



Complaints

St Bernadette's School is committed to helping everyone in our school community become all that God created us to be.

The Board has overall responsibility for ensuring the school provides a safe environment and high quality education for all students.

Student safety is the priority when dealing with any complaint.

Students must be kept safe while Board of Trustees meet their obligation to be a 'good employer'.

A complaint can be made by anyone in our school or community.

Process for Complaints

* Note

Caregivers (and staff) are welcome to have support people with them at any time.

1. Anyone with a concern is encouraged to discuss the matter with the person involved as soon as possible to prevent issues escalating.
2. The caregiver or teacher is welcome to involve the Principal at any point.
3. If a caregiver has a concern or complaint about another child they need to speak to the class room teacher or Principal not the child.
4. If the teacher and caregiver have not previously involved the Principal and the issue is still unresolved, it should now be referred to the Principal.
5. If the issue has been worked through with the class teacher and Principal and remains unresolved it may be referred in writing to the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees.

Ideal Simplified Process:

Class
Teacher



Principal



Board of
Trustees

Stage one: school community process

1. While minor issues may be able to be discussed in a quick informal chat with a staff member, normally in order for both parties to give the matter full attention, arranging a time to discuss the matter is the preferred option.
2. If the complaints procedure has not been followed, the Board will normally return any letter of complaint to the writer and ask that they follow the procedure first.
3. The Board needs to formally receive a complaint in order to act on it. If a complaint is serious enough for the Board to deal with, it is serious enough to be put in writing. If you have concerns about expressing the matter clearly in writing, please discuss the matter in confidence with the Board Chair (or another delegated Board Member) to enable them to assist you with this.
4. All parties to a complaint may bring a support person to any meeting where the issue is to be discussed.

Stage two: Board process - (Following NZSTA Guidelines)

1. Issues of a serious matter, such as allegations of physical abuse, may require a special meeting of the Board.
 2. All letters addressed to the Chair of the Board are for the whole Board. The Chair cannot decide independently what action will be taken unless the Board has delegated them authority to do so.
 3. Resolution or dismissal of the complaint must not be discussed before all the information is to hand.
 4. Conflict of interest will be determined on a number of issues, including whether the complaint involves the actions of any trustee.
 5. The Board must exercise caution when dealing with complaints regarding staff, particularly in relation to confidentiality and the principles of natural justice. It is advisable to contact the regional NZSTA personnel/industrial adviser in such cases. The Board will need to consider the relevant staff disciplinary policies, employment agreements, and expert advice from the NZSTA adviser.
 6. The Board recognises that not all complainants will be satisfied with the outcome of a complaint. After one reconsideration, the Board, if it is confident of its decision, will refuse to enter into further discussion or correspondence. The NZSTA helpdesk can help with such a decision by giving an objective assessment of a Board's processes in dealing with the complaint.
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7. A complaint regarding lack of compliance in relation to an agreed complaint resolution will be treated as a serious matter and actioned with urgency as a new complaint rather than as a reconsideration of the previous issue.
8. Trustees need to be clear in their mind of the difference between a complaint they have as a parent (that is, regarding their own child) and a complaint they have as a trustee (for example, obstruction of staff preventing them carrying out Board work). In the first instance they are required to follow the normal procedures and are excluded from decision making due to conflict of interest. The latter case is dealt with as an agenda item for the whole Board (possibly with the public excluded).

Internal Board of Trustees Procedure for Complaints

- shaded area denotes "public excluded" meetings

Letter of complaint is acknowledged by the Chairperson and the complainant advised of the next steps in the Board process. The letter becomes part of the correspondence that will be dealt with at the next Board meeting while the public is excluded.

Letter is tabled at Board meeting (with the public excluded) and referred to relevant parties for reporting back to the Board. The Board decides whether to deal with the matter as a whole or appoint a Committee to investigate and recommend to the Board.

At the meeting of the Board or Committee, the reports are received and the parties may be invited to speak to their complaint or answer questions. The Board/Committee considers the evidence and/or information and comes to a decision or recommendation.

Depending on the delegated powers of the Committee either they or the Board as a whole come to a resolution as to how the Board will respond and/or what action will be taken.

The Board's response is communicated to the parties to the complaint. This may be either publicly or confidentially depending on the case.

Any of the parties may request the Board to reconsider their decision - however normally for such a reconsideration to take place, new information that would have been relevant to the Board's deliberations must be produced.