



PROCEDURE PR.670.GOV

TITLE: COMPLAINTS RESOLUTION PROCEDURE

Date issued: 31 January 2017

Last revised:

Authorization: Senior Staff: (12 Dec 2016)

1.0 OBJECTIVE

To establish procedures for receiving, investigating and resolving expressions of concern received from the public/parent community.

2.0 DEFINITIONS

In this procedure,

2.1 **Board** refers to the Board of Trustees.

2.2 **Complaint** means an oral or written expression of dissatisfaction related to an OCDSB policy, procedure, program, service, facility or actions of a staff member, trustee or the District where the complainant believes that the District has not provided a service experience to the complainant's satisfaction at the point of service delivery and a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.

2.3 **District** refers to the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB).

2.4 **Ombudsman** refers to an independent official who investigates complaints from the public about mal-administration in government. The Ombudsman is an officer of the provincial legislature, independent of the government and all political parties, who is appointed for a five-year term.

2.5 **Trustee** means a member of the Board elected or appointed in accordance with the Ontario *Municipal Elections Act* and the Ontario *Education Act*. Student trustees are elected by the Student Senate and Student Presidents' Council to represent the interests of students on the Board.

3.0 RESPONSIBILITY

3.1 The Director of Education and/or designate holds the primary responsibility for this procedure.

- 3.2 Superintendents, principals, managers and supervisors will be responsible for ensuring that staff are aware of the requirements and processes in place to deal with complaints from parents/guardians and community members.
- 3.3 All employees will be responsible for understanding the requirements and processes in place to deal with complaints from parents/guardians and community members.

4.0 PROCEDURE

4.1 Client Service

The District will provide information about client service, complaint resolution and feedback mechanisms on the District and school websites.

4.2 Appeal Mechanisms

The District will clearly communicate the process and timelines for appeal mechanisms, including, but not limited to those set out in the following Board policies and procedures:

- a) Student Suspensions and Student Expulsions:
 - i) Board Policy P.026.SCO Student Suspension and Expulsion; and
 - ii) Board Procedure PR.515.SCO, Student Suspension and Expulsion.
- b) Appeal of Student Suspensions:
 - i) Board Policy P.022.SCO Appeals Hearing Panel (Student Suspension);
 - ii) Board Procedure PR.512.SCO Appeals Hearing Panel (Student Suspension).
- c) Appeal of Student Expulsions:
 - i) Board Policy P.023.SCO Expulsion Hearing Panel (Students);
 - ii) Board Procedure PR.513.SCO Expulsion Hearing Panel (Students);
- d) Student Transfer Requests: Board Policy P.077.PLG Designated Schools/Student Transfers;
 - i) Board Procedure PR.568.PLG Designated Schools/Student Transfers - Elementary
 - ii) Board Procedure PR.569.PLG Designated Schools/Student Transfers - Secondary
- e) Appeal of Special Education Identification and Review Committee (IPRC) Decisions:
 - i) Board Policy P.117.SES Special Education Appeal Board;
 - ii) Board Procedure PR.654.SES: Special Education Appeal Board
- f) Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA) Requests:
 - i) *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. M56;
- g) School Board Code of Conduct Issues:

- i) Board Policy P.125.SCO School Board Code of Conduct;
- i) Board Member Code of Conduct:
 - i) Board Policy P.073.GOV Board Member Code of Conduct;
- j) Accessibility:
 - i) Board Policy P.121.GOV Accessibility;
- k) Religious Accommodation:
 - i) Board Policy P.086.CUR Religious Accommodation; and
- l) Equity of Access and Inclusive Education:
 - i) Board Policy P.098.CUR Equity and Inclusive Education.

4.3 Complaint Resolution Process

- a) Inquiries, questions and/or complaints may be made by personal contact, telephone, email or letter. Wherever possible, the parties should seek opportunities to resolve the matter informally.
- b) The District will redirect inquiries, questions and/or complaints to the appropriate school, site, department, employee and/or supervisor who will then respond to the inquiry, facilitate a resolution, or routinely disclose the information.
- c) Written complaints regarding an employee received by a staff member other than the employee's immediate supervisor, will normally be redirected to the employee's immediate supervisor.
- d) No complaints will be considered unless the complainant states his/her name, and provides contact information for correspondence.
- e) A person who makes or is the subject of a complaint will not conduct or oversee any aspect of the complaint resolution process.
- f) The basis of each investigation will be the District's expectation that employees and students will follow the school code of conduct and Board policies and procedures.
- g) The appropriate District staff will endeavor to acknowledge and act on complaints promptly and, to the extent reasonably possible, no later than two (2) working weeks from the date of the complaint and, wherever possible, the District will endeavor to resolve complaints within thirty (30) school days. Where the complaint cannot be resolved with 30 days, the complainant will be advised the work towards resolution is ongoing.
- h) The response will be provided in the same manner as the complaint was received, for example, via personal contact, telephone, letter, email or social media.

4.4 Anonymous, Frivolous or Vexatious Complaints

- a) Anonymous or pseudonymous complaints will not be considered, copied, distributed, repeated, responded to or entertained by the District, unless it is believed that such complaint references an illegal, abusive or child protection matter, or is otherwise believed to be relevant in law in which case they will be referred to the appropriate party or parties, such as the police and/or Children's Aid Society.
- b) Where an individual repeatedly makes the same or similar complaint, such complaint(s) may be considered to be frivolous or vexatious.
- c) Where there is a concern that a complaint is malicious, frivolous or vexatious, the employee's supervisor will consult with a supervisory officer to determine how best to deal with the complaint.
- d) Where it is determined that the complaint is malicious, frivolous, or vexatious, the complainant will be notified that the District is of the opinion that the request is malicious, frivolous, or vexatious and the reasons for which the request is deemed malicious, frivolous, or vexatious.
- e) Complainants who persist in making complaints that are malicious, frivolous, vexatious or harassing of employees, will be advised that such action will not be condoned or tolerated.

4.5 Concerns/Complaints Concerning a Student (Academic Complaints)

If parent(s)/guardian(s) have a concern about a school matter, the concern is best resolved at the school level using the following steps:

- a) Step 1: Talk with the teacher;
- b) Step 2: Talk with the school principal. Where a complaint cannot be resolved locally to the satisfaction of the parent(s)/guardian(s), the Principal will refer the matter to the superintendent of instruction;
- c) Step 3: Talk with the school's superintendent of instruction; and
- d) Step 4: Talk with the Director of Education or his/her designate.

4.6 Matters That Should Not Be Discussed by Staff

- a) Although the subject matter of meetings between parent(s)/guardian(s) and staff may be fairly broad, these meetings will generally relate to the education of the child at the school in question. However, there are certain matters that staff members are unable to discuss with parents/guardians/community members, including personal details or disciplinary measures concerning other students, and matters related to staff performance issues.
- b) In the event that discussion cannot be limited to the subject matter that led to the meeting (generally the education of the child of the parent(s)/guardian(s) at the school in question), staff will bring closure to the meeting.

4.7 Concerns/Complaints About Client Service (Administrative Complaints)

- a) Where a complainant has a concern involving client service Step 1: Talk with the employee who provided the service;

- b) Step 2: Talk with the employee's supervisor/manager/principal;
 - c) Step 3: Talk with the employee's superintendent; and
 - d) Step 4: Talk with the Director of Education or his/her designate.
- 4.8 Concerns About Safety of School, Property, Facilities or Equipment
Where an individual has a concern relating to the safety of school or District property, facilities or equipment, the individual will contact the appropriate school or department directly.
- 4.9 Concerns/Complaints About Student Transportation
- a) Student transportation in school boards is governed by the *Education Act* and related regulations which mandate a joint co-terminus board consortium for the purpose of providing a common administration of transportation services for students in a specific region.
 - b) Transportation of students in the Ottawa-Carleton region will be provided by the Ottawa Student Transportation Authority (OSTA) in accordance with Board and OSTA policies.
 - c) Where an individual has a concern or complaint regarding transportation concerns, the individual will be directed to contact OSTA.
- 4.10 Role of Parents/Guardians
- a) It is expected that parent(s)/guardian(s) will:
 - i. ensure regular school attendance; and
 - ii. support their child's learning activities and experiences.
 - b) Parents/guardians are encouraged to:
 - i. be informed about what their child is expected to learn and to communicate with the teacher;
 - ii. monitor their child's progress and achievement in partnership with his/her teachers and include their child in this process; and
 - iii. act as their child's advocate.
- 4.11 Representative of the Parent(s)/Guardian(s)
- a) From time to time the parent(s)/guardian(s) may believe or feel that they need support in order that they can adequately address their child's interests. This support may be necessary while parent(s)/guardian(s) are attending meetings with staff employed by the District.
 - a) Parent(s)/guardian(s) will have the right to have a representative of their choosing in attendance at meetings with staff, subject to any limitations established in Board policies or procedures. Any costs/expenses associated with such a representative are the responsibility of the parent(s)/guardian(s). A representative supporting the parent(s)/guardian(s) must agree, at the outset or in advance of the meeting, to respect and maintain the confidentiality of any matter discussed at a meeting between parent(s)/guardian(s) and staff.

- b) Staff will have the right to have a representative of their choosing in attendance at meetings with parents/guardians.
- c) Principals, staff and parent(s)/guardian(s) will be notified in advance of a meeting as to who is anticipated to be in attendance.

4.12 Role of the Trustee

- a) As representatives and advocates for their constituents a Trustee may assist by facilitating communication between the parent(s)/guardians(s) or community member and the appropriate staff member at the school or District level. Parents/guardians/ community members may contact trustees at any time.
- b) Trustees will direct the parent(s)/guardians(s)/community member to the appropriate resolution process for the specific concern or to the appropriate employee or department. Such direction will take into consideration the status of the issue and what steps, if any, have already been taken to resolve the concern at the time the trustee is contacted. The Trustee will have regard for, and support Board policies in their communication with constituents. (Refer to Attachment 1, A Guide for Addressing Complaints from Parent(s)/Guardian(s), and Community Members).

4.13 Role of the School Council

School councils were established to act in an advisory capacity to school principals and to the Board on educational matters and will not be used as a forum to discuss parent(s)/guardians(s)-teacher/student issues.

School councils will include a process for resolving internal school council disputes in the school council's by-laws and/or constitution.

4.14 Office of the Ombudsman

The District will advise complainants of their right to contact the Office of the Ombudsman for assistance if the matter is unresolved.

5.0 APPENDICES

Attachment 1: A Guide for Addressing Complaints from Parent(s)/Guardian(s), and Community Members

6.0 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Accepting Schools Act, Bill 13, Ontario, 2012

Education Act, Ontario, 2000, Section 171 and Part XIII, Ontario

Human Rights Code of Ontario Ministry of Education, Code of Conduct, 2000

Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, Ontario, R.S.O. 1990, c. M56,

The Teaching Profession Act, Ontario

Ontario Regulation 429/07 Accessibility Standards for Customer Service

Ontario Regulation 610/00 School Councils and Parent Involvement Committees, s.15(2)

Ontario Regulation 181/98 Identification Placement of Exceptional Pupils

Parent Involvement Committee Publication: *Your Child's Education – Be a Part of It!*

Ontario Ministry of Education publication: Shared Solutions, A Guide to Preventing and Resolving Conflicts Regarding Programs and Services for Students with Special Education Needs, 2007

Board Policy P.002.COM Board-Community Relations
Board Policy P.014.SCO School Councils
Board Policy P.022.SCO Appeals Hearing Panel (Student Suspension)
Board Policy P.023.SCO Expulsion Hearing Panel (Students)
Board Policy P.026.SCO Student Suspension and Expulsion
Board Policy P.032.SCO Safe Schools (Managing Student Behaviour)
Board Policy P.073.GOV Board Member Code of Conduct
Board Policy P.077.PLG Designated Schools/Student Transfers
Board Policy P.083.CUR Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting of Student Achievement
Board Policy P.093.SCO Confidential Communication Between Students and Staff Board
Policy P.096.SES Special Education Programs and Services
Board Policy P.098.CUR Equity and Inclusive Education
Board Policy P.103.HR Alleged Employee Misconduct Towards a Student
Board Policy P.117.SES Special Education Appeal Board
Board Policy P.121.GOV Accessibility
Board Policy P.125.SCO School Board Code of Conduct
Board Policy P.129.GOV Complaints Resolution Policy
Board Procedure PR.512.SCO Appeals Hearing Panel (Student Suspension).
Board Procedure PR.513.SCO Expulsion Hearing Panel (Students);
Board Procedure PR.515.SCO, Student Suspension and Expulsion
Board Procedure PR.542.HR: Alleged Employee Misconduct Toward a Student
Board Procedure PR.543.HR: Alleged Harassment of a Student
Board Procedure PR.566.GOV Accessible Formats and Communication Supports
Board Procedure PR.568.PLG Designated Schools/Student Transfers - Elementary
Board Procedure PR.569.PLG Designated Schools/Student Transfers - Secondary
Board Procedure PR.586.CUR Religious Accommodation
Board Procedure PR.618.CUR Equity and Inclusive Education
Board Procedure PR.654.SES: Special Education Appeal Board
Board Procedure PR.659.SCO: Bullying Prevention and Intervention
Board Procedure PR.666.GOV: Accessible Service Delivery



A Guide for Addressing Complaints From Parent(s), Guardian(s), and Community Members

1.0 Introduction

- a) This guide has been developed to support best practices for the implementation of Board policies relating to the management and resolution of concerns or complaints arising from parent(s)/guardian(s), or individual members of the public specifically related to academic matters, administrative matters, employees and transportation of students.
- b) As the *Education Act* requires trustees to entrust the day-to-day management of the Board to its staff through the Director of Education, when parent(s)/guardian(s), or community members raise concerns or complaints, it is the staff that will investigate, manage and provide resolutions to the identified issue in accordance with relevant Board policies.

2.0 Guidelines for All

- a) Only those concerns or complaints will be considered by OCDSB staff where the complainant or inquirer provides their name and contact information for correspondence purposes.
- b) Parent(s)/guardian(s), or community members will be directed, as appropriate, to address concerns and complaints at the level at which the concern originates.
- c) All information shared is bound by the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act as governed by legislation in Ontario ensuring confidentiality is maintained by all parties concerning student and personnel matters.

3.0 Guidelines for Parents/Guardians

If a parent(s)/guardian(s) or has a concern about a school matter, the following steps will be followed to resolve the issue:

- a) **Step 1: Talk with the Teacher:**
The parent(s)/guardian(s) is encouraged to discuss any concern or issue with the classroom teacher at a mutually convenient time. Parent(s)/guardian(s) may write or call the school to set up an appointment. It is expected that most situations would be resolved at this level.
- b) **Step 2: Talk with the School Principal:**
If the parent(s)/guardian(s) and the teacher are not able to resolve the issue, the matter should be discussed with the school principal (or designate). The principal (or designate) will gather facts from the parties involved to clarify the problem and work to

resolve the matter as quickly as possible. The basis of each investigation will be the District's expectation that employees and students will follow the school code of conduct and Board policies and procedures.

- c) **Step 3: Talk with the Superintendent of Instruction:**
If the parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school principal are not able to resolve the issue, the parent(s)/guardian(s) may contact the superintendent of instruction. The superintendent will review the matter as it relates to established policies and procedures and will respond to the parent(s)/guardian(s) about his/her concern.
- d) **Step 4: Talk with the Director of Education or his/her Designate:**
If the parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school superintendent are unable to resolve the issue, the parent(s)/guardian(s) may contact the Director of Education or his/her designate to discuss the concern. The Director of Education or his/her designate will investigate the matter and respond to the parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school superintendent are unable to resolve the issue, the parent(s)/guardian(s) about the concerns. In an exceptional situation where a resolution cannot be reached the Director of Education or his/her designate may consider scheduling a mediation session with the parties involved.

4.0 Guidelines for Trustees

- a) When a trustee receives a complaint from a parent(s)/guardian(s), or community member, the Trustee will review the process as outlined in this guide with the individual and direct them to contact the appropriate staff. The process will allow the parent(s)/guardian(s), or community member to engage in communication with the most appropriate staff member.
- b) Where a trustee has an inquiry regarding a school-related matter which was initially brought to their attention by a parent(s)/guardian(s), or community member, the trustee is directed to contact the superintendent of instruction for that area of responsibility.
- c) Where a trustee contacts a principal regarding concerns or complaints from parent(s)/guardian(s), or community member, the matter will exclude any investigative purpose. Direction to principals will be provided by the superintendent of instruction.

5.0 Guidelines for Principals

- a) When a complaint or concern is raised by a parent(s)/guardian(s), or community member the principal will consult with the superintendent of instruction, as appropriate, and endeavor to resolve the issue at the local level in accordance with Board policies.
- b) Where a complaint or concern cannot be resolved locally to the satisfaction of the parent(s)/guardian(s), or community member, the principal will refer the matter to the superintendent of instruction.

6.0 Guidelines for Superintendents of Instruction

- a) Where a matter cannot be resolved at the school level, the superintendent of instruction will consult with the principal regarding the concern or complaint and endeavor to

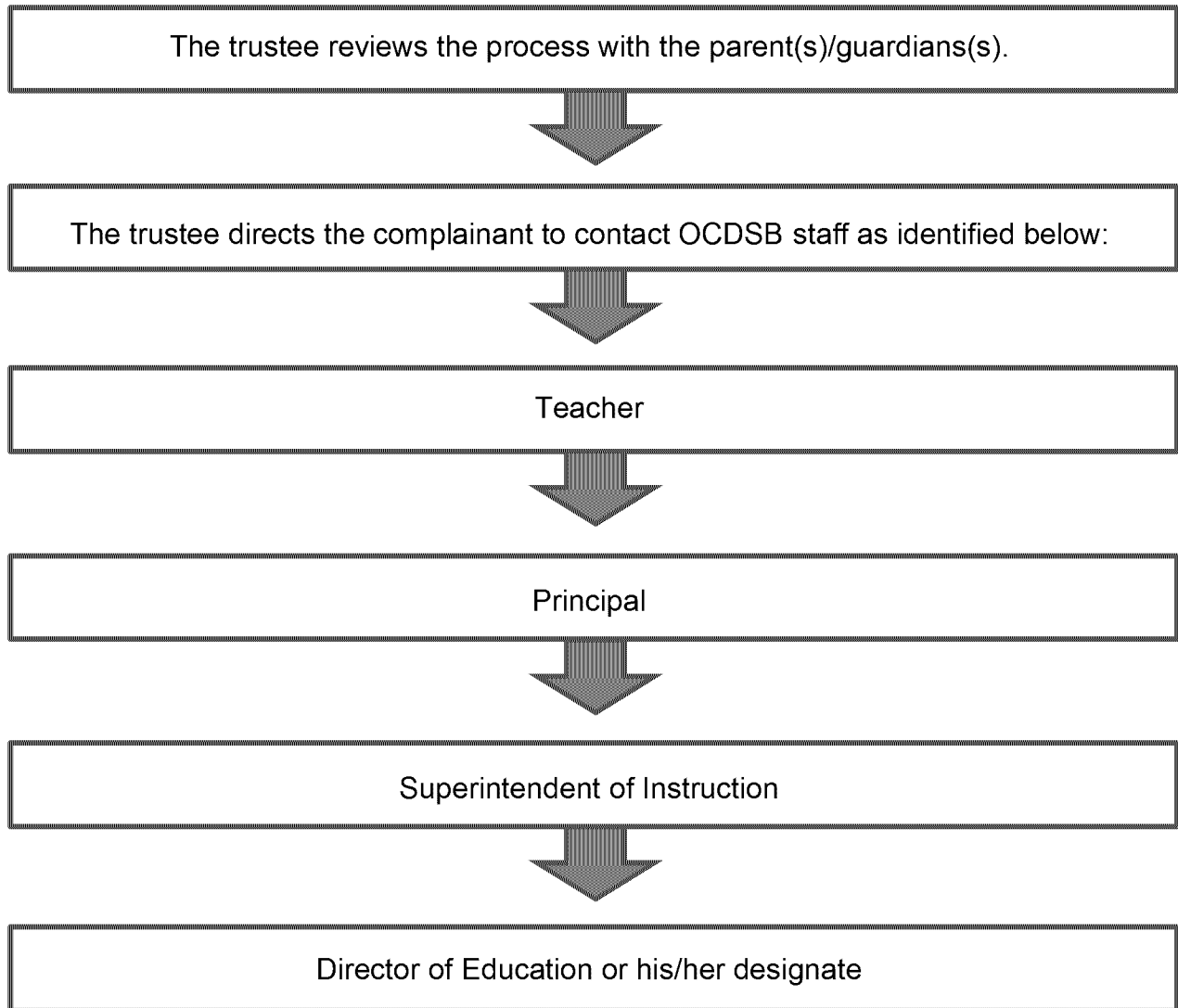
resolve the issue in accordance with Board policies. The superintendent will inform the parent(s)/guardian(s), or community member of the resolution to the matter.

- b) Where requested, superintendents of instruction will apprise respective trustees, as appropriate, of the resolution of a particular matter which was initially brought to the trustees' attention by the parent(s)/guardian(s), or community member.
- c) Where a superintendent is unable to satisfy the complaint, he/she will advise the Director of Education or his/her designate of the matter.

7.0 Process for Addressing ACADEMIC Complaints

When a trustee receives a complaint from the parent(s)/guardian(s) of a student about any academic problem, the trustee will suggest that parent(s)/guardian(s) contact the teacher of the student and if the complainant is not satisfied he/she should approach the principal of the school. If the problem is not then solved satisfactorily, the parent(s)/guardian(s) should contact the superintendent for that area. If the complaint is still not satisfied, then they may appeal to the Director of Education or his/her designate who will respond in a timely manner.

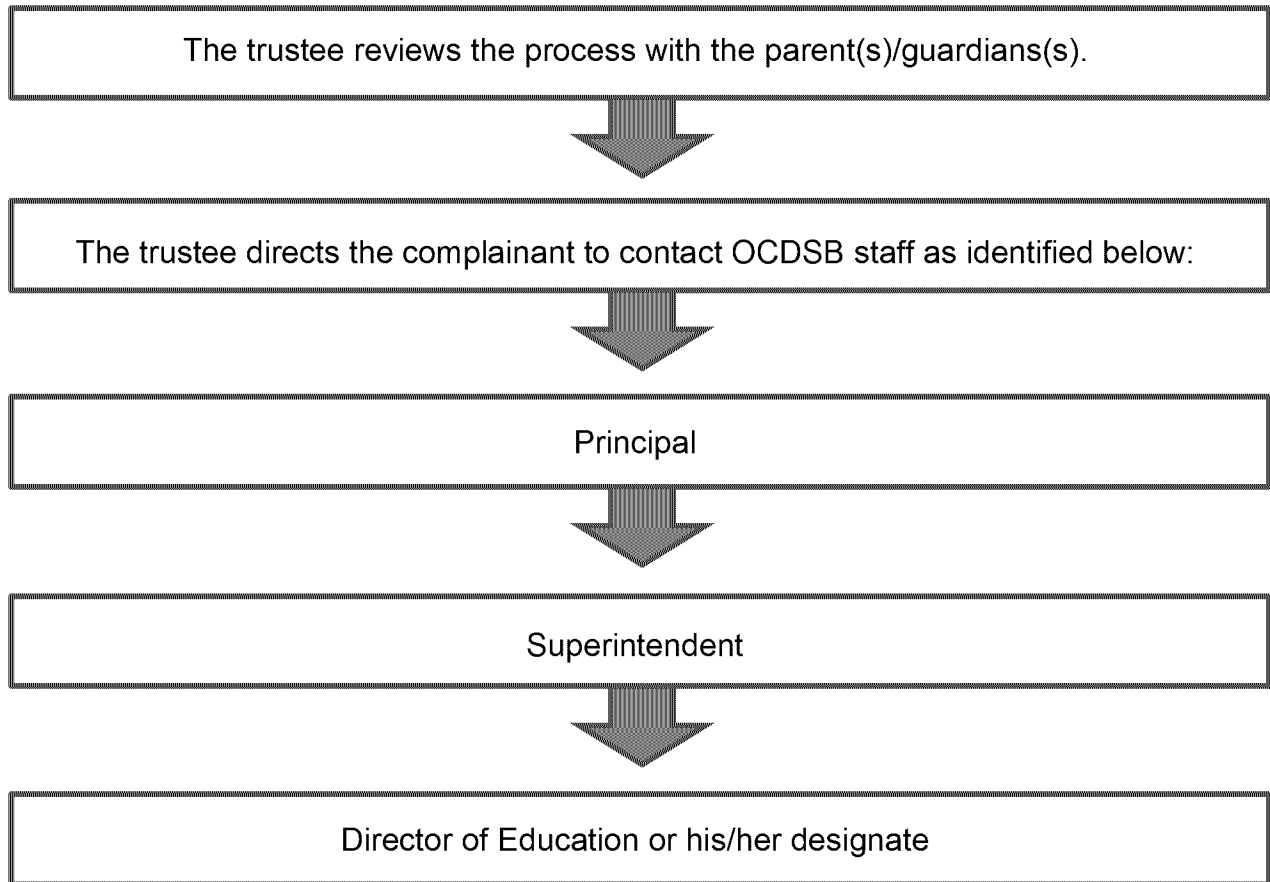
ACADEMIC



8.0 Process for Addressing ADMINISTRATIVE Complaints

When a trustee receives a complaint from the parent(s)/guardians(s) of a student about any problem which is not strictly academic, the trustee will suggest that the parent(s)/guardians(s) contact the principal of the school, or the trustee may contact the principal for information purposes and not for investigative purposes, or the superintendent. If the problem is then not solved satisfactorily, the parent(s)/guardians(s) should contact the superintendent or Director of Education or his/her designate, who will respond in a timely manner.

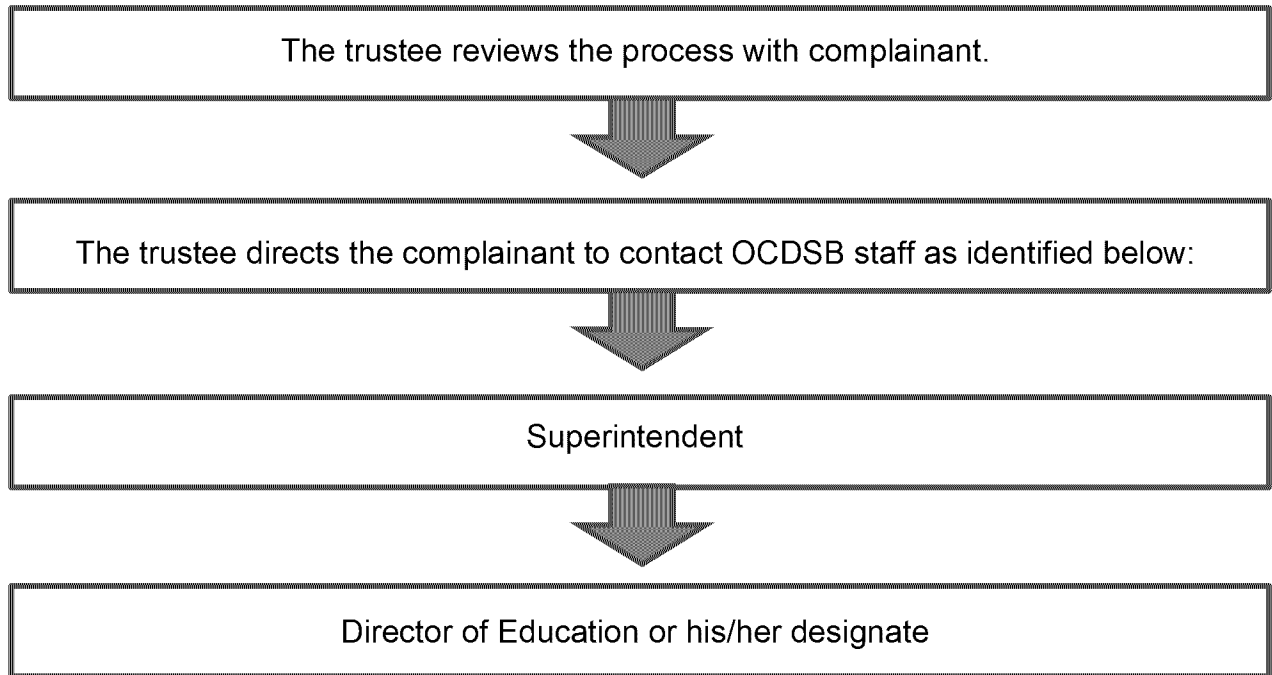
ADMINISTRATIVE



9.0 Process for Addressing Complaints about EMPLOYEES

When a trustee receives a complaint from a community member or any other person concerning an employee of the Board, he/she will direct that complaint directly to the superintendent who has jurisdiction over the person about whom the complaint was made, or the trustee should refer the complaint to the Director of Education or his/her designate.

EMPLOYEE



10.0 Process for Addressing STUDENT TRANSPORTATION Inquiries or Complaints

Student transportation in school boards is governed by the *Education Act* and related regulations which mandate a joint co-terminus board consortium for the purpose of providing a common administration of transportation services for students in a specific region.

Transportation of students in the Ottawa-Carleton region will be provided by the Ottawa Student Transportation Authority (OSTA) in accordance with OCDSB and OSTA policies.

When a trustee or school administrator receives an inquiry or complaint from the parent(s)/guardian(s) of a student regarding any transportation concerns, the trustee or school administrator will direct the parent(s)/guardian(s) to contact OSTA directly at:

Ottawa Student Transportation Authority
Confederation Education Centre, 1645 Woodroffe Avenue
Office hours from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Telephone 613-224-8800
Fax 613-224-8840

For general inquiries email admin@ottawaschoolbus.ca

The Ottawa Student Transportation Authority has established four transportation zones within the City of Ottawa. These zones are: West, Centre West, Centre East, and East.

If you are not sure what zone your school is assigned to please check their website at www.ottawaschoolbus.ca. Click on School Directory to display a complete listing of all schools and zones.

West Zone
(613) 224-8800 ext 2383
west@ottawaschoolbus.ca

Centre East Zone
(613) 224-8800 ext 2381
centre.east@ottawaschoolbus.ca

Centre West Zone
(613) 224-8800 ext 2382
centre.west@ottawaschoolbus.ca

East Zone
(613) 224-8800 ext 2380
east@ottawaschoolbus.ca

Information on bus delays and cancellations are posted on the OCDSB website at www.ocdsb.ca or at OSTA's parent portal:
<https://ostabusplanner.ottawaschoolbus.ca/Cancellations.aspx>