



Complaints Handling Policy and Procedures

RATIONALE

This policy is made pursuant to the requirements set out in section 47 of the *Education Act* and of NESAs for registration of the school

PURPOSE

Rainbow Ridge School is committed to providing a safe work environment for all workers and students. The purpose of this Complaints Handling Policy and Procedures is to establish a framework for the handling of complaints that relate to the operation of the school.

POLICY

We acknowledge that a member of staff, a student, a parent or a member of the wider community can sometimes feel aggrieved about something that is happening at the school which appears unsatisfactory, or unreasonable. Complaints about any policy or procedure, decision, behaviour, act or omission (whether by the Principal, member of staff or student) that is deemed to be unsatisfactory or unreasonable may be made using this policy and procedure.

It is the aim of the School to seek to resolve issues through direct discussion between you and other parties using the School's Communication Procedures. However, there may be instances in which it is not possible to take up the issue with the other party directly or doing this does not resolve the matter. It is in such cases that the Complaints Handling Policy and Procedures can be utilised.

A distinctive feature of the Complaints Handling Policy and Procedures is to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that complaints are addressed in a timely and confidential manner in order to prevent minor problems or concerns from escalating. We expect that complaints will be brought forward and resolved in a respectful manner recognising the dignity of each person concerned in the process. **This policy recognises that some minor or simple matters can be resolved without recourse to the formal complaint handling process but rather, quickly and simply, by discussion between the appropriate people and/or using the Communication Procedures.**

POLICY FRAMEWORK

Through the processing of a complaint through this policy the School will:

- endeavour to increase the level of satisfaction and improve the relationship between Rainbow Ridge School, staff, parents and the wider community
- improve the level of parent satisfaction with Rainbow Ridge School, and the relationship of parents and families with school
- respect and recognise the innate dignity of each person in any way involved with the School
- recognise the rights of a person who is the subject of a complaint (the respondent)

- protect the confidentiality of both the complainant and the respondent
- recognise and protect the right to comment and complain
- provide an efficient, fair and accessible mechanism for prompt investigation and resolution of complaints in accordance with the principles of natural justice
- ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, information is available to school community members of the complaints handling process
- enable the nature of complaints to be monitored to improve the quality of services by identifying and rectifying practices that may be impeding the quality of services
- ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the complaint handling process is transparent and comprehensive

The following principles inform the content of this policy:

(a) Commitment

This school will investigate all formal complaints in accordance with this policy. This will be reflected in the:

- adoption and distribution of the complaints handling policy and procedures
- appropriate training of staff in the implementation of this policy
- ongoing monitoring and evaluation of effectiveness of the Complaints Handling Policy and Procedures

(b) Responsiveness

Complaints will be dealt with promptly. The process and the time needed to resolve an issue will vary depending on the nature and complexity of the issue.

(c) Visibility

The existence of this complaint handling policy and procedures, its purpose and the method of accessing it will be made available internally for staff and externally to the community via the School's website.

(d) Procedural fairness

The principles of procedural fairness will be followed in all aspects of complaint handling. Procedural fairness includes:

- giving the complainant the opportunity to use the School's Communication Procedures in the first instance
- in the case that this does not resolve the issue, to put their case in a clear and respectful manner
- offering reasonable assistance to enable the complaint to be made and to know the complaint handling procedures
- informing the respondent of the substance of the complaint and providing an opportunity to respond

Complaints Procedure

All complaints are taken seriously and are responded to in accordance with the context and seriousness of the complaint. **See the Communication Procedures to see if your complaint can be handled through this process. Most complaints can be resolved by addressing the issue directly with the person or people concerned.**

1. Submit your complaint in writing, signed and dated and addressed to the Principal (include your contact details)
Or
Make an appointment with the Principal to make your complaint in person
Or
If your complaint is about the Principal address your complaint in writing to the Chairperson of the Rainbow Ridge School Board of Directors
2. The Principal / Board Chairperson on receipt of your written complaint will contact you to discuss your complaint. You may be asked to meet with the Principal / Board Chairperson.

Investigation of a complaint within the school should establish:

1. What was said and done/not done
 2. When and where the incident(s) occurred, or the concern arose
 3. Who else saw or heard the incident(s) or expressed the concern
 4. What the reaction of the complainant was; what the complainant did
 5. Whether there was an incident in relation to the complaint and
 6. Whether there have been any previous incidents/concerns of a similar nature or concerning the same person/people
3. The Principal / Board Chairperson will advise you of how your complaint will be handled, procedural fairness, confidentiality and what can be expected in terms of the time it may take and actions which may be taken.
 4. The School will adhere to confidentiality of your complaint and will expect confidentiality from you throughout the process.

The Principal /Board Chair will:

- Provide feedback to the complainant and the respondent
- Ensure the privacy of all the parties, including requesting all parties apply confidentiality until the matter is resolved
- Monitor the situation
- Take measures to prevent retaliation
- Ensure appropriate disciplinary action is taken if appropriate
- Advise complainants that they have the right to take their complaint further if they are not satisfied with the measures that the school has taken
- Resolution of the complaint is the expected outcome of the process

- In the case that your complaint is unresolved the School will appoint a mediator agreed to by all parties to help resolve the matter
- The School will review its Policies and Procedures where your complaint has brought an awareness to how improvements can be made to the running of the school.

If the allegation is of a serious nature, or if legal action is being considered, it will be brought to the Board of Directors, and the School's insurance company will be informed.

Associated Documents:
Communication Procedures
Parent Handbook
Social Behaviour Policy and
Procedures
Staff Code of Conduct
Student Code of Conduct
Parent Code of Conduct