

# Aotearoa Infinite Academy

## Complaints Policy and Procedures



## Purpose

Aotearoa Infinite Academy (“Infinite”) promotes a school culture where it is safe and constructive for students, parents, staff, and members of the wider community to raise concerns and complaints. We are committed to addressing all concerns with fairness, respect, and due care. This reflects our responsibility under the Education and Training Act 2020 and the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 to provide a safe, supportive environment for students, staff, and the school community, and to maintain effective and accountable school operations.

Concerns and complaints provide important opportunities for learning and improvement. They help us to identify gaps, strengthen our policies and processes, and ensure that Infinite is operating transparently and effectively in line with its Charter obligations.

***Anyone can raise a concern or complaint with Infinite — including students, parents, caregivers, staff members, contractors, volunteers, members of the public, and representatives of external agencies.***

The way Infinite responds depends on the nature and seriousness of the issue, who is involved, and any statutory or safeguarding obligations that apply. Complaints may relate to an individual, a school process, a general matter affecting the school community, or the actions of a person within the responsibility of Infinite.

This policy outlines the principles and procedures for raising and responding to concerns or complaints. It includes clear steps for:

- Raising a concern or complaint directly with Infinite;
- Accessing an independent review, including escalation to an external oversight body if not satisfied with Infinite’s response; and
- Ensuring procedural fairness, confidentiality, and natural justice throughout all complaint processes.

## Guiding Principles

When responding to concerns and complaints, Aotearoa Infinite Academy (Infinite) meets all legal obligations under the Education and Training Act 2020, Health and Safety at Work Act 2015, Employment Relations Act 2000, and Privacy Act 2020, and upholds the principles of natural justice.

Our approach is guided by respect, fairness, and cultural awareness. We ensure every concern or complaint is handled with care, professionalism, and in a way that promotes trust and learning within our community. At Infinite, we:

- Treat people fairly and seek to protect their mana and dignity, consistent with our inclusive school culture.
- Ensure that all those involved have the opportunity to be heard and respond.
- Ensure that decision-makers are impartial, with no conflicts of interest, and that outcomes are not predetermined.
- Take cultural considerations into account, including tikanga and kawa, when appropriate.
- Maintain privacy and confidentiality, sharing information only with those who need to know.
- Take reasonable steps to prevent victimisation or retaliation against anyone who raises a concern or complaint.
- Communicate clearly and in a timely manner with everyone involved.
- Take appropriate, proportionate steps to resolve the matter and support those affected.
- Implement measures to prevent recurrence of similar issues.
- Keep accurate, secure, and comprehensive documentation of the process and outcome.
- Seek legal or external advice when necessary to ensure compliance with legal and procedural standards.

## Raising Concerns and Complaints

Aotearoa Infinite Academy (Infinite) encourages anyone with a concern or complaint to raise it promptly and respectfully. Doing so allows the Academy to respond effectively, uphold its duty of care, and maintain a safe and inclusive learning environment.

Concerns and complaints should be raised with the school in the first instance. However, in some cases — such as matters involving immediate safety, suspected criminal behaviour, or harm to a child — it may be more appropriate to contact an external agency directly (e.g., New Zealand Police, Oranga Tamariki, or Netsafe).

### Who can raise a concern or complaint

Anyone connected with Infinite may raise a concern or complaint, including students, parents or caregivers, whānau, staff members, contractors, volunteers, and members of the public.

If a person has a concern about a student who is not their own child, they must contact the school and must not contact the student or their parents/caregivers directly.

### Support and Representation

Anyone raising a concern or complaint may seek support from a friend, whānau member, lawyer, union representative, or counsellor. A support person may accompany them to meetings but must respect the same privacy and confidentiality obligations as all others involved.

## Respectful Communication

All concerns and complaints must be raised in a manner consistent with Infinite's Community Conduct Expectations and inclusive school culture. Infinite will respond to all concerns and complaints promptly, fairly, and respectfully.

## Timeliness and Sensitive Claims

Concerns should be raised as soon as possible after the event to enable timely resolution. However, there is no strict time limit for raising a concern or complaint, particularly where it involves historic or sensitive matters such as mistreatment, neglect, or physical, sexual, or psychological abuse.

Sensitive claims of this nature can also be made directly to Police or another appropriate authority.

## How to Raise a Concern or Complaint

Concerns or complaints may be raised in writing or verbally with an appropriate staff member, such as:

- The staff member most directly involved (e.g. a teacher or Dean);
- The Principal for more serious matters or if the issue cannot be resolved at staff level;
- The Chair of the Board if the concern involves the Principal.

If a concern raised verbally cannot be resolved through discussion, the person receiving it will make a written record or may ask the complainant to put it in writing.

If the concern relates to a member of the Board, it should be raised with another Board member. If the concern relates to child safety or safeguarding, it may be referred directly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) for appropriate handling.

## Information to Provide

Those raising concerns are encouraged to provide as much relevant information as possible, including:

- Names of people involved and relevant dates or events;
- A clear description of the issue and any steps already taken to resolve it; and
- Their preferred contact details.

While anonymous complaints will be considered, anonymity may limit Infinite's ability to investigate or respond effectively. In such cases, the Academy may seek legal advice on the most appropriate course of action.

## Next Steps

Infinite aims to acknowledge and begin responding to all concerns and complaints promptly. Where the concern involves a specific individual, that person will normally be informed early in the process, unless there are exceptional circumstances such as a risk to safety.

Infinite may meet with all parties involved to clarify information, discuss next steps, and agree on a pathway to resolution.

All parties are expected to:

- Respect privacy and confidentiality;
- Allow the school to follow its procedures;
- Avoid direct communication with one another about the matter unless agreed through the process.

If a complainant later chooses to withdraw their concern, Infinite may still be obliged to review the matter — particularly where safety, legal, or safeguarding issues are involved.

## Assessing and Responding to Concerns and Complaints

At Aotearoa Infinite Academy, we act to understand and resolve concerns and complaints in a timely, respectful, and fair manner. We follow the procedures below to assess matters brought to our attention and to decide on an appropriate response, depending on the nature and seriousness of the concern or complaint and who is involved.

For serious matters — including allegations of physical or sexual harm, neglect, or misconduct — Infinite may immediately refer or report the matter to external agencies, such as the Police, Oranga Tamariki, or the Ministry of Education. Our decision-making complies with all relevant legislation, regulations, employment agreements, and school policies.

## Receiving a Concern or Complaint

All Infinite staff are made aware of this Complaints Policy and the correct procedures for receiving and managing concerns or complaints. Any member of staff may receive a concern or complaint.

- A staff member who receives a verbal or written concern or complaint may refer it to another staff member or escalate it to a senior leader, the Principal, or the Board, depending on its seriousness.
- Serious or sensitive matters, such as safeguarding, safety, or potential misconduct, are to be escalated immediately to the Principal and/or Board Chair.
- If a concern is raised verbally and cannot be resolved at the time, the staff member may make a written record, or request that the complainant put it in writing.
- If a concern or complaint is received in writing, Infinite will acknowledge receipt and outline next steps.

## Initial Actions

When a concern or complaint is received, Infinite will:

- Determine roles and responsibilities, including:
  - Who will oversee the response and communication;
  - Who the decision-makers are, and whether the Board should be involved;
  - How any conflicts of interest will be managed (e.g. excluding affected individuals from decision-making).
- Consider whether any external agencies or advisors need to be informed or consulted (e.g. Police, Oranga Tamariki, legal counsel, Teaching Council, or WorkSafe).
- Gather relevant information from the person who raised the concern and others involved.
- Consider whether the matter engages other school policies (e.g. Health and Safety, Finance, Behaviour, or Employment).
- Take cultural considerations into account, including tikanga and kawa, to ensure that the process is respectful and appropriate.

The school will notify the complainant about how the matter will be managed and what the next steps are. Due to privacy and confidentiality requirements, there may be limits on what information Infinite can share about actions taken.

## Determining Whether to Proceed

Infinite will consider all legitimate concerns and complaints in good faith. However, in some cases — for example, where the complaint is clearly frivolous, repetitive, or outside the school's scope — the school may determine that no further action will be taken. This decision, and the reasons for it, will be communicated to the complainant. Infinite may also seek legal advice or involve an external mediator or agency to support fair resolution.

## Managing the Concern or Complaint

Infinite manages each concern or complaint in accordance with its nature and seriousness, and with respect to who is involved. Processes differ depending on whether the matter concerns a student, staff member, parent or caregiver, or member of the public.

Further details are provided below:

Matters involving students:	<p>To manage a concern or complaint involving students, we may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meet with the student or students to discuss the matter</li><li>• Mediate between students</li><li>• Contact and meet with parents/guardians and caregivers</li><li>• Manage the matter through other appropriate policies, such as those available on the Information &amp; Policy Hub</li><li>• Take another action that is appropriate in the circumstances</li><li>• Decide to take no further action.</li></ul> <p>Where necessary, Infinite may take steps as outlined in the Stand-down, Suspension, Exclusion, and Expulsion Policy.</p>
Matters involving staff (general):	<p>To manage a concern or complaint involving staff, we may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meet informally with the staff member or staff members involved</li><li>• Arrange meetings with those involved to seek to resolve the matter (e.g., facilitated meetings, mediation)</li><li>• Initiate a formal employment process and/or appropriate level of investigation for potential disciplinary or performance-based process</li><li>• Manage the matter through other appropriate policies</li><li>• Take another action that is appropriate in the circumstances</li><li>• Decide to take no further action.</li></ul>
Matters involving staff (teaching):	<p>To manage a concern or complaint involving a staff member who is also a teacher, we may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Take any steps or do anything we may do in respect of any other staff member</li><li>• Make a mandatory report to the Teaching Council in respect of certain matters. See <a href="#">Conduct Concerns</a>.</li></ul>

<p>Matters involving any member of the school community:</p>	<p>To manage a concern or complaint involving any member of the school community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet with the person who raised the matter</li> <li>• Arrange a meeting or mediation</li> <li>• Reinforce community conduct expectations</li> <li>• Notify the person who is the subject of the concern or complaint of any actions required to resolve the matter, and the possible outcomes of not completing these</li> <li>• Manage the concern through other appropriate policies</li> <li>• Issue a trespass notice (if the matter relates to physical premises)</li> <li>• Seek a restraining order</li> <li>• Take another action that is appropriate in the circumstances</li> <li>• Decide not to take any further action.</li> </ul>
<p>Sensitive matters:</p>	<p>Sensitive claims relate to mistreatment, neglect, or physical, sexual, or psychological abuse. All sensitive claims raised with the school are managed by the Board, who may need to refer the matter to the Police or other agencies, and/or seek legal advice as needed. We seek to minimise further harm to those raising sensitive claims, and encourage claimants to involve a support person.</p> <p>To manage a sensitive claim, the Board (or its delegated committee) may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Request further information from the person who raised the claim</li> <li>• Refer the person to the police or another appropriate agency</li> <li>• Review and collate relevant information held at the school and request information from Ministry records (if relevant)</li> <li>• Engage an independent assessor (e.g. to conduct interviews or an investigation)</li> <li>• Consider whether a mandatory report to the Teaching Council is required</li> <li>• Take another action that is appropriate in the circumstances.</li> </ul> <p>Infinite establishes how the person who raised the claim would like it to be addressed. We ask for consent before sharing information with external agencies if required as part of any investigation. At the conclusion of any</p>

	investigation, the board decides on any actions in consultation with the person who made the claim. As part of any investigation into a sensitive claim, we consider how we can prevent further harm from occurring at our school.
Other matters:	<p>To resolve matters that do not fit into the above categories (e.g. a concern about our school procedures or someone who is not part of our school community), we may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet with the person who raised the concern or complaint</li> <li>• Notify the person/organisation that is the subject of a concern or complaint (e.g. another school, a contractor or external provider)</li> <li>• Investigate the matter</li> <li>• Take any other appropriate action relevant to the circumstances, at the sole discretion of the school</li> <li>• Decide to take no further action.</li> </ul>

## Closing the Concern or Complaint

After assessing and responding to the matter, Infinite will consider the concern or complaint closed. Subject to privacy, confidentiality, and other legal considerations, it may not always be possible or appropriate for the school to share full details of any actions taken; however, the person who raised the concern or complaint will be notified when the matter has been concluded.

Infinite may implement any required follow-up actions, such as updating policies, processes, or staff training to prevent recurrence of similar issues.

If a person feels their concern or complaint has not been resolved after receiving a response, they may escalate the matter to the Principal or Board. Once the Board has considered a matter, there is no further avenue for review within the school.

However, either the school or an individual may seek an independent review as appropriate. Individuals may also contact an external agency, such as the:

External agency	Type of concern or complaint	Link or details
Ministry of Education	For concerns about school administration or governance	<a href="#">School-related complaints</a>
Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand	For concerns involving a teacher's conduct or competence	<a href="#">Reporting a concern</a>

Ombudsman	For concerns about fairness in administrative decision-making	<a href="#">How to make a complaint</a>
Privacy Commissioner	For matters involving personal information	<a href="#">Complain to the Privacy Commissioner</a>
Human Rights Commission	For discrimination concerns	<a href="#">Making a complaint</a>
New Zealand Police	For matters involving alleged criminal conduct	In an emergency, call 111 <a href="#">Make a non-emergency report</a>
Oranga Tamariki	For concerns about a child or young person suffering from ill-treatment, abuse or neglect.	In an emergency, call 111 <a href="#">Make a report of concern</a>

Staff who believe they have an employment-related concern may also wish to consider whether they have grounds to raise a personal grievance under the Employment Relations Act 2000.

## Version Control

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