

Policy name	Complaints policy		
Policy number	CS -01		
Review cycle	Every year		
Reviewed	2022.2.14	Next review	2023.2.14

### **Introduction and the aims of the policy**

CGA prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its students. With this in mind, the School hopes that complaints will be rare. However, there are occasions where parents or caregivers will have cause to complain to the School. The procedures outlined in this policy aim to ensure that all complaints made are handled promptly, appropriately and fairly.

### **This policy applies to parents or caregivers of current students**

As a school, CGA will make every effort to ensure that all complaints are treated seriously and sensitively; parents/caregivers can be assured that their charges will not be penalised in any way for a complaint that is made in good faith.

### **Reasons for the policy**

By correctly dealing with complaints, CGA hopes to identify when regrettable situations have occurred with a view to preventing the similar events from recurring.

By identifying situations that constitute a complaint, students whose education has been perceived to have been affected can be helped.

### **What constitutes a complaint?**

CGA will treat, as a complaint, any instance where a parent/caregiver informs the School that they feel the School has done something wrong, failed to do something that should have been done, or where it is conceived that an unfair act has been confirmed.

A complaint may be made about the School as a whole, a specific department within the School, an activity provided by the School, or an individual member of staff. This list is not exhaustive and the School shall treat any expression of dissatisfaction, whether real or perceived, as a complaint.

### **Who to contact?**

- 1) If parents/caregivers have a concern or complaint, they should normally contact the Dean of the student's year level.
- 2) Where the complaint is about a Dean a parent/caregiver should take their concerns directly to the Principal. Parents/caregivers may also wish to follow this route where the issue is particularly serious or sensitive.
- 3) Where a complaint is against the Principal, parents/caregivers should make their complaint to the Board of Governors via the Executive Principal.

### **Procedure**

The procedure that the School will follow has three distinct stages, each of which will be conducted by a different person to ensure fairness.

The three stages are:

Stage 1: informal resolution

Stage 2: formal resolution

Stage 3: panel hearing

In most cases, problems will be satisfactorily dealt with at Stage 1.

A record of the number of complaints which proceeded beyond Stage 1 in the previous academic year is available on request.

## **Complaints Procedure**

Date Policy Effective from: 28<sup>th</sup> April 2020

### **Stage 1: Informal resolution**

On receiving a complaint in person, in writing, by email or by telephone, a year level Dean will make a written record of the concerns raised and the date on which they were received. If the complaint is made in writing or by email, it will normally be acknowledged within 3 working days.

In the vast majority of cases, the School hopes that matters will be resolved quickly to the parents/caregivers satisfaction. The School shall, in all cases, investigate the matter fairly and appropriately with any relevant staff.

As a school, CGA shall aim to deal with any complaint as quickly as is practicable without compromising the outcome. If the matter is not resolved within 10 working days, or in the event that the School and the parents/caregivers fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents/caregivers will be advised to proceed to Stage 2, (formal resolution).

### **Stage 2: Formal resolution**

If a complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the School Principal. The Principal, or someone on their behalf, will acknowledge receipt of the written complaint within 3 working days and will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

In most cases the Principal, or another senior member of staff not involved with the complaint, will organise a meeting with the parents/caregivers concerned to discuss the matter. This will be within 7 working days of the receipt of the written complaint. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

It may be necessary for the Principal, or another senior member of staff, to carry out further investigation. In this case, once he or she is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed in writing of the decision and reasons underpinning it.

If the complaint is against the Principal, the Chairperson of Board will call for a full report from the Principal and for any relevant documents. The Chairperson may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will, in most cases, speak to the parents/caregivers to discuss the matter further. This will be within 10 working days from the receipt of the written complaint.

Once the Chairperson is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents/caregivers will be informed of the decision in writing.

The Chairperson will give reasons for his or her decision.

### **Timescales for Stages 1 and 2**

Stages 1 and 2 will be aimed to be dealt with within 28 working days; complex issues or complaints received within 28 working days of the start of school holidays may take longer. In all cases CGA shall aim to complete the process as soon as is practicable, whilst allowing sufficient time for a thorough investigation to take place.

If parents/caregivers are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3, the panel hearing.

### **Stage 3: Panel hearing**

A panel hearing cannot normally be requested unless Stages 1 and 2 of this procedure have been completed.

If parents/caregivers wish to request a panel hearing they should write, via email, to the Executive Principal who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of a complaints panel. The panel will meet within 10 working days of the request being received.

The parents/caregivers should state the outcome they desire and all of the grounds of the complaint. The panel will not normally accept any areas of complaint which have not been previously raised during Stages 1 and 2.

The matter will then be referred to a complaints panel ("the Panel") for consideration. The Panel will consist of persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the School.

The Panel will consist of:

- 1) Chair of Board of Governors
- 2) CEO of CGA
- 3) Executive Principal
- 4) Principal
- 5) A co-opted member of the panel independent of the school management

The Executive Principal, on behalf of the Panel, will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable, and normally within 14 working days of the parent's request for a panel hearing.

If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further details of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such details shall be supplied to all parties not later than 3 working days prior to the hearing.

The parents/caregivers may attend the hearing via Zoom or equivalent meeting software and be accompanied to the hearing by the students concerned and one other person, if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. **Legal representation will not be permitted.**

If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents'/caregivers' complaint without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. The hearing may be adjourned for this purpose.

On completion of the hearing the Panel will consider all the facts that they consider relevant. They will then make findings and may make recommendations.

**Findings:**

Panel may dismiss or uphold the complaint.

**Recommendations:**

The Panel may make recommendations to the Principal or the Full Board, as appropriate. It is not within the powers of the Panel to make any financial award, nor to impose sanctions on staff, students or parents, although they may recommend these actions to the Principal or the Governing Body.

The Panel will write to the parents/caregivers informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. This will be within 7 working days of the hearing.

The decision of the Panel will be final.

A copy of the Panel's findings and any recommendations will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, any person who may be the subject of the complaint, as well as the Chairperson of the Board.

**Record of complaints**

Following the resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record which will include:

- (a) the nature of the complaint

- (b) whether it was resolved at one of the first two stages of this procedure or if it proceeded to a panel hearing
- (c) any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint.

Normally the record will contain the following information:

- (a) Date when the issue was raised
- (b) Name of parent/caregiver
- (c) Name of student
- (d) Description of the issue
- (e) Records of the investigation (if appropriate)
- (f) Witness statements (if appropriate)
- (g) Name of member(s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- (h) Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)
- (i) Action(s) taken by the School as a result of the complaint.

This record is kept securely and will only be made available, as and when required, to an inspection body or the Ministry of Education.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are normally kept for ten years after the resolution of the complaint and will be kept confidential except when the School is required to disclose information by the 2020 Privacy Act.

### **Monitoring and evaluation**

The monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of this policy and its implementation will be carried out by the Board and Principal.

Stage 1 complaints will be reviewed by the pastoral team and Principal.

### **International Students**

In handling student complaints and concerns, the School adheres to [the New Zealand Code of Practice](#).

When making complaints, students are encouraged to talk to the Dean or subject teacher about their issues whilst the problems are still manageable. If the issue is not resolved by the Dean or subject teacher, the student must follow the procedure outlined in the School complaints policy. If the student is not satisfied with the complaints process within the School, they may contact New Zealand qualification authority (NZQA).

Link: [Student complaints about an education organisation](#)

If an international student would like to make a complaint about CGA, the student must be able to show NZQA that they have tried to get the school to act to resolve the complaint prior to them contacting NZQA. NZQA deals with all complaints about non-compliance with the international student code of practice rather than financial and contractual disputes.

If an international student wishes to raise an issue or complaint, the student will be asked to see the Dean through an online conference tool. If the Dean is involved in the issue and is not the appropriate person to approach, the student should talk directly to the Principal. He/she will handle the complaints in accordance with the school complaints policy.