

## Rationale

Orana Steiner School welcomes feedback from all members of the School community and takes seriously any complaints or concerns that may be raised. This Procedure aims to outline the procedure for complaints handling and dispute resolution process.

## Policy

### Complaints Policy

The School recognises that complaints handling is critical to the improvement of any service delivery, including education. Where parents are dissatisfied with the conduct or outcome of their correspondence with a teacher or member of the School's staff, they may lodge a formal complaint which will be handled in accordance with the School's Complaint Handling Procedures.

Through the Procedures, and pursuant to the School's obligations under section 94 of the Education Act, the School administers an accessible and transparent complaints management scheme. Regular analysis of complaints received, and implementation of rectification actions where deficiencies are identified, are central to this scheme.

## Definitions

Complaint	<p>A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to the School about an educational and/or operational matter in relation to services provided by the School or the behaviour or decisions of a staff member, contractor or volunteer, including misconduct.</p> <p>A complaint arises from any decision, act or omission by any person or persons associated within the School and its community (including staff, parents, and/or students), which is considered wrong, mistaken, unjust or discriminatory, and is causing concern or distress.</p>
Formal Complaint	A formal complaint is a written statement of the issues involved which has been received by the Principal/Chair of the Board.
Parents	Refers to parents, carers and guardians.

## Implementation

Staff, parents or students may sometimes feel they have experienced unreasonable treatment, disadvantage or distress which they would like to complain about. Such a complaint should be dealt with as expeditiously and informally as possible in order to maintain the important social relationships which underpin the School community and provide the basis for offering a supportive and caring educational and working environment. However, should such matters become a formal complaint, substantive and procedural fairness must be accorded to the parties.

If a parent or student has a concern about the conduct of a staff member, they should raise their concern in accordance with the following procedure.

If a complaint that concerns the behaviour of a staff member may constitute reportable conduct, the matter will be addressed in accordance with the Reportable Conduct procedures for Staff within the School's Child Protection Policy Framework. Complainants are not required to assess whether their concern meets the threshold of reportable conduct before making a complaint. Any concern about a child's wellbeing may be reported under this policy framework.

### i. Informal complaint and information sharing

Not every complaint will necessarily lead to the lodging of a formal complaint. The vast majority of issues causing concern comes from misunderstandings or incomplete understandings. A resolution can often be reached through informal discussions with appropriate staff members that dispels misunderstandings or incomplete understandings.

Informal complaints may be raised by a complainant directly with the person involved. However, if the complainant does not feel comfortable doing so or the matter is one where it may not be appropriate to do so the complaint can be made to the Deputy Principal or the Principal. Any complaint about the conduct of a staff member should be raised directly with the Principal in the first instance.

The School will seek to resolve complaints informally where possible but acknowledges that in some cases a person may wish to make a formal complaint.

## ii. Formal complaints

Should the matter not be resolved through an informal process, the complainant may raise the matter formally with the School. A formal complaint should be made in writing to the Principal, via email to [principalsoffice@oranaschool.com](mailto:principalsoffice@oranaschool.com).

Where a person wishes to make a formal complaint concerning the Principal or a Director of the Board in their capacity as a Director, the complaint should be made in writing to the Chair of the Board, via email to [boardchair@oranaschool.com](mailto:boardchair@oranaschool.com). In this situation, the references in this guide relating to the role of the Principal/Delegate should be read as references to the Chair of the Board.

The Principal/Delegate or Chairperson of the Board will generally acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint in writing as soon as practicable.

## iii. Handling complaints

### 1. Assessing a formal complaint

The Principal/Delegate will generally assess the complaint and determine:

- Whether the complaint is one to be addressed under this guide or is a reportable conduct matter which is dealt with by the relevant procedures; and
- The priority of the complaint in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the matter raised; and
- Whether the School may be required to report the matter to the Ombudsman, Police, Child Protection Services or other relevant authorities should the complaint relate to possible unlawful conduct or other reportable matters.
- An anonymous complaint cannot be acted upon.

### 2. Managing a formal complaint

The Principal/Delegate will generally manage a formal complaint by:

- Advising the complainant of the likely steps that will be undertaken by the School in relation to the complaint;
- If appropriate, advise the relevant parties of the complaint at the relevant time and providing them with an opportunity to respond. Before responding, the respondent has the right to know the implications for them in terms of disciplinary action if the complaint is substantiated;
- Collecting any additional information the School considers necessary to assess the complaint;
- Maintaining and advising appropriate confidentiality during the process by all parties concerned. A complaint should not be referred to elsewhere, formally investigated, or discussed with others without the consent of the Principal/Delegate.
- Making a decision about how the complaint will be resolved (“resolution decision”); and
- Advising the complainant in writing, and any other relevant parties as appropriate, of the resolution decision of the Principal/Delegate and if appropriate, any proposed action to be taken.
- Recording all formal complaints on the Complaints Register to be reviewed on a regular basis to identify any deficiencies that may need to be rectified.

There may be circumstances where some of the steps outlined above are not appropriate and the School will determine, on a case by case basis the most appropriate method of handling the complaint.

A complainant and the relevant parties that the complaint is about may choose to have an appropriate support person present at any meeting with representatives of the School about the complaint. However, the School maintains the right to determine whether the person's preferred support person is appropriate and may not approve the attendance of a support person where they are determined by the school to be inappropriate.

Where a complaint is held by the Principal to be lacking in substance she/he must dismiss the complaint.

A complaint that is found to be false and/or malicious in nature or is subject to indiscriminate broadcasting will lead to possible disciplinary action, including dismissal of staff or the cancellation of enrolment.

## Child safety

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All child safety-related concerns are handled in accordance with the School's Child Safe Framework and associated policies and procedures.

## Evaluation and review

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- Minor review conducted annually.
- Major review conducted as deemed necessary by the Principal.

## References and related documents

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- Communications Policy Framework
- Positive Discipline Guidelines for Staff
- Reportable Conduct Procedures for Staff
- Mandatory Reporting Procedures
- Parent Communication Guidelines
- Parent Code of Conduct