



NEWSTEAD CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Complaints Handling – Policy and Procedures

The purpose of this policy is to promote better relationships during difficult circumstances, through the encouragement of fair and just procedures and a Christ-Like manner.

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Principal: Ms. Diane Hooley

Assistant Principal: Mr. Jon Targett

Business Manager: Mr. Jim Lambie

Board Chair: Mr. Richard Holloway

INTRODUCTION

Newstead Christian School is committed to building a strong Christian focused community, ensuring a harmonious, fair, just, working and learning environment. We strive to create an environment that fosters open and respectful communication between members of the school community.

As a Christian community we cannot expect to be spared disputes and grievances. This is clearly acknowledged by our Lord who teaches us to first go to the fellow Christian who offends us before we take the matter any further (see *Matthew 18: 15– 20*). We must always act in love - out of concern for the spiritual, physical, emotional and material wellbeing of all concerned while seeking just and Christ honouring outcomes.

For the purpose of this policy, there are two avenues for the raising of issues and dissatisfactions relating to the operations of the School:

1. Less serious **Concerns**; and
2. Formally documented **Complaints**.

The definitions and processes surrounding **concerns** and **complaints** are detailed within this policy.

It is our policy that complaints are welcomed at Newstead Christian School and treated in a positive manner. The School is committed to handling concerns and complaints efficiently, promptly and thoroughly.

Our online **complaints** management system allows the School to effectively capture, manage and report complaints. Regular analysis of complaints received is part of the School's commitment of continuous improvement to assist in identifying causes and possible systemic failures.

SCOPE

This policy is to give guidance and instructions for Students, Parents (which includes legal Guardians), Staff and members of the wider community with **concerns** and **complaints** regarding any aspect of the School's operations, for example:

- **academic natured**
assessment policy, reporting procedures, curriculum issues, classroom management issues.
- **emotional, social, psychological, behavioural or spiritual natured**
exclusion, discrimination, bullying, stress.
- **administrative natured**
noise, parking, accounts, uniform, health care, information and technology, marketing and communication.
- **employment natured**
workplace disputes, advice, training, professional development.

This policy does not cover complaints about child abuse, grooming or other breaches of our Child Protection Policies which are reported immediately to the Principal.

CONCERNS:

For the purpose of this policy, a concern will be treated as a less serious matter. The vast majority of issues causing concerns within the Christian community can be handled quickly and in an informal manner. The School requests that the process of raising a **concern** as outlined below (in the Process section of this document). Although formal records may not be kept of concerns raised, to enable the School to identify any systemic issues arising, and take appropriate action, it may be documented.

COMPLAINTS:

A complaint will be treated as an expression of genuine dissatisfaction that requires a formally documented and recorded process.

Matters which are considered a complaint may include (but are not limited to):

- unresolved disputes or conflict
- allegations of discrimination, harassment or bullying;
- issues that may cause financial loss or damage the School's reputation;

All complaints will be handled using the principles of Procedural Fairness. This means that:

- each party has an opportunity to be heard, in person or in writing as appropriate to their needs, and to respond to the allegations and/or evidence offered by the other;
- issues or facts which are disputed are investigated;
- the investigator is free from bias or the perception of bias and, in particular, is not 'judge' in his or her own cause;
- any complaint outcome is supported by the evidence, including a finding on the balance of probabilities in the event of a dispute of fact;
- if necessary, the complaint outcome is finalised by an adjudicator, who may also be the investigator, who is free from bias or the perception of bias; and
- the outcome is consistent with established school policy.

At any stage of the complaint process, either parties can seek mediation or legal advice at their own expense.

PROCESS & GUIDELINES FOR DEALING WITH CONCERNS

As a first step, informal and private attempts at resolution should be undertaken between the parties concerned. Most concerns will be able to be resolved using this informal process.

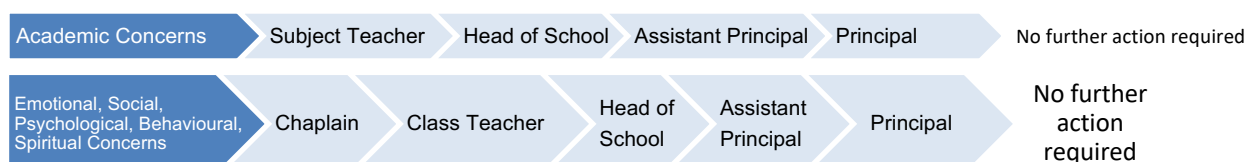
When attempting to resolve your **concern**, take time to consider the following:

- Talk to the person as soon as possible. Leaving things longer will only make it harder.
- Try to remain calm even though you may not feel that way.
- Writing down the concerns will help you to describe clearly the action or behaviour that is objected to.
- Try to identify what outcome would resolve the situation for you.
- Choose a mutually convenient time to talk and do so in a private place, i.e. not in front of students or other adults.
- Remember that you have one side of an issue, others will have another side.
- Seek positive outcome resolution at all times.

Students

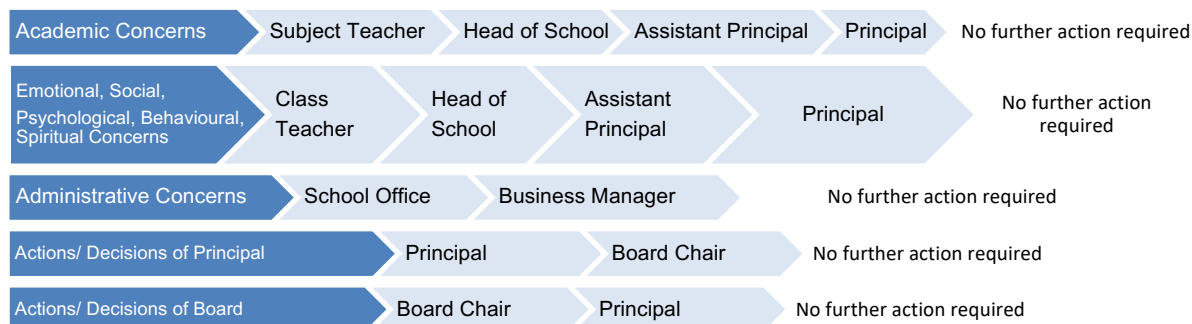
Wherever possible, students are encouraged to raise **concerns** with their class teacher in the first instance. Students may also seek advice and guidance on how to raise concerns from the School Chaplain or another trusted adult.

The following diagram is a guide to direct students in who to raise their concerns to:



Parents / Guardians

Parents should direct **concerns** as follows:



For further details of this process, please see the more detailed flowchart below. The Parents and Friends (P&F) is not the forum for the lodging of concerns or complaints.

Members of the wider community

Members of the wider community includes volunteers, contractors, visitors, neighbours or anyone impacted by the operations of the School who are not otherwise students, parents or staff.

Members of the wider community with a concern relating the operations of the School should contact the office via phone 6331 1922 or email: office@ncs.tas.edu.au to raise your concern. The office staff will direct your call or provide you with the email address of the appropriate person. The School will endeavour to respond within 48 hours and seek to resolve your concerns within an appropriate timeframe.

Employees / Staff

Staff members (including casual employees) should direct workplace issues or concerns regarding their employment to their direct supervisor in the first instance. If this does not resolve the issue, they should raise their concern with the Principal. Complaints of bullying, harassment or discrimination will be dealt with using the School's Internal Complaints Procedure available on Complispace.

If a staff member has an unresolved issue with a student or parent at the school, they should meet with the Head of School to discuss their concern.

Concerns regarding working conditions of an Industrial nature will be dealt with under the Dispute Resolution section of the appropriate NCS Enterprise Agreement.

Students, Parents, Staff and Members of the wider community

There may be occasions where the parties' preference is to have an issue dealt with as an informal **concern**, however, because of the potential risk (real or perceived) to the School, its staff members, students, parents or the wider general community, the School may be obliged to deal with the concern in a more formal context by lodging a complaint.

If you believe your concern has not been resolved or addressed appropriately you may proceed to making a formal complaint.

PROCESS & GUIDELINES FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS:

A **complaint** or unresolved dispute will be treated as an expression of genuine dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem, where a person has a view that the School has done something wrong, acted unfairly or failed to do something it should reasonably have done.

Complaints should be raised using the School's online complaint form available here:

https://ncstas.csassurance.com/contracts/new?contract_template=4&token=zsFKzyfmx5Gib5crL5

Where complaints are made verbally to a staff member, the complainant should clearly ask the staff member to submit a formal complaint form on their behalf.

Step	Action	Process	Outcome
1	Submission of complaint*	Complete the online Complaint Form available on The Hub or website. If unable to submit online form, request a member of staff to raise a complaint on your behalf;	
2	Acknowledgement of complaint	Complaints are acknowledged by automated email confirmation to the complainant.	
3	Assess the Complaint	The School's delegate will receive the complaint and determine the status, priority and action to be taken. Complaints against the Principal/Board will be directed to the Chair of the NCS Board.	
4	Investigation (if required)	The School's delegate will investigate the issues raised following the principles of procedural fairness. The School will aim to provide a response within 14 days from the date of the complaint being lodged.	
5	Written response	Following the determination, if appropriate the School's delegate will formulate a resolution and provide a written response to the complainant.	The matter will be closed if the response is accepted.
6	Internal review	If the initial response is not accepted, the matter will be reviewed internally by the Principal or the Principal's delegate who may seek additional information or submissions from the relevant parties. The School will aim to provide a resolution within 14 days of the matter being handed over for an internal review. The matter will be closed if the response of the Principal, or their delegate, is accepted.	The matter will be closed if the response is accepted.
7	Independent External Investigation	At the Board's discretion, a mutually agreed external independent investigation may be considered.	The matter will be closed if the response is accepted.
8	External resolution	If the matter remains unresolved, the complainant may pursue external resolution alternatives.	

- The online Complaints Form is emailed to the Business Manager and a copy sent to the Principal as an automated process to ensure transparency within the organisation.
- Any complaints made in relation to the Principal and/or the Board are submitted via the Complaint Form and are directed to and managed by the Chair of the Board.
- Not all complaints received will warrant investigation.
- As a general rule, anonymous complaints will not be acted upon unless an allegation is of such a serious nature as to warrant investigation.
- There may be circumstances in which some of the steps outlined above are not appropriate and the School (and the Board if appropriate) will determine, in its absolute discretion, on a case by case basis, the most appropriate method of handling the complaint.
- Staff Complaints specific to industrial matters covered under the School's Enterprise Agreements are to be resolved under the Dispute Resolutions clauses contained within the relevant agreements.

Outcomes and Shared Understanding

The School is committed to positive-restorative outcomes for those involved. This will depend on the seriousness of the matter, the wishes of the complainant and the nature of the working relationship of the persons involved.

In working through this process, it is understood that:

- Confidentiality will be respected and maintained, as far as is possible, by all parties concerned. While all parties have a right to seek advice in confidence, no party will canvass - within the school community or beyond - to support or defend an allegation;
- The school, through its teachers, its Heads of School, the Principal and the Board will be open to the concerns of parents and students;
- Complaints will be received in a positive manner;
- Information that will assist in the resolution of a complaint will be clear and readily available;
- Concerns will be dealt with speedily and those who have raised them will be kept informed about progress;
- Students will not receive adverse treatment because they or their parents have raised a complaint;
- Clear confidential files and a log will be kept; *and*
- Resolution of the matter will be sought.

The School is committed to provide training, ongoing mentoring, disciplinary action, review of policy or procedure and committed to the confidentiality and privacy of all parties.

Record Keeping

When handling **concerns** the School may document the concern and the outcome for continuous improvement to assist in identifying causes and possible systemic failures.

When handling **complaints**, the School ensures compliance in regards to reporting, record keeping and confidentiality. Information is only shared with those who need to know. The information will also be reviewed by appropriate personnel for continuous improvement to assist in identifying causes and possible systemic failures.

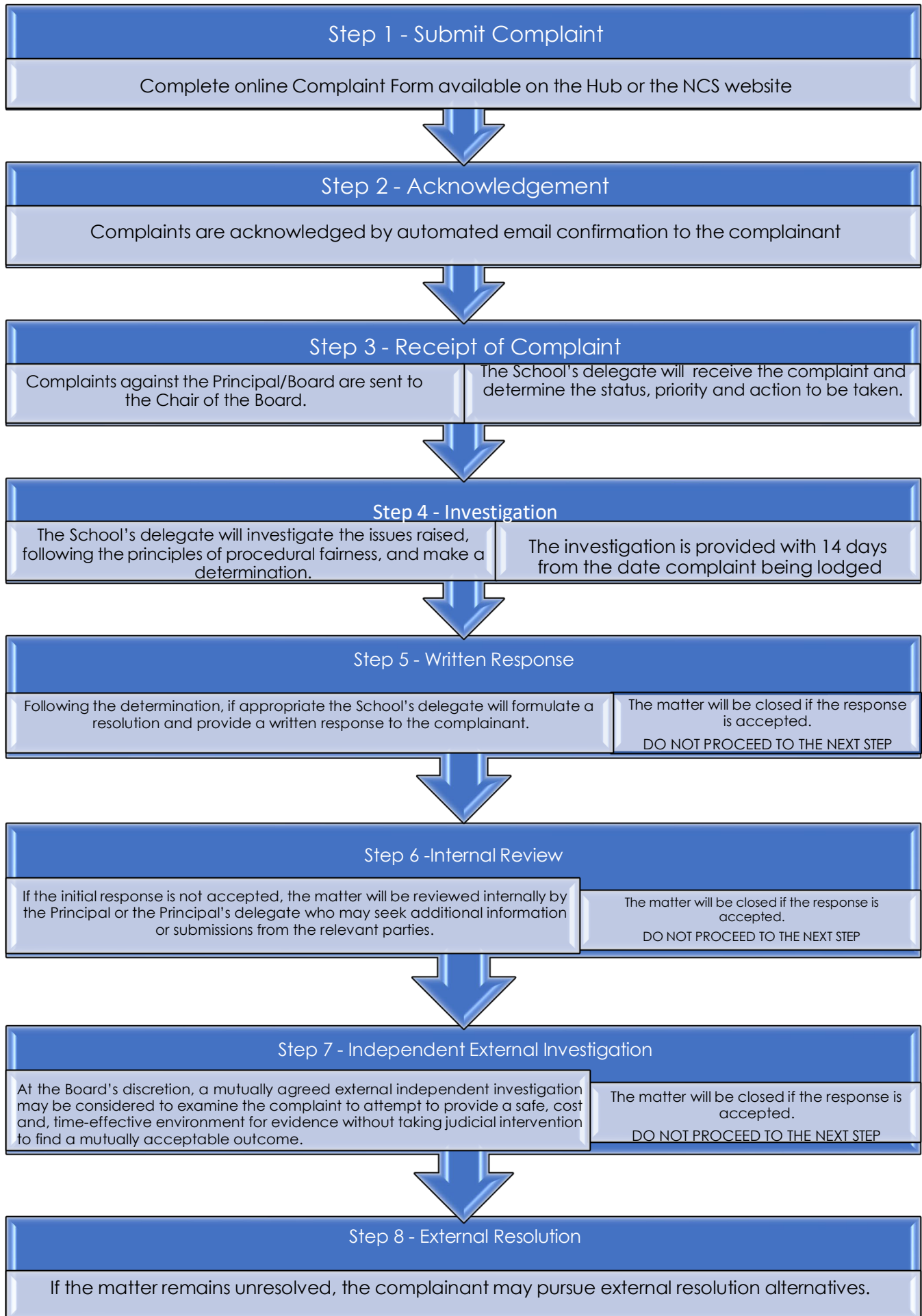
Records of complaints, interviews and other documentation relating to a complaint investigated will be retained by the School in an appropriately restricted access file. These records must be kept in accordance with the relevant legislative requirements.

Related Documents

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Guidelines for Investigation of a Complaint• Child Protection Policy• Staff Code of Conduct• Behaviour Management Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Internal Complaints Procedure for Staff (harassment, bullying, discrimination)• NCS Enterprise Agreements• NCS Student Policies• NCS Bullying Prevention Policy
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Complaints Flowchart

Complaints regarding Child Protection are handled as per our Child Protection Policy



This flowchart must be read and understood in conjunction with the Complaints Handling Policy & Procedures