

# COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCE RESOLUTION POLICY & PROCEDURE



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## INTRODUCTION

### PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This procedure applies to Northside Montessori Society “the School” in handling complaints made in respect of services provided by the school or if a staff member has a grievance about matters at work, including about:

- work relationships; and
- decisions made by other staff members which impact on their work.

This procedure applies to all employees, contractors, and volunteers.

This procedure **does not extend** to:

- complaints which are whistleblowing disclosures, which need to be dealt with in accordance with the School’s Whistleblowing policy; or
- complaints about reportable conduct, which need to be addressed in accordance with the School’s Child Protection policy; or
- complaints regarding unlawful discrimination, harassment or bullying between staff which are generally addressed in accordance with the school’s Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Statement; or
- personal grievances between parents, guardians, or other members of the school community.

### OBJECTIVE

- To ensure that complaints / grievances lodged at this school are resolved in a prompt and efficient manner.
- To promote the highest standard of professionalism in dealing with our community.

## COMPLAINT

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.

Staff at Northside Montessori School are responsible for managing the resolution of a complaint or grievance lodged with the School. We will make every effort to promptly resolve the dispute or complaint, or grievance lodged with us according to the principles of procedural fairness. Where the School cannot

resolve a complaint or grievance, the complainant or School Principal can forward the complaint or grievance to the Chair of the Board.

**Procedural Fairness** is a basic right of all when dealing with authorities. Procedural Fairness ensures that everyone should have access to an “unbiased decision”.

At Northside Montessori School we believe that any person against whom an allegation has been made has the right to:

- Know the allegations related to the specific matter and any other facts which could be taken into account in the consideration of the matter.
- Be aware of the range of possible consequences resulting from the decisions made.
- Know the process by which the matter will be considered.
- Have an opportunity to respond to the allegations.
- Be given an opportunity to have a “preliminary decision” reviewed if there are additional issues which could be considered in mitigation before the preliminary decision is confirmed.

*Source: Registered and Accredited Individual Non-government School (NSW) Manual – June 2004*

## PRINCIPLES

The following **principles** apply to those raising complaints and grievance and to those against whom complaints or grievance have been raised.

1. Teachers, assistants, administration staff, students and parents/legal guardians are entitled to raise concerns, complaints or grievances.
2. The school has a transparent and clear process which provides the framework and structure within which such concerns/complaints/grievances can be raised.
3. Consideration needs to be given to the level of seriousness before beginning the process.
4. Consideration should also be given to determining the most appropriate staff member for initial contact within the School.
5. All efforts are made to resolve the dispute at the most appropriate level.
6. Justice requires that both/all parties have the opportunity have their case heard.
7. Individual cases are considered on their own merits and within the context of the pressures and demands on families and schools.
8. All parties involved in complaints/grievance handling are required to maintain appropriate confidentiality, including in relation to handling and storing records.

9. The School will extend the same principles of justice to members of staff.
10. The role of the Board and its' Chair is one of governance and not day-to-day school management. Grievance disputes should not start at the Board level unless the subject of the dispute is the School Principal herself/himself. Only in such a situation should the matter be referred to the Chair of the School Board, in writing, who will raise the issue with the School Principal.

## RAISING A COMPLAINT / GRIEVANCE

Northside Montessori School will seek to resolve complaints/grievances informally where possible but acknowledges that in some cases a person may wish to make a formal complaint.

Informal complaints should 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/grievance raised with the Business Manager or the Deputy Principal or Principal.

Should the matter not be resolved through informal processes, the complainant may raise the matter formally with the School in accordance with the procedures detailed in this document.

The recipient of the complaint/grievance will acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint/grievance, in writing, as soon as practicable.

### COMPLAINTS & GRIEVANCES PROCEDURE FOR STUDENTS

Discuss concerns ***directly with the staff member concerned***. There should be a concerted attempt to understand each other's point of view and to mutually resolve the dispute.

If this has been unsuccessful, the matter should be referred to the following persons, in order of priority:

Class Teacher  
Deputy Principal  
Principal (concerns should be in writing)

Concerns need to be put in writing before a meeting takes place. Procedural fairness principles apply to those raising complaints and to those whom against complaints have been raised.

### COMPLAINTS & GRIEVANCES PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS, GUARDIANS AND CARERS

Discuss concerns ***directly with the staff member concerned***. There should be a concerted attempt to understand each other's point of view and to mutually resolve the dispute.

If this has been unsuccessful, the matter should be referred to the Deputy Principal.

In the case of the issue not being resolved at this level, or if there are concerns about the process itself, approaches can be made to the School Principal. It is requested that these concerns are put to the School Principal,, in writing, before a meeting takes place.

## COMPLAINTS & GRIEVANCES PROCEDURE FOR STAFF

Discuss concerns *directly with the staff member concerned*. There should be a concerted attempt to understand each other's point of view and to mutually resolve the dispute.

If this has been unsuccessful, the matter should be referred to, in order of priority, as detailed below:

for Educators refer matter to:

- Direct Supervisor, then
- Deputy Principal, then
- Principal

for Administration Staff refer matter to:

- Business Manager, then
- Principal

In the case of the issue not being resolved at this level, or if there are concerns about the process itself, approaches can be made to the School Principal. It is requested that these concerns are put to the School Principal, in writing, before a meeting takes place.

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, via email [chair@northsidemontessori.nsw.edu.au](mailto:chair@northsidemontessori.nsw.edu.au).

## HANDLING COMPLAINTS/GRIEVANCES

### ASSESSING A COMPLAINT OR GRIEVANCE

On receipt, the recipient will assess the complaint/grievance and determine:

- a. Whether the complaint/grievance is one to be addresses under this policy and procedure or another; and
- b. The priority of the complaint/grievance in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the matter raised.

### MANAGING A COMPLAINT OR GRIEVANCE

Generally, the complaint/grievance is managed by:

- a. acknowledging receipt of the complaint/grievance immediately and advising the complainant of the likely steps that will be undertaken by the School in relation to the complaint/grievance;
- b. if appropriate, advising the relevant parties of the complaint/grievance 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/grievance;
- d. seek advice from the Principal or member of the School's executive group, if required, about the complaint, grievance or handling difficult situations;
- e. making a decision about how the complaint or grievance will be resolved ("resolution decision"); and

- f. advising the complainant in writing, and any other relevant parties, as appropriate, of the resolution decision and if appropriate, any proposed action to be taken.

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

On receipt of telephone complaints/grievance/concerns: listen, make notes, and if you feel the need to have time to reflect before responding (always a wise thing to do) reply that you have heard and understand the concerns/complaints/grievance, etc, and that you will "come back to" (whomever) after you have had an opportunity to fully consider the matter/issue. This also gives you time to reflect or to discuss the issue with colleagues or senior staff members, who might have suggestions as to how you should respond. The recipient of a complaint/grievance should not feel pressured into responding to complaint/grievance immediately, without careful consideration.

It is recommended that notice to the Principal is provided for serious matters or when an escalation of conflict may occur.

## CONTACT

If you have any queries about this policy, you should contact the School Business Manager. Other contacts are:

<i>Role</i>	<i>Contact Details</i>
Principal	<a href="mailto:principal@northsidemontessori.nsw.edu.au">principal@northsidemontessori.nsw.edu.au</a>
Deputy Principal	<a href="mailto:ap@northsidemontessori.nsw.edu.au">ap@northsidemontessori.nsw.edu.au</a>
Business Manager	<a href="mailto:bm@northsidemontessori.nsw.edu.au">bm@northsidemontessori.nsw.edu.au</a>
Chair of the Board	<a href="mailto:chair@northsidemontessori.nsw.edu.au">chair@northsidemontessori.nsw.edu.au</a>

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