



COMPLAINTS POLICY and PROCEDURES

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose and scope

We recognise that our school community needs to feel confident that any concerns or issues they may raise will be handled promptly and professionally.

This procedure applies to The Children's House Montessori School in handling complaints made in respect of services provided by the school or against staff members, which includes employees, contractors and volunteers. This procedure does not extend to personal grievances between parents, guardians or other members of the school community. Consideration has been given to regulations: 143B, 168-173, 173A and 176 when updating this policy. The children's safety, health and wellbeing is our key priority.

1.2 Related policies

Complaints about reportable conduct will be addressed in accordance with the school's Child Protection Policy. The main regulatory requirement here is that the approved provider must notify the regulatory authority in writing within 24 hours of any complaints alleging that a serious incident has occurred at the service.

1.3 Confidentiality

All parties involved in complaints handling are required to maintain appropriate confidentiality, including in relation to handling and storing records. The Principal is responsible for the storage of confidential records.

2. Complaints

A complaint or grievance is an expression of dissatisfaction made to the school about an educational and/or operational matter relating to services provided by the school or the behaviour or decisions of a staff member, contractor or volunteer, including misconduct.

Our families are integral to our service; we welcome their input into all aspects of our service's operation, including any complaints they may have. We welcome complaints as an opportunity to enhance the quality of our education and care practices. We reflect on each complaint received, identifying and issues or areas of improvement for our service. Our processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused.

If a parent/carers or student has a concern about the conduct of a staff member, they should raise their concern with the school in accordance with section 3. If a complaint that concerns the behaviour of a staff member may constitute reportable conduct, the matter will be addressed in accordance with the school's Child Protection Policy in accordance with section 1.2. Please refer to the school's Child Protection Policy for information about reportable conduct. Complainants are not required to assess whether their concern meets the threshold of reportable conduct before making a complaint. Any concern about a child's wellbeing may be reported under this policy.

Complaints may be made by a student or parent/carers. Educators are to report all complaints received to the Principal and /or the approved provider promptly so timeframes can be adhered to. Educators will support children to know who to talk to if they are feeling unsafe and will communicate the complaint handling process in language that they understand.

The school will seek to resolve complaints informally where possible but acknowledges that in some cases a person may wish to make a formal complaint.

As per the regulations the name and phone number of the person to whom complaints can be made is clearly displayed at the service, on the outside noticeboard on the ramp and on the inside noticeboard by the front door.

The Principal or delegated person will receive training in best practice to guide them in the complaints procedure.

3. Raising a complaint

3.1 The complainant

Informal complaints may be raised by a complainant directly with the person involved. However, if the complainant does not feel comfortable doing so or the matter is one where it may not be appropriate to do so a complaint can be made to the Principal. Any complaint about the conduct of a staff member should be raised directly with the Principal in the first instance.

Should the matter not be resolved through informal processes, the complainant may raise the matter formally with the school. A formal complaint can be made in writing to the Principal via email childrenshousensw@gmail.com

Where a person wishes to make a formal complaint concerning the Principal the complaint should be made in writing to the Chair of the Board/Delegate, via the school address. In this situation, the references in this policy relating to the role of the [Principal] should be read as references to the [Chair of Board/Delegate].

3.2 The school

The Principal will generally acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint in writing as soon as practicable. In general, the Principal will endeavour to find a suitable resolution to an issue raised within 5 working days.

4. Handling complaints

4.1 Assessing a complaint

The Principal generally will assess the complaint and determine:

- whether the complaint is one to be addressed under this policy or is a staff grievance or reportable conduct matter which are dealt with by the relevant policies, see section 1.2; and
- the priority of the complaint in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the matter raised; and
- Whether the school may be required to report the matter to the Ombudsman, Police, Family and Community Services or other relevant authorities should the complaint relate to possible unlawful conduct or other reportable matters?
- The approved provider/ Principal must notify the regulatory authority in writing within 24 hours of any complaints alleging that a serious incident has occurred at the service.
- Ensure that in handling a complaint, the process is child focused, and that children understand who to talk to if they are feeling unsafe.

4.2 Managing a formal complaint

The Principal generally will manage a formal complaint by:

- a) advising the complainant of the likely steps that will be undertaken by the School in relation to the complaint;
- b) if appropriate, advising the relevant parties of the complaint at the relevant time and providing them with an opportunity to respond;
- c) collecting any additional information, the School considers necessary to assess the complaint;

- d) making a decision about how the complaint will be resolved (“resolution decision”); and
- e) Advising the complainant in writing, and any other relevant parties as appropriate, of the resolution decision of the Principal and if appropriate, any proposed action to be taken.
- f) Records of the complaint will be held in our complaints file for a period of 24 years.

There may be circumstances where some of the steps outlined above are not appropriate and the school will determine, on a case-by-case basis the most appropriate method of handling the complaint.

A complainant and the relevant parties that the complaint is about may choose to have an appropriate support person present at any meeting with representatives of the School about the complaint. However, the School maintains the right to determine whether the person has preferred support person is appropriate and may not approve the attendance of a support person where they are determined by the School to be inappropriate.

5. Contact

If you have any queries about this procedure or you feel the complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction, please email the Chair directly for further advice.

In summary

Obviously, the school hopes that any complaints can be addressed promptly to both the Parent’s and the school’s satisfaction. The procedure set out above aims to have complaints resolved internally without having to be escalated to the NSW Department of Education. As a parent run school, we are all volunteers and are not expected to have all the answers, but we are willing to learn and make the necessary changes to improve our service.

If the complaint identifies any issues or areas requiring improvement in our service a review of this policy and procedures will be undertaken in a timely manner. A review will also take place should there be a change in the relevant legislation.

As per Regulation 172, any changes to this policy will require the updated policy to be circulated to parents and staff and the updated policy put on the school’s website.

Educators and staff will be provided with training on our complaints management and procedures at induction and after any reviews.