

Policy on Complaints

For the Board of Proprietors and School Board

RATIONALE

At Woodford House, fair, supportive and professional procedures are available to resolve matters of concern or Complaint, whether personal or professional, between or among members of the School community.

AIMS

1. To deal with Complaints in a professional manner that enables positive working relationships to be maintained between/among students and any individuals employed directly or indirectly by the Woodford House Board of Proprietors or Board of Trustees.
2. To protect the rights of school community members by:
 - a) ensuring the Complaints are fairly investigated and decisions are made on the basis of properly evaluated evidence;
 - b) ensure the process complies with the procedure set out below and relevant contractual provisions.
3. To protect the rights of complainant by:
 - a) acting promptly to resolve the dispute or Complaint;
 - b) ensuring that they are not harassed for having laid a Complaint.
 - c) ensuring the process is fair and Natural Justice is applied.
4. To protect the rights of the respondent by:
 - d) acting promptly to resolve the dispute or Complaint;
 - e) ensuring that they are not harassed for having a Complaint laid against them.
 - f) ensuring the process is fair and Natural Justice is applied.
5. To ensure the School's standards of teaching, learning and pastoral care (including day school and boarding) are upheld.
6. To protect the operational integrity and reputation of the School.

DEFINITIONS

'Complaint/s' means an INFORMAL or FORMAL expression of dissatisfaction or unease about service; action/or inaction; or aspects of school affecting achievement and/or well-being.

'Natural Justice' means the right to adequate notice, a fair hearing and no bias.

PROCEDURES

In the first instance, concerns will be treated as 'informal Complaints'. Regardless of whether the Complaint is informal or formal the attached Feedback Form should be completed so there is a record of receiving the Complaint and that the appropriate follow up action is taken.

- A. Informal Complaint (concern):** Usually verbal (a telephone call, an email, or face to face meeting) to express concern, suitable for cases of mild dissatisfaction or to request some specific (low level, remedial) action. The process is as follows:
- i) Contact (by telephone/email/meeting) to any of the following:

- Subject teacher
 - Homeroom Mentor
 - Dean
 - Head of Faculty/teacher in charge of subject
 - Director of Boarding
 - Deputy Principal – Student Outcomes
 - Deputy Principal – Teaching and Learning
 - Deputy Principal – Student Wellbeing
 - Principal
- ii) The complainant explains the nature of the situation.
 - iii) Discussion between complainant and recipient about how things can be remedied.
 - iv) Agree on a course of action
 - v) Await implementation
 - vi) The School will provide a follow-up discussion to confirm outcome by phone call, email or a meeting. The Woodford House feedback form (Appendix A) will be use to to record the process.

B. Formal Complaint:

If the concern/informal Complaint cannot be resolved or if the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, or if it is of a more serious nature, a formal Complaint should be lodged. This should be in writing, addressed to the Principal, or if it is a Complaint about the Principal, it should be addressed to the Chair of the relevant Board (through the Board secretary). For the following, references to the Principal mean the Chair of the relevant Board (as applicable).

- i) The Complaint should be set out expressing the nature of the issue, concern, problem, dissatisfaction – preferably being as specific as possible about the issue, problem or concern. The complainant must state that the Complaint is a formal one.
- ii) Receipt of Complaint is acknowledged in writing by the Principal within three (3) business days of receiving the Complaint.
- iii) The Complaint is then investigated by the Principal and a meeting(s) held with the complainant and (if the Principal considers appropriate) anyone else subject of the Complaint, to explore solutions and agree on actions to be taken.
- iv) The Principal must notify the sub-committee of the relevant Board of the Complaint as soon as a formal Complaint is received.
- v) Remedial action agreed with the complainant or determined as necessary or appropriate by the Principal, must be implemented and documented in a reply to the complainant from the Principal.
- vi) If the outcome of steps (i-v) is considered unsatisfactory by the complainant, then the complainant has the right to forward the Complaint (in writing) to the Chair of the relevant Board, through the Board secretary.
 - a. The Complaint is then investigated and a meeting held with the complainant and (if the Board considers appropriate) anyone else subject of the Complaint, to explore solutions and agree on actions to be taken. This will usually involve a sub-committee of the Board.
 - b. Remedial action agreed with the complainant or determined as necessary or appropriate by the Board, must be implemented and documented in a reply to the complainant from the Chair of the Board.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. All informal and formal Complaints will be dealt with in a transparent, equitable and fair manner.
2. All informal and formal Complaints will be treated seriously and will be responded to as soon as it is practicable to do so.
3. All informal and formal Complaints are to be initiated by reporting the same to the appropriate person or persons as detailed above.
4. Any formal Complaint that concerns the conduct or performance of a staff member will be dealt with in accordance with the School's Code of Conduct, the principles of Natural Justice and in compliance with employment legislation.
5. Any Complaint that concerns the conduct or performance of a member of the School community will be dealt with in accordance with the Enrolment Contract, the principles of Natural Justice and compliance with employment legislation and school enrolment.
6. In all discussions, complainants and respondents will not be commented on by the School.
7. Complaints shall be listened to but cannot be actioned if the identity of the complainant cannot be revealed. Without knowing the complainant, the respondent cannot justly answer any Complaints.
8. Confidentiality about the Complaint must be maintained by all involved.
9. Complaints about students in the School shall be dealt with according to the School's Student Code of Conduct and Discipline System, and the Child Protection Policy.
10. The Woodford House community will be made aware of the Complaints procedures in this policy via the School Handbook.
11. Complaints regarding breaching the Code of Practice for International Students will be dealt with in accordance with the procedures outlined above. The International Education Appeal Authority is an independent body that receives and adjudicates on Complaints received from international students and may be consulted if required.
12. The School supports the use of an independent mediator should this be appropriate.
13. Any professional development needs identified by this process will be addressed.
14. Any formal Complaints to the relevant Board should be addressed to the Chair (through the Board secretary) and include all relevant details. The Board Secretary will forward letters to the relevant Board Chair.
15. The Principal or the Boards will take all steps to resolve the issue and will provide a written response.
16. This policy should be read in conjunction with the policy on Complaints by Employees about their Employment.
17. In the event that Complaints are made to individual Board members, then such Complaints should be re directed to the Principal so that they can be dealt with in accordance with this policy.

INVESTIGATION

1. If a disciplinary investigation is commenced, the respondent shall be advised of this decision and of his or her right to representation during the investigation. The identity of the person(s) who will be carrying out the formal investigation on behalf of the relevant Board shall be notified to the respondent .

2. The disciplinary investigation may involve interviewing those persons considered relevant to the enquiry. Both parties shall be kept advised of the scope of the enquiry.
3. Both parties shall be given the opportunity throughout the process to give responses and ensure his or her views are considered, consistent with Natural Justice. They may have a support person with them.
4. At the completion of the formal investigation, a report setting out the findings of the sub-committee (assuming appointed) shall be presented to the relevant Board who shall make the final decision as to whether the Complaint has been sustained. An offer of a restorative meeting is given to both parties as part of this process. Findings and recommendations of the Board shall be made available to the parties, who will be given further opportunity to respond to the findings and recommendations.

This Policy will be reviewed as required or biennially.

Reviewed _____ **Signed for the BOT** **24 September 2024**

_____ **Signed for the BOP** **22 October 2024**

Next scheduled review: Term 3 2026

Previous review: August 2018

May 2022

Appendix A FEEDBACK FORM

Please select the type of feedback you would like to provide formally in writing:

Compliment (please tick)	Comment (please tick)	Informal Complaint* (please tick)	Formal Complaint* (please tick)	Concern (please tick)
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*Please note that due process will follow in line with the School's Complaints Policy.

Details of person completing the form:

Name:			
Email:			
Phone Number:		Today's date:	

Parent (please tick)	Staff (please tick)	Day Girl (please tick)	Boarder (please tick)	Other (please tick)
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Please provide your specific feedback below

(Including date, time, parties involved, location and area of the School concerned where applicable):

Please outline the next steps you wish to see actioned:

Signature: **Date:**.....

Please return this form to the Business and Operations Manager, Ted Jones. Email: ted.jones@woodford.school.nz

If you have indicated to you wish to make a formal Complaint, Woodford House will acknowledge receipt within three working days of receiving this form and follow the actions outlined in the Complaints policy.

Business and Operations Manager or SLT to complete

Please circle the type of feedback that has been received: **Compliment / Comment / Complaint / Concern**

Action	By Whom	By When	✓

Tick items when actioned

Actions completed to prevent reoccurrence or to adopt the suggestion.

Response to person submitting the feedback (if applicable).

How - Phone / email / letter	What date?	By Whom

Business and Operations Manager use only (if applicable)

Principal Notified:	Date:
Investigator confirmed:	Date:
Investigation closed: Yes No (circle one)	Date: