



# Governance Process Policies

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## **Policy: Complaints and concerns**

Villa Education Trust respects any complaints that may be raised by parents or caregivers, staff, students and community members. The Trust believes in high standards and in the pursuit of excellence. As a leader in education and learning opportunities it is keen to listen to and learn from any valid concerns raised about the school.

### **Procedure for making a complaint**

Villa Education Trust expects the following steps to be taken by a complainant:

1. Contact the person whom the complaint involves.
2. If still unresolved, contact the Principal.
3. If there is no satisfaction from the previous steps, make a complaint in writing to the Villa Education Trust.
4. Any letter of complaint will be tabled at the full Trust meeting unless natural justice prevents this.
5. There may be occasions when the steps under procedure 1 (as above) are inappropriate to follow. In these cases, it is expected the complainant will contact the Trust in writing.
6. If the complaint is in respect of the Principal, then it should be addressed in writing to the Trust.

### **Written complaints received by Villa Education Trust**

On receiving a written complaint, the Trust will decide on what further action is required on a case-by-case basis. Before the Trust decides to deal with a complaint it must check that the procedures outlined above have been followed. If not, the Trust may decide to return any letter of complaint to the writer and ask that they follow these first.

All letters addressed to the Chairperson of the Trust are for the whole Trust. The Chair cannot act independently as to what action will be taken. The following steps will be taken:

1. The Chair acknowledges the letter of complaint within a fortnight of receipt and the complainant is advised of the next steps in the Trust process. The letter becomes part of the correspondence that will be dealt with at the next Trust meeting.
2. The letter of complainant is tabled at the Trust meeting and referred to relevant parties for reporting back to the Trust. The Trust decides whether to deal with the matter as a whole or appoint a committee to investigate and recommend to the Trust.
3. The Trust Chair will advise the Villa Education Trust's insurance company of the complaint and will seek advice where necessary.

4. At the meeting of the Trust/committee, the reports are received, and the parties may be invited to speak to their complaint or answer questions. The Trust/committee considers the evidence and/or information and comes to a decision or recommendation.
5. Depending on the delegated powers of the committee, either they or the Trust as a whole come to a resolution as to how the Trust will respond and/or what action will be taken.
6. The Trust's response is communicated to the parties to the complaint in writing.
7. Any of the parties may request the Trust to reconsider their decision. However, normally for such a reconsideration to take place, new information that would have been relevant to the Trust's deliberations must be produced.

### **Guidelines**

1. The person about whom a complaint is made will be informed as soon as practicable and given reasonable time to respond.
2. Requests for confidentiality as to identity of complainant will be respected unless natural justice demands otherwise.
3. Issues which demand immediate attention e.g. allegations of physical abuse, may require a special meeting of the Trust to be called.
4. Resolution or dismissal of the complaint must not be discussed before all the information is to hand.
5. The Trust will determine if there is any conflict of interest and act appropriately if there is one.
6. The Trust must exercise caution when dealing with complaints regarding staff, particularly in relation to confidentiality and processes to ensure the principles of natural justice are met. It is advisable to contact legal representation in such cases. The Trust will need to consider the relevant staff disciplinary policies, employment contracts and expert advice from a legal advisor.
7. The Trust recognizes that not all complainants will be satisfied with the outcome of a complaint. Once reconsidered, if the Trust is confident of its decision, it will refuse to enter into any further discussion/correspondence.
8. A complaint regarding lack of compliance in relation to the procedure will be actioned with urgency as a new complaint rather than a reconsideration of the previous issue.

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