

Accountability and Complaints Procedure

Preamble: It is inevitable that in any organisation of this size, and because of the inherent competitive nature of the sport business, some parties may at times feel aggrieved to the extent that they consider a complaint is justified.

Each partner school is required to have a designated Head of Sport who is responsible for all communication with the Sports Director's Office. The Head of Sport is responsible for the school sports programme.

The Sports Director's Office is owned by, and accountable to, its partner schools. It is a policy driven organisation. On matters of substance, a complaint will only be recognised if it is lodged through a partner school (through the Head of Sport or Principal) or by a partner sports organisation. Complaints made by parents, students, staff, coaches or members of the public will not be recognised unless they are endorsed by the school Head of Sport or Principal, or sports organisation. All such unendorsed complaints will be referred back to the school or sports organisation of the aggrieved party. Accountability for the Sports Directors' Office ultimately resides with the Southland Secondary Schools Principals' Association. The Principals' Association delegates its responsibility to the Management Committee of the Sports Director's Office (a committee made up of appointed Principals and elected Heads of Sport). The Management Committee employs a Regional Sports Director who is responsible for implementing Management Committee policy and programmes. The Management Committee is at all times receptive to opinions concerning the operation of the Sports Director's Office but has the expectation that these will have been raised with the Sports Director in the first instance.

Nature of Complaints

Parties may feel aggrieved because:

- there is disagreement with established policy or procedure
- there is disagreement by a partner school or partner organisation with the interpretation of established policy or procedure by another partner school or organisation.
- there is disagreement by a school or partner sports organisation with the interpretation of established policy or procedure
- of the style of the Sports Director's office personnel.

Policy

This document details all policy statements which have been endorsed by the Management Committee. It also includes established procedural documents. In the first instance, changes to these documents should be directed through the regular meetings of Sports Coordinators/Management Committee. Ultimately, the Management Committee is responsible for policy changes, but it will always take account of the views of the Regional Sports Director, Heads of Sport, Sports Coordinators and the Southland Secondary Schools Principals' Association.

Specific opportunities are provided for interest groups to influence change (e.g., the "post event" meeting of teachers in charge of particular sports, regular meetings of Sports Coordinators). It is the expectation that these forums are first used so that the opinions of other present partner schools are taken into account.

A School to School Complaint

From time to time, any partner school may be aggrieved by its perception of the conduct of another partner school. It is important that the Sports Director's Office is made aware of such instances, as a pattern of conduct may develop which individual schools may not be able to recognise.

In such instances, the aggrieved school has two options:

- make a complaint school to school, in which case it should forward a copy to the Sports Director's Office. The Sports Director's Office will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and request to be informed of any response.
- make a complaint to the Sports Director's Office. This must be in writing, and be endorsed by the Head of Sport/Principal. The Sports Director's Office will refer the complaint to the alleged offending school without judgment, and request a response "as soon as appropriate". If the response indicates that a satisfactory resolution has been achieved school to school (the desired outcome) then the Sports Director's Office will accept this resolution. If no resolution is achieved, the Sports Director will attempt to **mediate** the dispute to achieve an acceptable resolution. If this is not possible the Sports Director's Office will adopt an **arbitration** role making a decision that takes into account the views of both parties.

Should one or other of the School parties find the decision unacceptable to them they can make a formal complaint to the Management Committee as per Section B2.

B Complaints Directed Against the Actions of the Sports Director's Office

Principals should appreciate that in a very real sense, the Sports Director is a contracted employee of their school. The nature of sport, both in its competition rules, and in its administration, can be at variance with attitudes prevalent in our increasingly individualistic society. Sport rules are usually set down by the governing body of the sport. While these may have been modified by agreement of secondary schools, there remains a set of rules which applies, and it would be rare for any variation of these to be permitted. Similarly, the Sports Director's Office will set and publish dates for various stages of the administration of an event. While the office will make every effort to cater for lapses by school staff in not meeting deadlines, the consequential impact upon other participants and the inability to effectively communicate changes may mean that it is not possible to provide for late entrants. Principals must also appreciate that in entering any event, the school and the participating students are making a commitment to that event and to accept the obligations which that entry entails. When difficulties arise in this area, it is usually because the Sports Director's Office is unable to meet the request of the school for some variation to normal practice.

In such situations, schools are expected to treat the situation as a learning episode. In this sense, the Sports Director's Office has educational outcomes, and is an educational organisation rather than a sports organisation. Schools **teach** sport, rather than **play** sport.

1. Informal Complaint Procedure

This pathway offers the chance to resolve issues close to where and when they happened. No record of the issue, the resolution, or the people involved is kept. Both parties may agree to ask a third person to help them seek a resolution through facilitation. Using this pathway in no way prevents either party from moving to a more formal process at any time.

Note: If the school Head of Sport is not satisfied with the response by or action taken by the Sports Director to deal with a complaint through this informal procedure, then the school principal should restate the complaint to the Sports Director. In doing so, it is expected that some additional information or interpretation of the events which led to the complaint will be provided by the Principal's perspective. Merely restating the same case is unlikely to result in a different response or course of action.

Steps

- (a) Complainant may seek support and assistance from another person.
- (b) Complainant approaches Sports Director(s), who may also seek to have a support person.
- (c) Complainant and Sports Director(s) discuss concerns at an agreed time and place.
- (d) A resolution may be agreed following these discussions.
- (e) If parties cannot agree, a mutually acceptable facilitator will be appointed to reach a resolution which both parties accept.
- (f) If a facilitator is not considered appropriate by either party, and/or a resolution has not been agreed, then the complainant can choose to pursue the complaint through the formal complaints process.

2. Formal Complaint Procedure

The purpose of this pathway is for an individual to seek to resolve an issue with the support of the school Head of Sport/Principal. If it is inappropriate to raise the complaint with the Sports Director(s) due to the relationship with or between the Sports Director(s) and complainant, then it should be reported to the Chairperson of the Management Committee in writing. This procedure is most appropriate for serious complaints or where a complainant is dissatisfied with attempts to resolve the issue via the informal procedure.

Written records of the complaint will be kept and documents may be retained on personal and school files.

Steps

- (a) Complaint is made in writing to the Chairperson of the Management Committee and addressed to the Sports Director's Office. If the complainant considers it is inappropriate to make the complaint to the office due to the relationship or association with the Sports Director's Office personnel to the complainant, then it should be addressed in writing to the Chairperson of the Management Committee at his/her school.
- (b) Chairperson acknowledges receipt of complaint.
- (c) Chairperson refers written complaint to Sports Director(s) for response.
- (d) Sports Director's response communicated to complainant by Chairperson.
- (e) If complainant is unsatisfied with response, then the Management Committee will set up a committee to investigate the complaint.

- (f) The complaint is investigated and the outcome is reported back to the Sports Director's Office, the complainant, and the complainant's school principal. The outcome is binding on both parties.
- (g) Records of the resolution and relevant documentation are securely stored.

3. External Complaint Procedure

Management Committee policy offers pathways for all persons or organisations to pursue complaints based on Harassment, Discrimination, Protected Disclosures, or Employment Relations as defined by the relevant legislation.

In all such circumstances, written complaints should be lodged with the Chairperson of the Management Committee.