

## **NZSJ Complaints Policy**

### **Rationale**

At NZSJ, we believe that it is important to have an open, fair and transparent environment for the school community. We are committed to building positive relationships and have in place clear channels of communication with parents and others. We are committed to foster strong values, such as respect, honesty and integrity and all matters will be managed with care and compassion.

### **Aims**

- To explain clearly how to deal with any complaint against the school or any individual connected with it by following the correct procedures.
- To deal with all complaints thoroughly and by being open, honest and fair when dealing with the complainant.

### **Concern or complaint?**

- A concern is 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought.'
- A complaint is best defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'.
- All concerns and complaints should be taken seriously and action should be taken to resolve them. However, this distinction means concerns can be handled informally and quickly without elevating the matter into a formal complaint.

### **Procedures**

#### **Stage 1 (Informal Stage)**

- Most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally, usually within five to ten working days, depending on the nature of the complaint.
- If parents have a complaint, they should first contact their child's teacher by email. In most cases, the matter will be resolved at this point.
- Please note that WhatsApp messaging is not the appropriate channel for making complaints. (Please see WhatsApp messaging guidelines for more details.)
- If the teacher/parent cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to contact the Head of the relevant department or the Head of School. If the person making the complaint is not a parent, he or she should address the complaint to the Head of School.
- A complaint made directly to the Head of School will normally be referred to the relevant teacher unless the Head of School deems it appropriate to deal with the

matter personally. The person handling the complaint should document the outcome and communicate with the person who made the complaint.

## Stage 2

- If the complaint cannot be resolved informally, then the Head of School should be informed in writing so that the concerns can be expressed and summarized clearly.
- The Head of School will make efforts to resolve the issue at this stage and will respond to the complainant within 5 - 10 school working days, depending on the nature of the complaint.
- In most cases, the Head of School will communicate with the relevant individuals involved and discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- The Head of School may need to conduct further investigations.
- All meetings and outcomes related to the complaint will be recorded by the Head of School.

## Stage 3

- If a resolution is not reached at Stage 1 and/or 2, the Head of School will convene a complaints panel to further discuss the matter. The complaints panel will include a representative from the board, the Head of School, and another member of staff.
- If the Head of School is the subject of the complaint, the matter will be referred to the Board to handle the procedure and organise the complaints panel. A further investigation may be required.
- If necessary, a formal hearing will take place where everyone involved will have the opportunity to be heard. In this case, both parties should provide the panel with any written information they intend to use in the formal hearing in advance.
- After carefully examining all the facts and evidence, the Panel will reach a decision and may make a list of recommendations going forward. The Panel will communicate its decision and the reasons for it to all parties involved. The decision of the Panel will be final.

## **Additional Notes:**

- In case a complaint is submitted right before the end of the term, at any of the three mentioned stages, a response will be provided within 30 school working days.
- Complainants are encouraged to indicate potential actions they believe might help resolve the problem at any stage.
- Acknowledging that the school could have handled the situation differently or more effectively does not imply an admission of negligence or misconduct.
- Identifying areas of agreement between the parties can be beneficial in addressing the complaint.
- It is essential to address any misunderstandings, discuss unresolved issues, and find constructive ways to move forward positively.