

COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES POLICY

OVERVIEW

Chrysalis Montessori School welcomes feedback from all school community members and takes all complaints or concerns raised seriously.

This document outlines how to make a complaint and provides guidance on how complaints may be received, recorded, responded to, reviewed, resolved, and reported via the complaints and grievance mechanism.

Effective complaints and grievance management are important in maintaining respectful and trusting relationships across the school community.

Some concerns may be addressed through a simple conversation or meeting where discussions bring clarity or changes to address a situation. We encourage and empower staff to handle such matters using their professional judgment, keeping the best interests of our students and the School at the forefront of their minds.

Our School welcomes suggestions and comments from the school community and takes seriously concerns, disputes and complaints that may be raised.

SCOPE

This policy and procedure applies to teaching staff, administration staff, the School Board, parents, guardians, and students.

RELATED LEGISLATION, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The following policies should be read in conjunction with the Complaints and Grievance Policy:

- Record Management
- Privacy Policy
- Codes of Conduct
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Child Abuse Prevention and Grooming Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy
- [School Education Act 1999](#)
- [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#): Principle 6 of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, using the Office of Child Safety's "Complaints Handling Guide: Upholding the Rights of Children and Young People"

DEFINITIONS

COMPLAINT

A complaint or grievance is an expression of dissatisfaction made to Chrysalis related to services or operations or the complaints handling process itself. In this guidance, 'complaint' or 'grievance' are used interchangeably.

A complaint or grievance:

- Relates to a specific negative effect (real or perceived)
- Impacts an individual or group of people.
- Is linked to the activities of the school.
- Requires a specific response from the school.
- Is submitted directly to the school by an individual, group or on their behalf by a third party

Some examples of grievances are:

- Bullying or discrimination
- How an issue has been handled
- The actions of another member of the school community
- Safety in the school
- A child's treatment by a member of staff

COMPLAINANT

The person or people making the complaint or grievance are referred to as complainants.

CONCERN

A less serious matter that may be resolved with a more informal approach.

RESPONSIBILITIES

PRINCIPAL

Is responsible for ensuring all staff are educated about the School's complaints handling procedure, investigating and, where necessary, escalating complaints when requested by the complainant, and maintaining accurate records in the Complaints Register. The Principal reports to the Board monthly on the number and type of complaints to ensure systemic complaints are identified and rectified; and monitors the effectiveness of and continual improvement of the complaints process.

SCHOOL BOARD

Is accountable for ensuring that appropriate and relevant policies and procedures are developed, implemented, and reviewed regularly, and relevant reporting is completed. The School Board supports the Principal and/or Complaints Officer in managing complaints that are escalated to the School Board.

COMPLAINTS OFFICER

Key senior staff members, including the Principal, may act as a Complaints Officer and are authorised to record, investigate, and manage complaints. Complaints Officers must maintain accurate records in the Complaints Register and liaise with complainants.

SCHOOL STAFF

All staff are authorised to deal with informal complaints. Where a person makes a formal complaint, this will be referred to a Complaints Officer. All school staff will participate in complaints management training.

COMPLAINANT SUPPORT PERSON

During a complaint handling process, a complainant may nominate a support person to be involved at appropriate times. This person must not be part of the complaint. When a meeting occurs, a complainant may have a support person present. A complainant support person does not say anything in grievance meetings. They are there to provide emotional support for the person/s involved. The support person is also bound by confidentiality.

ROLE OF THE DIRECTOR GENERAL

The Director General of the Department of Education is responsible for ensuring that the School observes the Registration Standards, including the standard of its complaints handling system. Any student, parent or community member is entitled to contact the Director General with concerns about how the School has dealt with a complaint. Information is available on the [Department of Education website](#).

While the Director General may consider whether the school has breached the registration standards, the Director General does not have the power to intervene in a complaint or override the school's decision.

COMPLAINTS AND CONCERNS FRAMEWORK

A concern will be treated as a less serious matter that may be resolved with a more informal approach, for example through a conversation or meeting directly with parties involved to bring clarity or changes to address a situation. We encourage and empower staff to handle such matters using their professional judgment, keeping the best interests of our students and the School at the forefront of their minds. We encourage people to use this approach in the first instance, then lodge a complaint if it is not handled satisfactorily directly. See **Appendix 1** for further guidance.

A dispute, complaint or grievance will be treated as an expression of genuine dissatisfaction that requires following a formal process as detailed below.

HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

A formal complaint may be lodged in the following ways:

- Complete the complaints form (see **Appendix 2**) and leave it at the front desk,
- via email at admin@chrysalis.wa.edu.au
- phone call
- in person, or
- in writing addressed to the Principal.

Complaints should be acknowledged at the time of receipt or as soon as possible afterwards.

COMPLAINTS FROM STUDENTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The school recognises that it is critical to empower students to understand their rights to report problems and effectively support them in addressing the issues raised. Students are encouraged to raise concerns with any member of staff with whom they feel comfortable and safe, whether it is the class teacher, a member of the support staff or the Principal. Students are taught the *'Speak Up' Three Top Tips for Making a Complaint* as outlined by the Commissioner for Children and Young People and shown how to fill out the Student Complaint Form – see **Appendix 3**.

Students can make a complaint in different ways:

- in person, including during classroom discussions and meetings, or
- in writing via letter or email, or
- by completing a student complaints form (see **Appendix 3**) and posting it in a 'student voice' / complaints box located in the administration office or library or
- via a person whom they feel comfortable with raising a concern who may lodge a complaint on their behalf.

Complaints should be acknowledged at the time of receipt or as soon as possible afterwards.

Complaints that appear small still need to be handled seriously. Young people may test the complaints procedures on relatively minor issues before finding the confidence to raise something serious, such as bullying.

In circumstances involving an allegation or complaint concerning grooming, child abuse and breaches of the Code of Conduct, it is required that the Child Abuse Prevention and Grooming Policy is followed, and the matter is reported promptly to the relevant authorities.

COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES POLICY

Approved by
Mark Panaia

Date
November/2023

Next Review
November/2024



WITHDRAWAL OF A COMPLAINT

A complainant may withdraw a complaint at any stage of the process. If a complaint is withdrawn, the matter will be deemed to be closed unless the School, at its discretion and in all the circumstances, wishes to continue to address a matter raised.

ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS

If a complainant chooses to make a complaint without disclosing their identity, this will limit the options for proper and thorough investigation and resolution.

It also raises issues in relation of procedural fairness for those who have a complaint made against them, as they have the right to know of the particulars of the complaint and to respond. The School, therefore, cannot guarantee that anonymous complaints can or will be dealt with as effectively.

Complainants are always encouraged to identify themselves. As far as possible and appropriate, due discretion will be respected and maintained by all parties throughout the resolution process, save where persons are required to be informed on a 'need to know' basis or where investigative, statutory, or legal requirements stipulate those matters be disclosed, reported or discussed.

Anonymous complaints will be recorded in the Complaints Register.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality applies to information relating to the person making the complaint and if relevant, to a person against whom a complaint is made. The School is committed to maintaining the confidentiality of information throughout the complaints process. Personally identifiable information about a complainant will only be made available for addressing the complaint and (unless the complainant consents) will be actively protected from disclosure.

Children and young people have the same right to privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality as adults. Children and young people may waive their right to privacy and confidentiality if they decide to involve somebody else in the complaints process, e.g. to access support.

Where complaints are made in circumstances where an alleged crime may have been committed, or the matter falls under the School Child Safe Reporting Policy and Procedures, the Police and Director General will be contacted and formally advised. In this situation, the Principal or next most senior staff member, if the Principal is unavailable, must take responsibility for actioning the complaint. The Chair of the School Board should be informed as soon as possible.

COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCESS

1. Receive and record

All formal complaints are logged in the Complaints Register and are screened by a designated Complaints Officer or, in the case of complaints against the Principal, by the Chair of the School Board.

2. Acknowledge complaint

All valid complaints will be acknowledged at the time of receipt or as soon as possible afterwards (at most within 24 hours). Complaints are allocated a status, priority, and target resolution date. Confirmation of the nature of the complaint and clarification with the complainant may be required. Where possible, the School seeks to resolve all disputes within 14 days.

3. Assess and address immediate risks

The Complaints Officer shall investigate the issue raised, following principles of procedural fairness, and make a determination.

If required, relevant parties involved will have the opportunity to share their experience and perspectives. No one makes assumptions or acts until all relevant information has been collected and considered. All sides have access to support as required. The Complaints Officer takes all necessary steps to ensure those involved in a grievance are not victimised for coming forward with a grievance or helping to resolve it.

4. Resolve

Following the determination, if appropriate, the Complaints Officer shall formulate a resolution and provide a written response to the complainant. The matter will be closed if this response is accepted.

Resolution may come in the form of making and communicating any changes; communicating that the School is now alert to a possible problem; acknowledging a concern and that it is being taken seriously; an outcome deemed to be well-considered; and an apology.

If more time is needed to consider a matter, complainants will receive a communication update. In some instances, it may not be appropriate to communicate detailed actions or responses undertaken by the School fully. However, confirmation of response must always be given.

5. Further investigation

If the initial response is not acceptable, the matter will be reviewed internally by the Principal or the Principal's delegate, who may seek additional information or submissions from the relevant parties. In some instances, a mediation process may be entered. Initially, the Principal facilitates dialogue between both parties. If required at this stage, an independent person with mediation skills and experience may be engaged to facilitate this process as agreed by both parties.

The Principal or their delegate seeks to resolve all disputes within 14 days from the date that the review process is initiated. The matter will be closed if the response of the Principal or their delegate is accepted.

6. Monitor and report

All complaints received will be entered into the Complaints Register and, where appropriate, a corrective action request will be made to address any underlying processes which the complaints investigation revealed may require improvement.

7. External resolution

If the matter remains unresolved, the complainant may pursue external resolution alternatives.

REFERRAL OF A COMPLAINT TO THE SCHOOL BOARD

Generally, the School Board are not directly involved with receiving, investigating, or resolving complaints other than complaints arising within or about the School Board itself.

Some complaints may be complex in nature or take a longer time to resolve. Complex complaints may be taken to the School Board. When a complaint is about the Principal, a person may lodge a formal complaint with the School Board if they feel the matter cannot be resolved or feels it is appropriate to do so.

In turn, and consultation with the complainant, the Chair of the Board will expeditiously take all reasonable steps to investigate the complaint and facilitate a resolution thoroughly. If a meeting is requested, the Chair will offer to meet at a time convenient. Those to be involved are:

- A member of the Board Executive (Chair, Vice, Treasurer or Secretary),
- the Principal or one appropriate member of staff, and
- the complainant.

The complainant may bring a support person with them who is not involved with the complaint.

Formal correspondence to the Board Chair can be addressed via admin@chrysalis.wa.edu.au, attention 'The School Board Chair'.

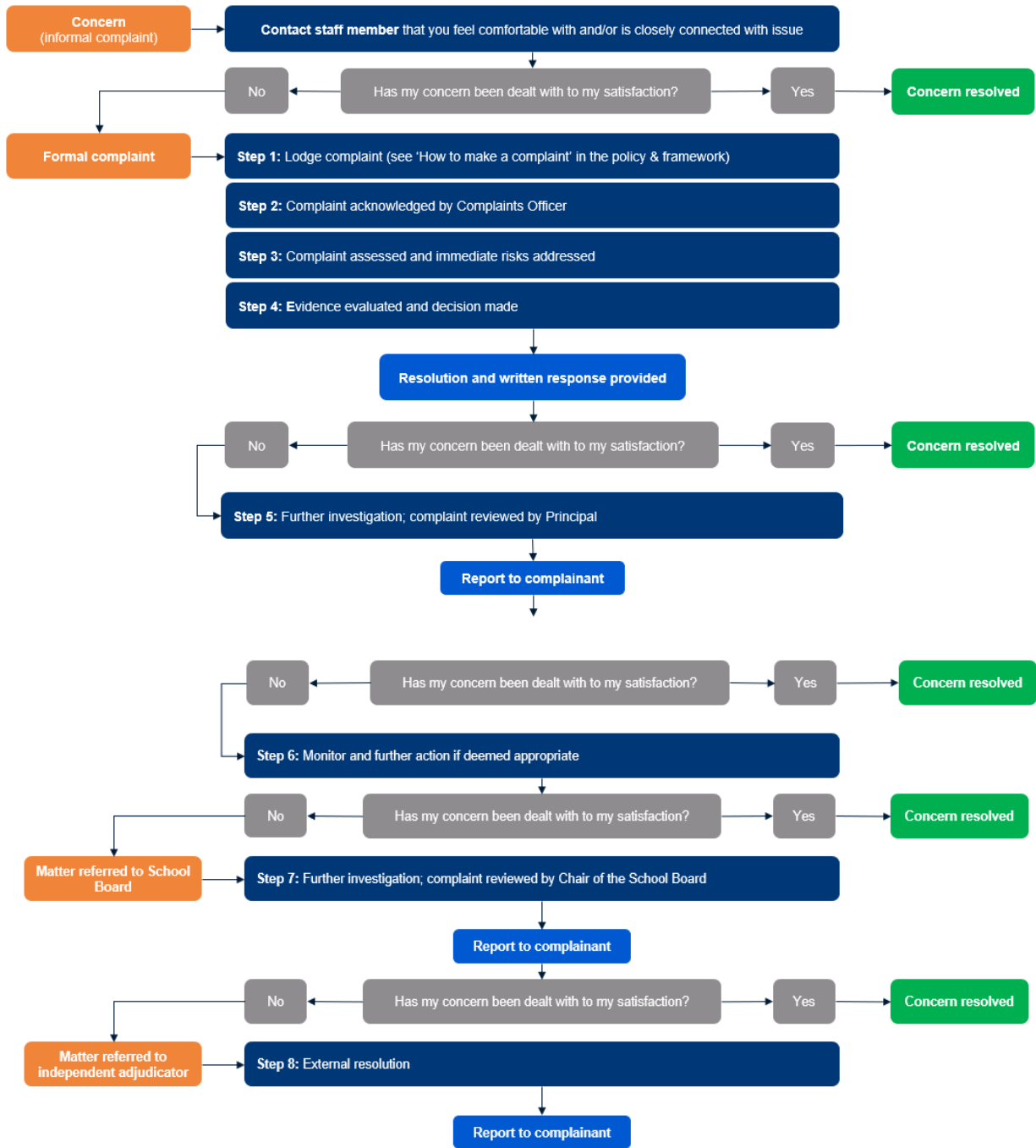
REFERRAL OF A COMPLAINT TO AN EXTERNAL AUTHORITY

When a complaint is not or cannot be resolved within the School, the parties may seek the assistance of external professional agencies or other independent arbitrators. The independent arbitrator will be:

- Agreed by both parties
- Remunerated by both parties (if appropriate)
- Assured both parties will accept the arbitrator's decision.

At all stages of the process, the complainant may seek legal advice if they wish.

PROCESS FLOWCHART





RECORD KEEPING

Accurate, appropriate, and secure records will be kept at the School on its Complaints Register by the Complaints Officer responsible for overseeing or managing the resolution process for a particular complaint. The Complaints Register is kept and managed by the Principal. Records concerning students must be kept securely for seven years after the student reaches 18 years of age.

Records will contain the following information:

- date when the issue occurred, or it was observed;
- location of the event or observation;
- date when the complaint was reported;
- date the complaint was acknowledged to the complainant;
- name of the complainant (if not anonymous);
- how the complaint was raised (email, phone, in person, letter, etc.);
- a brief statement of complaint;
- name of Complaints Officer handling the complaint;
- a brief statement of investigation undertaken;
- a brief statement of the outcome and any agreed actions.

Records will be reviewed at least annually so that any systemic problems may be identified and actioned.

COMMUNICATION

The Complaints and Grievances Policy is publicly and readily available to all staff and school community members.

DOCUMENT CONTROL

	Date	Version	Nature of Change
Version Control	September 2017	1.0	Initial Plan
	November 2022	2.0	Plan Review
	November 2023	3.0	Plan Review

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: GUIDANCE ON TYPES OF COMPLAINTS

Complaint type	Description
Educational Methodology Complaints	Concerns related to the implementation of Montessori methods, materials, or curriculum deviations.
Teacher-Student Interaction	Issues regarding teacher behaviour, teaching style, or specific interactions with students that may not align with Montessori principles of respect and independence.
Parental Involvement and Communication	Feedback or grievances about the level of parental involvement in the learning process, communication effectiveness, or handling of individual student needs.
Student Behaviour and Conflict Resolution	Reports on student behaviour that may not align with Montessori values of peace and social harmony, including how conflicts are resolved within the classroom.
Facility and Environment	Concerns regarding the physical environment of the school, including classroom layout, safety, and alignment with the Montessori emphasis on aesthetically pleasing and functional spaces.
Inclusivity and Diversity	Issues related to the representation and inclusion of diverse cultures, abilities, and backgrounds, reflecting the Montessori value of preparing children for a global society.
Policy and Administration	Complaints related to school policies, administrative decisions, or procedural issues that may impact the Montessori learning experience.
Health and Safety	Concerns regarding health protocols, nutritional aspects of school meals, or any safety issues within the school environment.
Staff Code of Conduct	Concerns regarding staff behaviour that may not adhere to the professional standards or ethics expected in a Montessori setting, including issues related to professionalism, respect, confidentiality, and interactions with both students and parents.
Professional Development and Training	Grievances or feedback about the adequacy, relevance, and frequency of professional development and training opportunities for staff, especially in relation to Montessori methodologies.
Resource and Material Adequacy	Comments on the availability, quality, and appropriateness of Montessori materials and other learning resources.
Financial and Tuition Concerns	Issues related to the financial aspects of the school, including tuition fees, transparency in financial management, and allocation of resources.
Special Needs and Individual Learning Plans	Concerns or feedback regarding the support and accommodation for students with special needs, including the effectiveness of individualized learning plans.
Community Engagement and Outreach	Feedback on the school's involvement with the local community, partnerships, and how it integrates community resources into the educational experience.
Technology Integration	Comments on the use of technology within the school, balancing Montessori's emphasis on tangible learning with modern technological advancements.
Teaching Standards	Evaluating adherence to Montessori principles, pedagogical skills, individualized instruction, assessment methods, teacher-student relationships, classroom management, and teachers' professional development and learning.

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November/2023

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APPENDIX 2: COMPLAINTS FORM



COMPLAINTS FORM

This form may be used by any member of the school community to report a complaint or grievance. Once completed, please deliver in the following ways:

- leave at the front administration in an envelope marked **CONFIDENTIAL**
- send via mail to Chrysalis Montessori School, attention 'The Principal'
- email to admin@chrysalis.wa.edu.au

ABOUT THE PERSON MAKING THE COMPLAINT

DATE:

YOUR NAME:

YOUR ROLE (eg teacher, parent, on behalf of a student):

YOUR CONTACT PHONE NUMBER AND EMAIL:

INDICATE LEVEL OF CONCERN TO YOU (please circle):

MINOR

MEDIUM

MAJOR

ABOUT THE COMPLAINT OR GRIEVANCE

DATE WHEN THE ISSUE / EVENT OCCURRED:

LOCATION OF ISSUE / EVENT:

WHO IS IMPACTED:

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DESCRIBE ISSUE OR GRIEVANCE:

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE HAPPEN IN RESPONSE?

Thank you for filling out this form. You will be contacted by the Complaints Officer who will let you know how your complaint is being addressed.

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FOR INTERNAL USE ONLY

DATE THE COMPLAINT WAS ACKNOWLEDGED AS RECEIVED TO COMPLAINANT:

NAME OF COMPLAINTS OFFICER HANDLING COMPLAINT:

DESCRIBE PRIORITY RATING AND TARGET RESOLUTION DATE:

DESCRIBE CURRENT STATE / ANY IMMEDIATE ACTIONS:

BRIEF STATEMENT OF INVESTIGATION UNDERTAKEN:

STATEMENT OF OUTCOME:

ACTION LOG:



APPENDIX 3: CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE COMPLAINT FORM



Children & Young People Complaint Form



It takes courage to make a complaint. It doesn't have to be a negative experience.

You are welcome to complete this form and come and talk to a staff member. Your complaint / comments are invited.

Personal details (please tell us your name so we can follow up with you)

First name: Last name:

Class: Date:

Tell us in your own words what has happened or been done that you are worried or unhappy about. If you run out of space, you can attach more pieces of paper.

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What do you think should be done to fix the problem?

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Speak up. Be Heard. Get Support.