Complaints Policy and Procedure

Introduction

This document sets out how Nawarddeken Academy (NA) responds to complaints and resolves conflict. If the *Independent Commissioner Against Corruption Act 2017* (NT) applies, whistle-blower protection principals can protect the identity of the person making the complaint.

Statement of Commitment

Nawarddeken Academy is committed to providing student with a safe learning place that is free from harm. Every child is valued and respected for who they are, and they have the right to feel safe and be safe at school. We value and take seriously the voice of every child.

A complaint can be made by anyone including a student, former student, parent/carer, other family member, staff member, volunteer, contractor or member of the wider community.

Context

At NAL we live and work together closely with community, often in isolated locations. It is important we maintain good relationships with each other and with community.

Complaints or conflict can arise because of:

- the school not meeting the expectations of the community,
- personal or professional disagreement or misconduct,
- cross-cultural misunderstanding,
- the different ways people communicate with each other.

It is important to address complaints and resolve conflict quickly and to avoid escalation.

Definitions

In this document:

- **complaint** is an expression of dissatisfaction with an action taken, decision made, or service provided, or with the failure to take action, make a decision or provide a service,
- **conflict** is a disagreement between two or more people,
- **worker** includes employees, teachers, consultants, contractors, volunteers, and people undertaking work experience or vocational placements,
- **mediator** means someone impartial (fair) and not involved with the issue who helps those involved work toward a resolution.

Scope

This document applies to:

- child safe complaints
    - a breach of NAL's Code of Conduct
    - other staff misconduct (such as a procedural breach of the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy)
    - any complaint about NAL's response to or management of a child safety incident or concern, including complaints alleging non-compliance with Mandatory Reporting
- complaints about NAL, the Board of Directors (the Board), or NAL workers,
- conflict that arises within NA,
- conflict between NAL and community or other stakeholders.

Child focused approach

We take a child-focused approach to handling complaints and conflict. Students are taught about their rights, and how to make a complaint, using the National Office for Child Safety Infographic resource, which is also displayed at each school and available on our website. This is a child and EAL/D friendly resource that is revisited by classroom teachers every semester.

Whistle Blower Protection Statement

Nawarddeken Academy will treat all reports seriously, confidentially, and fairly. We will investigate concerns promptly and protect the identity of the person making the report wherever possible.

Retaliation is not tolerated. No person will be disadvantaged, punished, dismissed, harassed, or treated unfairly for making a good-faith report or helping with an investigation. This applies even if the concern is later found to be mistaken, provided it was reported honestly.

Anyone who experiences retaliation should report it immediately. Actions taken in response to retaliation may include investigation and disciplinary action.

Roles and Responsibilities

Internal HR Team

The CEO/Principal, Assistant Principal and Business Manager are responsible for managing the internal Nawarddeken Academy operational matters regarding Conduct and Complaints issues.

The Governance Advisor, Cultural Advisor and Board Director- Education can be called upon in an advisory capacity when required.

Board of Directors HR Team

Three (3) elected Board Directors (2026: Conrad, Terrah, Kenneth) are responsible for managing the overarching Nawarddeken Academy operational matters regarding Conduct and Complaints issues around the CEO, Governance Advisor or any other Board Directors etc.

Members of the Board

Board Directors must:

- manage complaints or conflict that involve directors and the CEO,
- establish timelines for resolution and review,
- remain objective and seek a fair outcome that meets the needs of everyone involved,
- maintain confidentiality which means not sharing with anyone who isn't directly involved

CEO

The CEO must:

- ensure the efficient and effective organisation, management and administration of the NA's complaints handling processes,
- manage complaints about NA, the Board, or NA workers,
- manage conflict within NA and between NA and community,
- establish timelines for resolution and review,
- remain objective and seek a fair outcome that meets the needs of everyone involved,
- maintain confidentiality which means not sharing with anyone who isn't directly involved,
- keep a record of all complaints and conflicts that cannot be dealt with informally,
- oversee the implementation of education for staff, students, families, and school community arounds complaints

- ensure the NA website contains information about how to make a complaint, including a whistle-blower protection statement

Teachers

Registered teachers must:

- teach students about their rights, and how to make a complaint, using the National Office for Child Safety Infographic resource, at least once per semester
- display the "How to Make a Complaint" infographic at each school and ensure students know how to access this resource on the school website

Workers

Workers must:

- inform the CEO of any complaint made about NA, the Board, or NA workers, even if the issue is resolved informally,
- maintain confidentiality which means not sharing with anyone who isn't directly involved.

Complaints and conflict are handled in a way that reflects traditional values, which place a high value on respecting people's privacy, their differences and learning to live together peacefully.

Policy

For everyone involved, this means:

- staying calm and respectful of others,
- not judging others too quickly,
- accepting that other people may see things differently,
- being open to talking through issues,
- being prepared to compromise,
- working together to find a solution,
- allowing a reasonable amount of time for a resolution,
- acting on agreements made to resolve complaints and conflict.

Having a complaint or being involved in a conflict is no excuse for:

- aggressive or offensive behaviour,
- willfully damaging property,
- making negative statements about a person or about NA.

When handling a complaint or conflict, any behaviour that is aggressive or offensive will be treated seriously and could delay resolution of the issue.

Defamatory remarks about NA or NA workers will be treated seriously and the Board will take appropriate measures to uphold the good name and reputation of NA and/or the persons affected.

Procedure

When making a complaint or dealing with conflict it is important to explain the concern or issue and to give specific examples. The best person to talk to will be different, depending on whether the complaint is about a student or a director.

Students

1. Talk to the person directly if you feel comfortable.
2. If not, talk to someone else you trust and feel comfortable with, such as a teacher, parent, or family member.
3. Add in other ways to make a complaint – e.g. email, phone

Parents/carers

1. Talk to the person directly if you feel comfortable.
2. If not, talk to someone else you trust and feel comfortable with, such as the Assistant Principal or CEO/Principal.
3. For anything related to teaching and learning talk to the Assistant Principal or CEO/Principal.
4. For anything related to the the CEO/Principal talk to a member of the Board, the Governance Advisor, or the CEO of Warddeken Land Management.

Workers/Employees

1. Talk to the person directly if you feel comfortable.
2. If not, talk to someone else you trust and feel comfortable with, such as a colleague, the Assistant Principal or CEO/Principal.
3. For anything related to the the CEO/Principal talk to a member of the Board, the Governance Advisor, or the CEO of Warddeken Land Management.

Directors

1. Talk to the person directly if it is appropriate and you feel comfortable.
2. If not, talk to another director you trust and feel comfortable with, the CEO/Principal or the governance advisor.

Resolving complaints and conflicts

Where possible, complaints and conflict are handled informally – refer to the flowchart at the end of this document. Where a mediator is used, the person must be agreed upon by everyone involved. This could be:

- the CEO/Principal
- a member of the Board
- the CEO of Warddeken Land Management
- the Governance Advisor

Where complaints or conflicts involve Bininj, an appropriate Bininj representative will be involved and participate in any meetings.

If a complaint or conflict cannot be handled informally, it will be handled formally. Both:

- formal complaints, and
- requests to handle a conflict formally,

must be made in writing to the CEO/Principal, the Governance Advisor or to a member of the Board.

Where necessary, an external mediator will be involved.

A written response will be provided for all formal complaints. A written outcome will be provided where formal conflict resolution occurs.

Unresolved complaints and conflicts

If a complaint or conflict cannot be resolved by the processes described, it may be referred to the board HR committee or an external agency.

Register and Documentation

The Complaints Register and supporting documentation for all formal complaints are treated and stored confidentially.

Flowchart for responding to complaints and resolving conflicts

