



Newcastle
Grammar
— SCHOOL —

POLICY DOCUMENT

Policy Number (PN): 3.6.2.4

Policy Name: **Complaints and Grievance Resolution Policy
and Procedures – School Community**

Last Revised: May 2021

Complaints and Grievance Resolution Policy and Procedures – School Community

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide the opportunity access procedures to facilitate the resolution of a dispute or complaint and to outline the principles applied to the handling and resolving of all disputes and complaints made to the School involving staff, students and parents. The Internal Complaints and Appeals processes are conciliatory and non-legal.

Child Protection Allegations

By their nature, allegations of a child protection nature are handled differently to complaints or grievances.

If you believe that a child is at risk then contact the Head of School immediately using the methods below:

Email ~ kate.grogan@ngs.nsw.edu.au

Phone ~ 02 4929 5811

Any such allegation will be handled in accordance with the School's Child Protection Policy. In brief, this means that:

- Once an incident report is made to the Head of School (HOS), the HOS will then decide whether this incident meets the legal threshold for reporting to relevant authorities.
- If it is judged to be necessary, a report is made to the Office of Children's Guardian (OCG), and/or the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ), and/or the Police.
- Depending on the nature of the report, and with the approval of the OCG, the HOS will order a formal investigation, in accordance with the principles of procedural fairness.
- Every effort will be made to communicate with all the parties involved throughout the process.
- The HOS will make a final ruling in accordance with OCG guidelines. This will then determine the actions to be taken, if any.
- Finally, a report will be sent to the OCG.

Principles

Employees of Newcastle Grammar School are responsible for managing the resolution of enquiries, concerns, complaints and disputes lodged by students, parents and members of the community. Staff will make every effort to resolve all enquiries, concerns, complaints and disputes promptly and in accordance with procedural fairness/natural justices.

The Head of School is responsible for establishing and maintaining processes for the management and review of enquiries, concerns, complaints and disputes.

A Complaints Register is kept by the PA to the Head of School. Complaints are reviewed regularly by the School's Executive staff.

The following principles apply:

- The wellbeing of a student or group of students is a priority
- The process is accessible to all parties, including students currently enrolled with special

needs, and including gifted and talented students; and there is a commitment to cooperation by School Staff

- Procedural fairness is offered to all parties
- The subject of the complaint is informed of its substance
- Confidentiality is always maintained as appropriate
- Complaints are monitored and their management evaluated to pre-empt systemic/recurring issues
- All persons in the School community are entitled to respect and courtesy
- Complainants are entitled to be dealt with fairly and promptly
- Procedures for lodging a complaint are communicated to the School community
- The Head of School will appoint an independent investigator as required when dealing with a complaint

Procedures

Students and parents or members of the community may lodge a complaint with the Head of School. **This may be about the provision of education; conduct of a school employee; or member of the school community.**

Complaints will be handled promptly, confidentially and according to procedural fairness. Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained between parties involved and support persons (unions or professional associations).

In the first place, we encourage anyone raising a complaint or grievance to do so via email ~ complaints@ngs.nsw.edu.au

The Head of School must:

- Maintain confidentiality and impartiality
- Ensure complaints are resolved
- Ensure that procedures for resolving complaints are communicated to Staff and parents
- Ensure complainants and respondents are aware that they can have a support person present during discussion

In some cases, a senior member of staff or external 'investigator' will be appointed by the Head of School to investigate the incident or claim. This person follows direction from the Head of School and must act according to the principles of procedural fairness. The 'Investigator' will inform the Head of School of the findings of the investigation. The Head of School will inform the claimant and the respondent of the findings. In the case of International students/parents a suitable interpreter will be provided for the duration of the procedures.

Complaints against other Students

Grievances brought by a student against another student will be dealt with under the School's Behaviour Management Policy.

Informal Complaints Resolution

- First, Newcastle Grammar School requires that there is an attempt to informally resolve the issue through mediation or informal resolution of the complaint.
- The student or parent on behalf of the student should contact the Head of House (7-12), Deputy Head of Primary (K-6) or the K-6 classroom teacher in the first instance to attempt mediation/informal resolution of the complaint.
- If the matter cannot be resolved through mediation/information resolution, it will then be referred to the Deputy Head of School, Director of Studies, Director of Teaching and Learning or Head of Primary and the School's internal formal complaints and appeals handling procedure will be followed.

Formal Complaints Handling Procedure

- The process of this grievance procedure is confidential and any complaints or appeals are a matter between the parties concerned and those persons directly involved in the complaints handling process.
- The student or parent must notify the School in writing of the nature and details of the complaint or appeal. **This should be done by email via complaints@ngs.nsw.edu.au**
In doing so, the written complaint or appeal will be lodged with the Head of School.
- Where the Internal Complaints and Appeals process is being accessed because the student has received notice from the School that the School intends to report the student for unsatisfactory course attendance, unsatisfactory course progress or suspension or cancellation of enrolment, the student has 20 days from the date of notification in which to lodge a written appeal.
- Internal Complaints and Appeals processes are usually available to students/parents at no cost. Should a cost be incurred then the student will be advised of the minimal amount involved.
- Each complainant has the opportunity present his/her case to the Head of School.
- Students or parents may be accompanied and assisted by a support person at all relevant meetings.
- The formal grievance process will commence with five (5) working days of the lodgement of the complaint or appeal to the Head of School.
- Once the Head of School has made a decision regarding the complaint or appeal, the student will be informed in writing of the outcome and the reason(s) for the outcome.
- If the grievance procedure finds in favour of the student, Newcastle Grammar School will immediately implement the decision and any corrective and preventative action required.
- Newcastle Grammar School undertakes to finalise all grievance procedures within ten (10) to fifteen (15) working days.
- The student is required to maintain normal enrolment and attendance at all classes during the appeals process unless the School determines otherwise.

External Appeals Process

- If the complaints procedure does not find in favour of the student and the student is dissatisfied with the result of the complaints procedure, the school will consider appointing an external body to handle an appeal.

Definitions

- Working day – any day other than Saturday, Sunday or public holiday during term time.
- Support person – a friend/teacher/relative not involved in the grievance. It should be noted that the student's lawyer and/or education agents are not regarded as acceptable support persons at internal stages of the complaints handling process.

Related Policies:

- **Attendance Policy and Procedures**
- **Child Protection Policy**
- **Grievance Procedure and Resolution Policy (Staff)**
- **International Students Policy**
- **Student Behaviour Management Policy**
- **Student Code of Conduct Policy**

Related legislation:

- Australian Human Rights Commission Act, 1986
- NSW Anti-Discrimination Act, 1977