



Don Buck School

Next review: Term 3 2026

Assessing and Responding to Concerns and Complaints

At Don Buck School, we act to understand and resolve concerns and complaints in a timely, respectful, and fair manner. We use the procedures below to assess matters brought to our attention and decide what response is appropriate according to the nature and seriousness of the concern or complaint, and who is involved. For serious concerns (e.g. physical or sexual violence), we may need to involve external agencies such as the Ministry of Education, police, or Oranga Tamariki. Our decision-making complies with legislation, regulations, employment agreements, and school policies.

Receiving a concern or complaint

As anyone at the school may receive a concern or complaint, all staff are informed about our Concerns and Complaints Policy and associated procedures.

- The person who receives a verbal or written concern or complaint may refer it to another staff member and/or escalate it to a more senior staff member, the principal, and/or the board. Serious and sensitive matters (e.g. misconduct, safety concerns) are immediately escalated to the principal and/or board as appropriate.
- If a concern or complaint is raised verbally, the person who receives the information may make a written record. We may also request that the matter be put in writing if it cannot be resolved at the time through discussion.
- If a concern or complaint is received in writing, the school acknowledges that it has been received.

When we receive a concern or complaint we:

- determine roles and responsibilities, including:
 - who will oversee the school response
 - who will contact those involved
 - who the decision-makers will be and the level of **board involvement**
 - how to manage a conflict of interest (including identifying anyone with a conflict and excluding them from any investigation or decision-making process)
 - if external agencies need to be consulted or informed (e.g. legal advisors, insurance provider, NZSBA, WorkSafe, Employment Mediation Services, Oranga Tamariki, police)
- seek information from the person who raised the concern or complaint
- seek information from others, including any person who is the subject of a concern or complaint
- consider if the matter needs to be managed alongside other school policies (e.g. finance, health and safety, employment, behaviour)
- take cultural considerations into account (e.g. tikanga and kawa).

The school notifies the person who raised the concern or complaint about how we plan to manage it and takes steps to resolve the matter. Due to privacy and confidentiality requirements, there are likely to be restrictions on the information the school can share.

Don Buck School considers all reasonable and legitimate concerns and complaints in good faith. However, in **▶some circumstances** the principal and/or board may determine that it is inappropriate to take any further action. In these circumstances, this is communicated to the person who raised the concern or complaint. If required, the school may seek legal advice or involve an external agency or mediator to help resolve the matter.

Managing the concern or complaint

We manage the matter according to the nature and seriousness of the concern or complaint. For how we manage the matter according to who is involved, click on the headings in the bullet points below.

- ▶ **Matters involving students**
- ▶ **Matters involving staff**
- ▶ **Matters involving board members**
- ▶ **Matters involving other members of the school community**
- ▶ **Sensitive claims**
- ▶ **Other matters**

Closing the concern or complaint

After assessing and responding to the matter, we consider the concern or complaint closed. Subject to privacy, confidentiality, and other considerations, it may or may not be possible or appropriate for the school to advise the person who raised a concern or complaint of the actions taken to address the matter, but they will be notified when the matter is closed. The school implements any follow-up actions, including updating policies and procedures to prevent further matters of the same kind.

If a person feels their concern or complaint has not been resolved after receiving a response, they may escalate the matter to the principal or board. After the board has dealt with a matter there is no further avenue for consideration of the matter at the school. Individuals can consider contacting an external agency (e.g. Ministry of Education, Teaching Council, Privacy Commissioner, Ombudsman, or Human Rights Commission). Staff may also wish to consider whether they have grounds to raise a personal grievance. See **Personal Grievance**.

Related policies

- **Student Wellbeing and Safety**
- **Staff Wellbeing and Safety**
- **Bullying and Harassment**
- **Staff Conduct**
- **Smokefree and Vapefree**
- **Trespasser on School Grounds**
- **Risk Management**
- **Responding to Digital Incidents**
- **Conflicts of Interest**
- **Fraud, and Theft**
- **Protected Disclosure**
- **Worker Engagement, Participation, and Representation**

Legislation

- Employment Relations Act 2000
- Health and Safety at Work Act 2015

- Teaching Council Rules 2016
- Privacy Act 2020
- Education (School Boards) Regulations 2020

Resources

- Ministry of Education | Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga
 - [Managing complaints](#)
 - [School-related complaints](#)
 - [Dealing with complaints](#) (Educational Leaders)
- New Zealand School Boards Association | Te Whakarōputanga Kaitiaki Kura o Aotearoa: [Handling complaints effectively](#)
- Ombudsman | Kaitiaki Mana Tangata:
 - [Good complaints handling by school boards](#)
 - [How to make a complaint](#)
- Human Rights Commission | Te Kāhui Tika Tangata: [Making a complaint](#)
- Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand: [Complaints from the public](#)
- Privacy Commissioner | Te Mana Mātāpono Matatapu: [Making a complaint to the Privacy Commissioner](#)

Hei mihi | Acknowledgement

SchoolDocs appreciates the professional advice of the Anderson Lloyd legal team (Dunedin) in reviewing our Concerns and Complaints policy and procedures.

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