

Complaints Policy

Board of Proprietors and School Board



POLICY PURPOSE

This policy outlines the fair, supportive and professional procedures to resolve matters of concern or complaint, whether personal or professional, between or among members of the School community.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all of the Woodford House community, including students, staff, contractors, visitors at Woodford House, and members of the public.

POLICY STATEMENT

The school is committed to managing complaints professionally, fairly, and promptly in accordance with established procedures, ensuring natural justice, safeguarding the rights of all parties, maintaining positive relationships, upholding standards of teaching and pastoral care, and protecting the school's integrity and reputation.

DEFINITIONS

1. Informal Concern: A matter of unease or worry that may be raised informally and often resolved through early discussion or clarification.
 2. Formal Complaint: An expression of dissatisfaction about a decision, action, behaviour, or service, where a response or resolution is expected. This will normally be a complaint in writing.
 3. Complainant: The person raising a concern or complaint. This may include a student, parent, caregiver, whānau member, staff member, or community member.
 4. Respondent: The person, group, or part of the school that the complaint relates to.
 5. Kōrero: A conversation or discussion, often kanohi ki te kanohi (face-to-face), used to share perspectives, build understanding, and resolve concerns respectfully.
 6. Whānau: Family and extended family connections, recognising the importance of relationships and collective support in the school community.
 7. Restorative Approach / Whanaungatanga: A process that focuses on understanding harm, restoring relationships, and agreeing on ways to move forward, rather than assigning blame or punishment.
 8. Natural Justice principles: The right to be heard, decisions made by a person who is unbiased and has no conflict of interest, a fair and reasonable process conducted in a timely manner, decisions based on relevant information that is factual, and all parties are treated respectfully, with their mana upheld throughout the process.
 9. Working Day: Any day the school is officially open for business, excluding weekends, public holidays, and school closure periods.
 10. Confidentiality: The obligation to respect and protect personal information, sharing it only when necessary to address a concern or complaint appropriately
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11. Support Person: A person chosen by the complainant or respondent to provide support during the complaints process. This may include a whānau member, colleague, or advocate.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Complainant: Raises concerns promptly, provides clear information, participates in good faith, and escalates matters where resolution is not achieved.
- Staff members (Teacher, Homeroom Leaders, Deans, Directors, SMT): Receive concerns respectfully, engage in early resolution, agree on actions, and follow through while maintaining confidentiality and professionalism.
- Principal: Ensures formal complaints are acknowledged, ensures a fair investigation and decision-making, implements outcomes, and communicates results in line with policy and legal obligations. Has formal responsibility delegated from the Board to ensure processes are in place and operating effectively.
- Presiding Member of School Board / Chair of Board of Proprietors / Board Subcommittee: Manages complaints directed at the Principal, independently reviews escalated complaints, ensures a fair process, determines outcomes, and communicates decisions.
- Board Secretary (Director of Finance and Commercial Strategy): Receives formal complaints addressed to the Boards and forwards them to the appropriate Board representative.
- School Administration: Maintains a fair, transparent, and timely complaints process, ensures records are kept, and supports continuous improvement and compliance.

PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES

1. Informal Concern:

- 1.1. Concerns should initially be raised informally with an appropriate staff member (e.g. Teacher, Homeroom Leader, Dean, Head of Faculty, Director of Boarding, other Directors, or Deputy Principals).
- 1.2. The complainant will outline the nature of the concern via phone, email, or in person.
- 1.3. The staff member will engage in discussion with the complainant to understand the issue and explore possible solutions.
- 1.4. A mutually agreed course of action will be identified where possible.
- 1.5. The agreed actions will be implemented in a timely manner.

2. Formal Complaint: If a concern is not resolved informally, or is of a serious nature, a formal complaint must be submitted in writing to the Principal (or to the Board Chair via the Board Secretary if the complaint concerns the Principal).

- 2.2. The complaint must clearly outline the issue and be identified as a formal complaint.
 - 2.3. The Principal will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within three (3) working days.
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- 2.4. The Principal will investigate the complaint, including meeting with relevant parties as appropriate. All parties will have the opportunity to have support at any meetings.
 - 2.5. The Principal will notify the School Board Presiding Member or Board of Proprietors Board Chair of the complaint, where relevant.
 - 2.6. A decision will be made, and any remedial actions will be implemented and communicated in writing to the complainant in a timely manner.

3. Escalation to the Boards

- 3.1. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, they may escalate the complaint in writing to the School Board Presiding Member and/or Board of Proprietors Board Chair via the Board Secretary (Director of Finance and Commercial Strategy).
- 3.2. If the formal complaint is directly regarding the actions and/or inactions of the Principal, the Board/s will form a subcommittee to investigate.
- 3.3. The Board/s (or delegated subcommittee) will review and investigate the complaint, including meeting with relevant parties where appropriate.
- 3.4. The Board will determine any further actions and communicate the outcome in writing in a timely manner.
- 3.5. In the event that complaints in the first instance, are made to individual Board members, such complaints should be re-directed to the Principal, so that they can be dealt with in accordance with this Policy.

4. General Procedural Requirements

- 4.1. All complaints will be managed in a fair, transparent, and timely manner, upholding the mana of all parties throughout the process.
 - 4.2. All parties must maintain confidentiality throughout the process.
 - 4.3. Complaints must be made by identifiable individuals to enable a fair response.
 - 4.4. Complaints relating to staff or students will be managed in accordance with relevant policies, employment agreements, codes of conduct, tikanga and legal obligations.
 - 4.5. The school may use restorative practices or independent mediation where appropriate.
 - 4.6. Complaints about non-compliance in Boarding, from boarding students, boarder's parents, or Board Members who make a complaint to the Board of Proprietors about a non-compliance, must be addressed as per the Education (Hostels) Regulations 2005.
 - 4.7. Complaints regarding breaches of the Code of Practice for International Students will be dealt with in accordance with this Complaints Policy.
 - 4.8. If the complaint cannot be resolved through the School's internal process, it may be referred to the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). Where appropriate, the complainant may also access the independent dispute resolution service, Study Complaints | Ngā Amuamu Tauira.
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- 4.9. All complaints and outcomes will be recorded appropriately in the Complaints Register.
- 4.10. Should the school be unable to solve an issue or the complainant is unsatisfied how the process was handled Woodford House will provide contact information for the Ombudsman or Ministry of Education contact.
- 4.11. The school will use insights from complaints to inform continuous improvement.

MONITORING AND IMPLEMENTATION

It is expected that all staff are familiar with the Complaints Policy and will follow the procedures as outlined.

All formal complaints will be recorded for the Complaints Register by the Principal's Executive Assistant for reporting to Board/s and relevant bodies such as the Education Review Office, when necessary.

The Complaints Policy is available on the Woodford House website.

RELATED POLICIES AND OTHER DOCUMENTS

- Codes of Conduct for Students and Staff
- Community Partnership Framework
- Student Disciplinary Procedures
- Health and Safety Policy and Procedures
- Child Protection Policy
- Code of Practice for International Students
- School Handbook

AMENDMENTS AND REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed triennially to ensure its effectiveness and relevance. The school administration reserves the right to amend the policy as needed.

REVIEW DETAILS AND APPROVAL

Owner:	Principal	School Community Engagement
Approved by Board of Proprietors	Date: Term 3, 2026	
Approved by School Board	Date: Term 3, 2026	
Next Review Due:	Date: Term 3, 2029	
