



NEWCASTLE
GRAMMAR
SCHOOL

Complaints Resolution Policy and Procedures – School Community

Policy Number (PN): 8.2.7

Last Revised: July 2025



NGS Policies & Procedures

8.2.7 Complaints Resolution Policy and Procedures - School Community

Policy Revised: November 2021 – formatting and updates to reflect AISNSW advice regarding NESA registration requirements.

August 2023 – formatting and updates to reflect AISNSW advice regarding NESA registration requirements.

August 2024 – formatting and updates to reflect AISNSW advice regarding NESA registration requirements. Revised flowchart.

July 2025 – formatting, consolidation of processes, removal of 'definitions'.

Due for Review: July 2027

1. Introduction

Newcastle Grammar School (NGS) understands that there may be times members of the school community feel dissatisfied with services provided by the school or have concerns about the behaviour or decisions of school students or staff. The school has policies and procedures for managing complaints including processes for how students and/or parent/carer(s) can raise concerns and how the school responds to concerns.

1.1 Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy and procedures is to facilitate the resolution of a dispute or complaint made by a stakeholder and to outline the principles applied to the handling and resolving of all disputes and complaints made to the school involving staff (including employees, contractors and volunteers), students and parent/carer(s).

This policy does not extend to *personal* grievances between parent/carer(s) or other members of the school community.

1.2 Whistleblowing

This policy does not extend to complaints which are whistleblowing disclosures. The procedures for processing whistleblowing complaints are outlined in the school's Whistleblower Policy.

In summary a whistleblowing disclosure is a disclosure which:

- is made by a Board member, staff member, a person who supplies goods or services to the school, a volunteer, an employer of a supplier or a relative of any of these people;
- involves alleged misconduct, an improper state of affairs or circumstances, or illegal activity, and
- is made to an Executive staff member, Board member, the school's auditor or a person who the school has authorised to collect such disclosures.

1.3 Confidentiality

All parties involved in complaints handling are required to maintain appropriate confidentiality, including in relation to handling and storing records.

2. Policy

A complaint or grievance is an expression of dissatisfaction made to the school about an educational and/or operational matter relating to services provided by NGS, or the behaviour or decisions of a staff member, student, contractor or volunteer, including misconduct.

Complaints may be made by a student or parent/carer(s) or other members of the school community. *NGS complaints resolution processes are conciliatory and non-legal.* The school will seek to resolve complaints informally where possible but acknowledges that in some cases a person may wish to proceed with a formal grievance.

If a parent/carer(s), student or stakeholder has a concern about the conduct of a staff member, they should raise their concern with the Head of School or a member of the Primary Leadership or

Executive team. If a complaint concerning the behaviour of a staff member may constitute reportable conduct, the matter will be addressed by the school's Child Protection Policy. Complainants are not required to assess whether their concern meets the threshold of reportable conduct before making a complaint. Any concern about a child's wellbeing or the conduct of an employee, volunteer, contractor or member of the school community may be reported under this policy.

A complaint about a reportable conduct matter may be current or historical. Timeframes for investigation of complaints relating to reportable conduct are dependent on the individual matter and may be over an extended period of time, particularly in the case of a historical allegation. The school is bound by privacy or other confidentiality requirements when conducting investigations of reportable conduct allegations, which may limit the information that can be shared with the complainant regarding the outcome of an investigation. Please refer to the school's Child Protection Policy for information about reportable conduct.

Complaints regarding a grievance between students will be addressed in accordance with the school's Behaviour Management Policy. Students are encouraged to raise their concern with their class teacher, mentor or Head of House to help solve the dispute. Parent/carer(s) must not approach any student of NGS to resolve a grievance. Parent/carer(s) are encouraged to raise wellbeing or behaviour concerns with their child's mentor, Head of House (7-12), Head of Student Wellbeing K-6 or the K-6 classroom teacher.

Complaints regarding a grievance between staff members about work matters, including work relationships and decision made by other staff members which impact on their work, will be addressed in accordance with the school's Complaints Resolution Policy and Procedures - Staff;

Complaints regarding unlawful discrimination, harassment or bullying between staff are generally addressed in accordance with the school's Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Policy – Staff;

Overseas students enrolled at the school on a study visa should also refer to the Overseas Students Policy.

Employees of NGS are responsible for managing the resolution of enquiries, concerns, complaints and disputes lodged by students, parent/carer(s) and members of the community. Employees will make every effort to resolve all enquiries, concerns, complaints and disputes promptly and in accordance with procedural fairness/natural justice. *NGS complaints resolution processes are conciliatory and non-legal.*

The Head of School or delegate (i.e. Deputy Head of School, Head of Primary, Head of People & Culture etc.) 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 Executive Assistant to the Head of School. Complaints are reviewed regularly by the school's Executive staff.

The following principles apply:

- As a Child Safe Organisation, the safety and 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. Each complaints resolution process is confidential, and any complaints or appeals are a matter between the parties concerned and those persons directly involved in the complaints handling process.
- 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 investigator independent to the school as required when dealing with a complaint.

3. Process

3.1 The Complainant

Complaints may be raised by a complainant directly with a member of staff. However, if the matter is one where it may not be appropriate to do so, a complaint can be made to the school and this will be managed by the Head of School or delegate (i.e. Head of People & Culture). Any complaint about the conduct of a staff member will be referred to the Head of School in the first instance.

Should a matter not be resolved between the parties directly in the first instance, the complainant may raise the matter with the school.

A complaint can be made in writing to the Head of School, via Executive Assistant to the Head of School:

Email Kate Grogan – kate.grogan@ngs.nsw.edu.au

Where a person wishes to make a complaint concerning the Head of School, the complaint should be made in writing to the Chair of the Board, via:

Email – chairperson@ngs.nsw.edu.au

In this situation, the references in this policy relating to the role of the Head of School should be read as references to the Chair of Board.

The Head of School or delegate will generally acknowledge receipt of a complaint raised with the school in writing as soon as practicable.

3.2 Informal Complaints Resolution

NGS requires that there is a prior attempt to informally resolve the issue through mediation or informal resolution of the complaint.

To attempt mediation/informal resolution of the complaint, the student or parent/carer(s) should contact the Head of House (7-12), Head of Student Wellbeing K-6 or the K-6 classroom teacher for complaints about student welfare, and the classroom/subject teacher for complaints about the quality of teaching or other academic matters.

The staff member receiving the complaint will provide information about the complaint and its resolution to their Line Manager who will submit this to the Complaints Register for record keeping purposes.

Complaints received by the school from members of the broader school community should be responded to by a member of the Executive team who will also submit information regarding the complaint to the Complaints Register for record keeping purposes.

The school will generally acknowledge receipt of a complaint in writing as soon as practicable. If the matter cannot be resolved through initial mediation, it will then be referred to the relevant Head of Dept., Head of House, Line Manager or member of Primary Leadership or Executive Team and the Formal Complaint/Grievance procedure will be followed.

3.3 Formal Complaint/Grievance Resolution or Appeal

After following the Informal Complaints Resolution process, if a successful outcome is not achieved, students, parent/carer(s) or members of the community may lodge a formal complaint or appeal with the Head of School.

Complaints will be handled promptly and according to procedural fairness. Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained between parties involved including support persons (Unions, Professional Associations or school employees who may act as support persons for colleagues).

The Formal Complaint/Grievance process will commence within five (5) business days of the lodgement of the complaint or appeal to the Head of School.

If this procedure finds in favour of the person involved, NGS will immediately implement the decision, and any corrective and preventative action required.

NGS undertakes to finalise all formal grievance and appeal procedures within ten (10) to fifteen (15) business days. In the case of a formal grievance that relates to an overseas student who is attending NGS on a Subclass 500 Student Visa, these must be finalised within 10 business days as per the CRICOS requirements.

On receipt of a formal complaint/grievance, the Head of School or delegate will:

- Acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint in writing as soon as practicable.
- Assess whether the complaint is one to be addressed under this policy or is a staff grievance or Reportable Conduct matter which are addressed by the relevant policies.
- Assess the priority of the complaint in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the matter raised.
- Assess whether the school may be required to report the matter to the Office of the Children's Guardian, Police, Department of Communities and Justice or other relevant authorities, should the complaint relate to possible unlawful conduct or other reportable matters.
- Advise the complainant of the likely steps that will be undertaken by the school in relation to the complaint.
- If appropriate, advise the relevant parties of the complaint at the relevant time and provide them with an opportunity to respond.
- Collect any additional information the school considers necessary to assess the complaint.
- Make a decision about how the complaint will be resolved ("resolution decision").
- Advise the complainant in writing, and any other relevant parties as appropriate, of the resolution decision of the Head of School and if appropriate, any proposed action to be taken.

There may be circumstances where some of the steps outlined above are not appropriate and the school will determine, on a case-by-case basis the most appropriate method of handling the complaint.

A complainant and the relevant parties that the complaint is about may choose to have an appropriate support person present at any meeting with representatives of the school about the complaint. However, the School maintains the right to determine whether the person's preferred support person is appropriate and may not approve the attendance of a support person where they are determined by the school to be inappropriate.

In the case of International Students, a suitable interpreter will be provided for the duration of the procedures (if required).

4. Related Policies

- Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy
- Student Code of Conduct
- Parent Code of Conduct
- Complaints Resolution Policy and Procedures - Staff
- Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Policy – Staff
- Note Taking and Record Creation Policy and Procedures for Staff
- Communications Policy and Procedures for Staff
- Parent Communication Policy
- Whistleblower Policy
- Overseas Students Policy

Complaints and Grievance Resolution – School Community Flowchart

