6.8.
2. The Principal will examine the substance of the complaint against a teacher, and in discussion with the Senior Leadership Team, where appropriate make the judgement about whether or not the complaint is serious enough to inform the BOT and take further actions".
3. The Chairperson of the BOT will examine the substance of the complaint against the Principal and present the complaint to the whole Board.
4. Where a complaint about the Principal is referred to the Board by the Chairperson, the Board shall determine what further action is to be taken and whether the Board shall carry out an initial investigation to determine whether formal disciplinary procedures should be initiated.
5. The initial investigation will follow the PPTA Teacher Conduct and Discipline: Guidelines on Initial Investigations document.
6. Should the people carrying out the initial investigation decide that there is a case to answer, these people, and any witnesses who may have been called, MUST NOT be part of the Discipline Sub-Committee which will conduct the Formal Hearing.
7. If there is a Formal Hearing, it shall follow the PPTA Teacher Conduct and Discipline: Formal Hearings document.

## **ADVICE FOR STUDENTS AND PARENTS ON RAISING CONCERNS**

If you would like to make a formal complaint because the matter is a serious one, please see the Procedure for Making a Formal Complaint on the reverse of this sheet. If you would like to discuss a concern more generally, and perhaps seek information and assistance about it, please follow the advice below.

Once your concern has been discussed, and positions clarified, some action may be taken. If you are not satisfied with the outcomes, you may wish to take your concern further. See the reverse of this sheet.

Where your concern is about assessment in Years 11, 12 or 13 you should approach firstly the subject teacher, then the Head of Department, then Mr Richard Baker as the Principal's Nominee, then NZQA itself.

### **STUDENTS**

If you have a concern about a teacher, or more generally about teaching or school programmes, you will need to talk to the teacher or person in charge of the programme.

If you think this may be difficult, talk it over with a support person *and/or* take this person with you when you come to talk about your concern. This could be a parent, a school friend, someone from the community (e.g. Student and Family Support Worker), or a school-based person (e.g. your form teacher, dean, guidance counsellor). This person may help you clarify what you wish to say.

If you cannot deal with the matter yourself, ask a parent/caregiver/support person to raise it for you with your teacher, form teacher, dean, or senior Manager in charge of your year group.

### **PARENTS**

If you have a concern about a teacher, teaching or school programmes, you should firstly contact the teacher or person in charge of the programme, and talk through your concerns.

Most teachers will be teaching during the day so the best way to contact them is to leave a message at the school office for them to contact you. Please leave information about the best time to contact you, and an appropriate phone number.

If your concern is about a matter which does not involve a particular teacher, or about something you don't feel able to talk about to the teacher directly, you have a number of alternatives. You could phone or write to:

1. Your son or daughter's form teacher or dean. This would be the case if the concern was about general progress and attitude.
2. The dean in the case of particular difficulties
3. The Head of Department (HOD) of a subject you were concerned with.
4. The Guidance Counsellor
5. A Deputy Principal or Principal

If you would like support in discussing a concern or complaint, members of the Home and School Association are happy to help you clarify and focus what you want to say, and may be asked to come with you.

Support may also be accessed through the Community Workers 525 9728.

## PROCEDURE FOR MAKING A FORMAL COMPLAINT

If you are not satisfied that you have got answers for your concerns and wish to make a formal complaint here is the procedure you should follow.

Write down your complaint giving details of what it is you are complaining about. **Help is available from the Home and School Association, Student and Family Support Worker, or Community Workers as needed. See contact details on previous page.** Include details of efforts you have already made to resolve the matter. Include your name and contact phone number.

Take your written complaint to the Principal or another member of the school's Senior Leadership Team if the Principal is absent. Ask for assistance at the school office if you are unsure how to go about delivering your complaint. If you prefer you can hand your complaint to a member of the Board of Trustees who will deliver your complaint for you to the Principal. The school office can tell you how to get in touch with a member of the Board of Trustees.

When the Principal receives a complaint, the Principal will discuss the matter with you before deciding what further action should be taken. If you want somebody else to accompany you when you discuss the matter you are welcome to do so.

The Principal will talk to the person about whom the complaint has been made as well as interviewing anybody else who may have had a part to play in the incident or who may have seen what happened. Written statements will usually be taken.

The Principal will decide what steps will be taken as a result of the investigation.

If your complaint is about the Principal, hand or post it to the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees. It will be dealt with by the Board of Trustees

You will be informed of the outcome of the investigation.

Depending on the nature of the complaint, the matter may be referred to the Board of Trustees for consideration and action.

Your complaint will be treated in confidence. However, in the interests of natural justice the person about whom a complaint is made must know who made the complaint, and have the opportunity to hear all details about the complaint and to reply to it.

Adopted by the Board of Trustees on: 23 May 2016

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