

## **7. Concerns, Complaints and Compliments Procedure**

### **Dealing with a Concern or Complaint**

Whānau and the school community should be aware that the board has a concerns and complaints procedure. It is [to be] included with enrolment information, easily located on the school's website, and should be included at least once a term in school newsletters and pānui.

### **Purpose**

It is important that staff, students and parents/caregivers see that all concerns and complaints are dealt with consistently, in an open and fair manner, and in line with the appropriate employment contract. This procedure forms a systematic process by which concerns and complaints about Te Aute College (its policies, practices, students, personnel and Board) can be managed:

1. To develop consistency, fairness and equity in the manner that concerns and complaints are attended to;
2. To provide the opportunity for low level resolution of concerns between relevant parties as per the procedure and or complains to be addressed as per the appropriate procedure;
3. To provide clear and transparent procedures that seek to resolve concerns and complaints, while maintaining the dignity of all those involved.

### **What is the difference between a Concern and a Complaint?**

- **A Concern** is a minor issue that may be resolved informally directly between the parties involved. Concerns are not expected to have disciplinary, legal or industrial consequences.
- **A Complaint** is an issue of a serious nature and may involve the consideration of disciplinary, legal or employment consequences. It may involve the principal or board of trustees. An unresolved or repeated concern might be escalated to a complaint.

### **Guidelines**

The relationship between members of the school community is strengthened when concerns and complaints are given serious, consistent and equitable consideration. Te Aute College (its policies, practices, students, personnel and Board) should be open to the possibility of positive change. Attending to concerns and complaints in the appropriate manner provides this opportunity:

### **Concerns**

As concerns arise, as a learning community it's an opportunity for us to resolve whānau concerns as well as to give us reason to review process and practice:

- Concerns should, in the first instance, be addressed to the relevant staff member.
- If the concern doesn't involve a staff member or hasn't been resolved by the relevant staff member, it should be addressed to the senior leadership team (SLT) and or to the principal.
- If the concern has not been resolved by either the relevant staff member, SLT or the principal, or it involves the principal or board, it should be addressed to the board of trustees.
- See Figure 1.

### **Complaints**

If a complaint arises, it is important that we and those involved follow the appropriate procedure; as with concerns that are raised, complaints will also allow us reason to review policy(ies), procedure(s), process and practice:

- Confirm a complaint exists i.e. it is of a serious nature or an unresolved concern?
- The school will acknowledge a complaint within 7 days and advise the board process or if it's a concern that hasn't been dealt with earlier, redirect complainant to the principal to deal with.
- If a complaint reaches the board, the board will meet and discuss 'in committee', and determine how this complaint will be resolved; the need to act in a timely manner may require a special hui of the board.
- If the complaint is to be heard by a delegation of the board, that has the authority to make decisions, bring recommendations and or findings then the delegation needs to be formally recorded and timeframe(s) determined.
- Before proceeding with any investigation the delegated person will make contact with the New Zealand Schools Trustee Association (NZSTA) and the board of trustees insurer. Caution and confidentiality shall prevail to ensure natural justice and if involving staff, the board will contact the NZSTA Employment

Advisory and support in such cases. The board will need to consider relevant disciplinary policies, employment contracts and advice from the NZSTA Employment Advisor.

- Board delegations reports back to a full board hui with findings, recommended actions or report decisions made.
- Board takes appropriate actions, records, and formally minutes decisions.
- Board advises complainant in writing of its decisions and actions considered in reaching its decision within 21 days of complaint receipt, unless otherwise agreed by all parties.
- See Figure 2.

In cases of allegations of serious misconduct (see definition below), an employee may be suspended with or without pay, or temporarily placed on other duties, pending investigation, and in line with the appropriate employment contract. Where such allegations are substantiated the employee may be dismissed without notice. Serious misconduct may include the following:

- Theft of Board property (including deliberate misuse, unauthorised use or private use of Board funds)
- Fraud
- Fighting and or assault
- Refusing or failing to obey lawful orders
- Bringing illegal non-prescription drugs or alcohol to work and or consuming same at work
- Lying or otherwise providing false information
- Undermining board policy or otherwise seriously damaging the integrity of the board
- Conduct of an indecent or sexual nature
- Physical or emotional abuse
- A serious breach of trust which renders an employee unsuitable for employment in a school environment

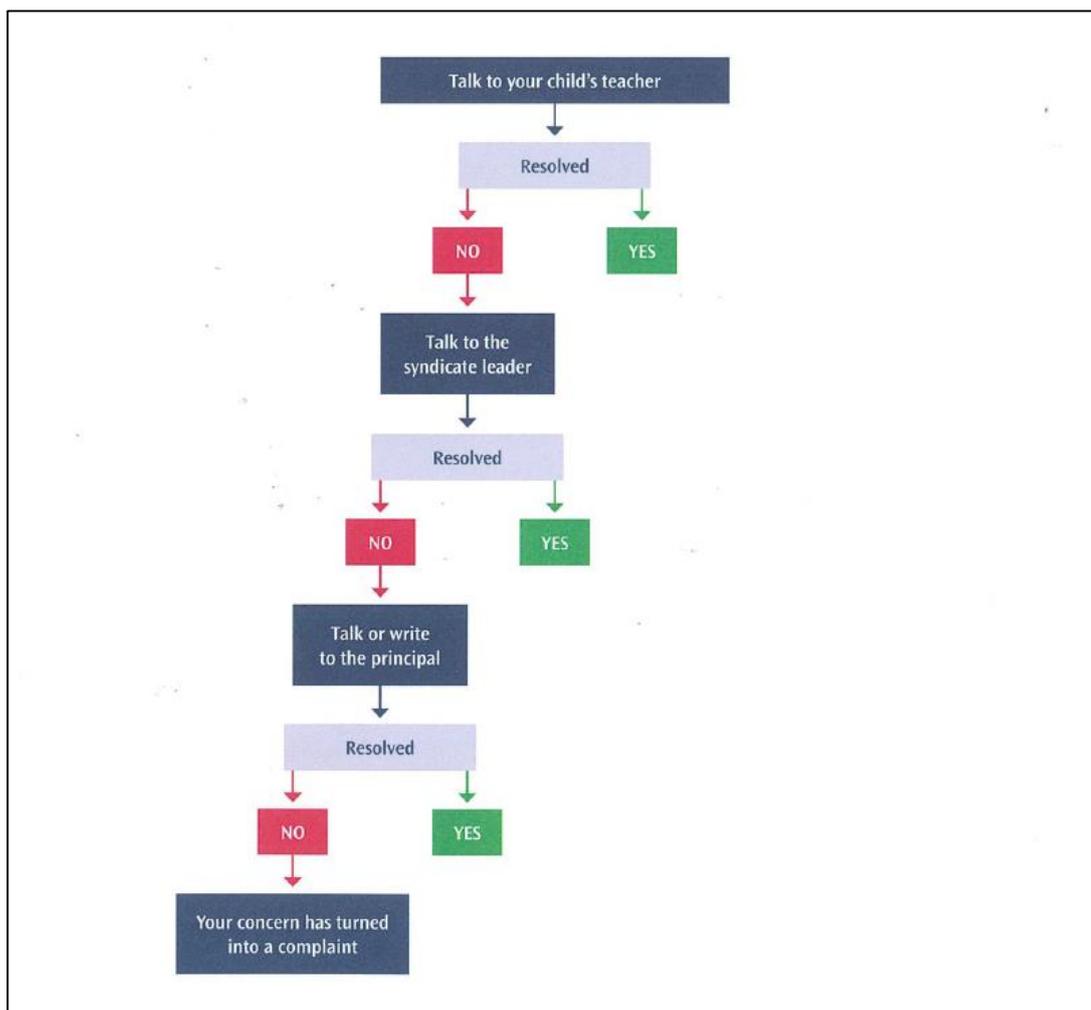


Figure 1: - Concern Procedure

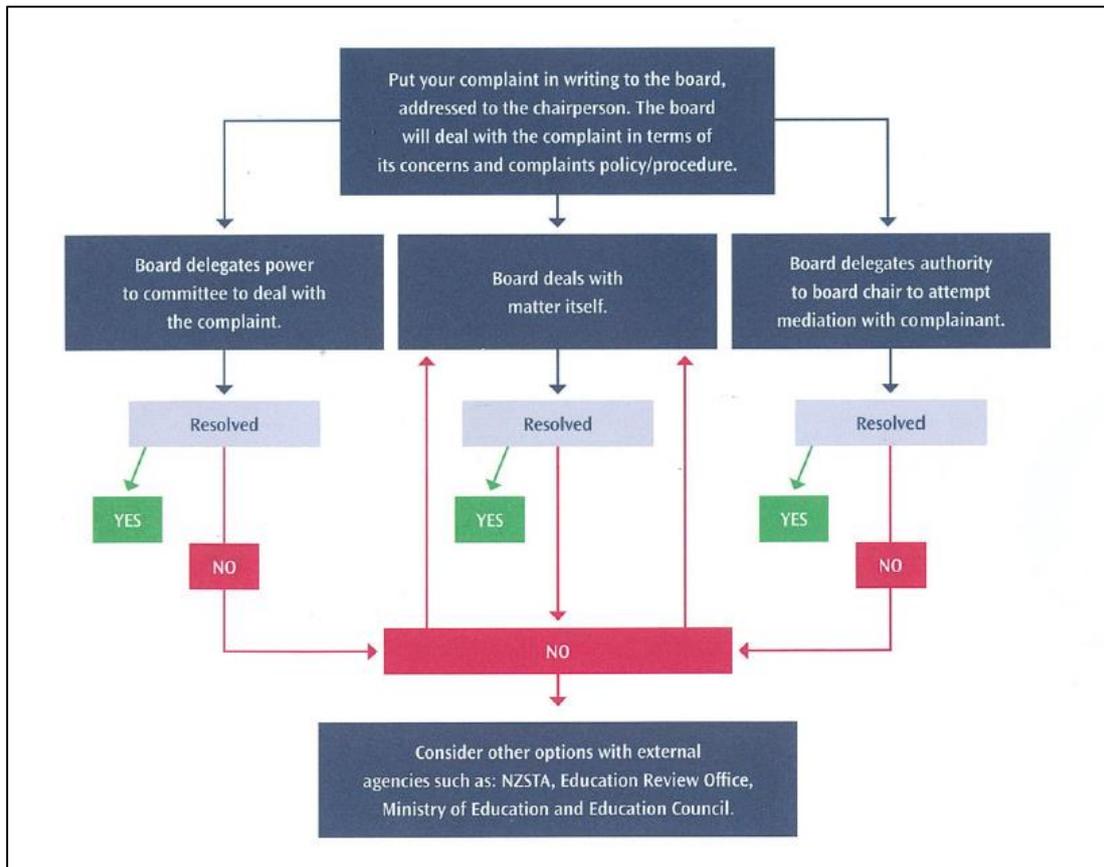


Figure 1: - Complaint Procedure

### Compliments

Given the context of concerns and complaints and the procedure that has been outlined and clarified above, there will also be times where whānau, the Te Aute College community, and or the extended community will compliment Te Aute College and in particular, the students.

Te Aute College certainly welcomes compliments and indeed, encourages whānau and the community to provide compliments, narrative and or anecdotal stories that highlight positive experiences associated with Te Aute College and its students' behaviours, actions and achievements.

Compliments via email and or hand written letters can be addressed to the 'Principal' or to the 'Board', which will then be acknowledged by way of formal response, noted [in board correspondence], circulated and shared with students and staff. Compliments will be celebrated and used as valuable feedback / feed-forward at both the operational and governance levels at Te Aute College.

Compliments are also welcomed via social media and the official Te Aute College Facebook site that is administered by school personnel. These compliments too will be noted and used to reiterate the great work that occurs at Te Aute College that whānau are a critical component of; alongside students and all staff.

Just as a whānau or community may have a specific cause for concern or a complaint and that we encourage dialogue and communication on, Te Aute College also encourages whānau and or community to present and share their compliments and acknowledgements for successes, achievements, no matter how big or small.

**Further Advice**

- All letters / emails addressed to the Chair of the board of trustees go to the full board.
- Conflicts of interest must be declared and conflicted board members must not participate on the matter.
- The board must conduct a thorough investigation into a complaint and weigh up both sides and trustees must exercise caution, confidentiality, process and natural justice.
- The board will recognise that not all complainants will be satisfied of an outcome. After one consideration, if the board or delegation remains confident in its decision, it has the right to refuse to enter into further discussion / correspondence.