

POLICY		PROCEDURE
Policy Name	Complaint Handling Policy	
NESA Manual Section	Safe and Supportive Environment (B8) Student Welfare (B8.2)	
Related Procedures	Complaint Handling Procedure (B8.2) Complaint Handling Procedural Fairness Guidelines (B8.2) Complaint Handling Process Flow Chart (B8.2) Complaints or Allegations of Staff Misconduct Flow Chart (B8.2) Privacy, Personal Information and Confidentiality Procedure (B2.3) Child Protection Procedure (B8.1) Student Wellbeing and Support Procedure (B8.2) Code of Conduct for Staff Procedure (B2.3) Staff Grievance Procedure (B2.3) Enrolment Procedure (B7.1) Document and Record Retention Procedure (B2.3)	
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Related Legislation	Education Act 1990 (NSW) Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW) Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW) Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)	
Date of Issue / Last Revision	12 August 2016 10 March 2017 – Re-formatted 15 July 2022 30 May 2025 30 August 2026	
Date Set for Review	August 2029	

Complaint Handling Policy

Policy Statement

At Central Coast Montessori Primary School (CCMPS), we recognise that complaints and concerns may arise from time to time, and we believe it is essential that they are not ignored. Unresolved or unspoken grievances can often escalate unnecessarily and undermine the sense of trust and collaboration that is central to our community.

We are committed to upholding the Montessori philosophy of respect for the child, open communication, and meaningful partnerships with parents and caregivers. We value the voices of our students, parents,

staff, and community members, and we view the expression of concerns as an opportunity for growth, learning, and continuous improvement.

All complaints will be managed fairly, promptly, confidentially, and in accordance with principles of procedural fairness, ensuring that all parties are treated with respect and dignity.

At CCMPs, we place particular importance on addressing complaints or allegations of staff misconduct or reportable conduct in a timely and appropriate manner, in partnership with parents and in line with our duty of care.

We affirm that every member of the CCMPs community has the right to feel safe. It is the responsibility of all staff, students, and parents/guardians to ensure that our school remains a safe and supportive learning environment for everyone.

Purpose

This policy outlines the process for students and/or parents to raise concerns or complaints, including complaints or allegations about staff misconduct, and describes how the school responds to and manages complaints. The aim is to foster a culture of trust and partnership between families and the school community while maintaining transparency, accountability, and a commitment to Montessori principles of peace, respect, and collaboration.

Scope

This policy applies to complaints raised by students, parents and carers, and other members of the School community or relevant stakeholders about educational or operational matters relating to the School.

It covers complaints related to:

- School policies and procedures
- Staff conduct (including staff misconduct allegations)
- Educational programs and learning environments (including Montessori materials and practices)
- General administration

Child protection concerns are not investigated solely under this Policy. Where a complaint raises a child protection concern, reportable conduct allegation or other child safety matter, the relevant Child Protection Policy and Procedure will apply and any statutory reporting obligations take priority.

Procedural Fairness

At CCMPs, we ensure that all complaints are managed with procedural fairness, consistent values of respect and empathy:

- **Right to be Heard:** All parties are given the opportunity to share their perspectives and experiences in a calm and respectful environment.
- **Right to an Unbiased Decision Maker:** Complaints are handled by staff who are impartial and not directly involved in the issue being raised.
- **Transparency and Communication:** Complainants are kept informed throughout the process, provided with clear explanations, and supported to understand outcomes and options for further review if necessary.
- **Timeliness:** Complaints are managed promptly and within specified timeframes to ensure efficient and fair resolution, reducing uncertainty and maintaining trust within the school community.

- **Accessibility and Protection from Detriment:** Complaints may be raised without fear of victimisation, adverse treatment or disadvantage. The School will provide reasonable assistance to students, families or others who require support to access or participate in the complaints process.

How to Raise a Concern

Informal Resolution:

We encourage open communication and partnership between families and the school. Parents and students are invited to raise concerns informally with the relevant teacher or staff member. Our staff are trained to listen and work collaboratively to address concerns in line with Montessori principles of respect and conflict resolution.

Formal Complaint:

If a concern cannot be resolved informally, is sufficiently serious to require formal consideration, or the complainant prefers, a formal complaint may be made to the Principal. Complaints concerning the Principal should be directed to the Chair of the Board. A complaint may be made verbally or in writing, and the School may assist a complainant to document their complaint where required.

Complaints should include:

- Name of the complainant
- Details of the concern/complaint
- Any supporting information or documentation
- Contact details for communication

Complaints or Allegations About Staff Misconduct

Complaints or allegations that relate to staff misconduct (e.g. inappropriate behaviour, serious breaches of the Code of Conduct, or conduct that may be reportable under child protection legislation) must be referred immediately to the Principal. The School's complaint handling process must not delay or replace any mandatory reporting, reportable conduct, police or other statutory reporting obligation.

The Principal will:

- Assess the complaint to determine the appropriate course of action.
- If the complaint raises a child protection concern, possible reportable conduct, risk of harm to a child or other matter requiring external notification, the Principal will ensure the matter is managed in accordance with the *Child Protection Policy and Procedure* and applicable legal reporting requirements.
- If the complaint does not involve risk of harm but still relates to staff misconduct, the Principal will investigate the complaint in accordance with the school's procedures and principles of procedural fairness.
- The staff member concerned will be informed of the substance of relevant allegations and given a reasonable opportunity to respond, subject to any statutory or external investigation requirements.
- The investigation will be impartial and confidential, ensuring procedural fairness for both the complainant and the staff member.
- Interim measures may be implemented where reasonably necessary to manage risk while a matter is being assessed or investigated.
- The outcome, including any actions to be taken, will be communicated to the complainant (as appropriate), and relevant authorities (where applicable).

How the School Responds to Concerns

1. **Acknowledgement:** The school will acknowledge all formal complaints in writing within **5 working days**, outlining the process and expected timeframes.

2. **Assessment:** The Principal (or delegate) will assess the complaint to determine its nature and scope, including whether it can be resolved informally or requires formal investigation.
3. **Investigation:** The complaint will be investigated fairly and confidentially, ensuring that all relevant parties are treated respectfully and given the opportunity to share their perspectives in a supportive Montessori environment.
4. **Resolution:** The School will aim to finalise formal complaints and provide a written response within 20 working days where practicable. Where this is not possible due to the nature or complexity of the matter, the complainant will be advised of the delay and provided with an updated expected timeframe.
5. **Record Keeping:** A confidential record of the complaint, investigation, and outcome will be maintained in accordance with privacy requirements.
6. **Continuous Improvement:** Complaints data will be reviewed regularly to identify trends, learn from experiences, and continually improve the quality of our educational environment.

Review of a Complaint Outcome

Where a complainant is dissatisfied with the handling or outcome of a complaint, they may request a review where there are reasonable grounds to do so, including where relevant information may not have been considered, procedural fairness may not have been afforded, or the complaint process may not have been followed appropriately.

Where practicable, the review will be undertaken by a person who was not responsible for the original decision. Depending on the circumstances, this may include the Principal, Board Chair or another suitably independent person.

The School will advise the complainant of the outcome of the review and, where appropriate, any available external complaint or review avenues.

Roles and Responsibilities

Principal:

- Oversees the implementation of this policy, ensures staff awareness, reviews complaints, manages complaint records, monitors timeframes, and makes decisions or delegates complaint handling as appropriate. Ensures appropriate communication and promotes a culture of open communication aligned with Montessori values.

Guides/Teachers:

- Receive complaints, treat them seriously, inform the Principal, and support the complainant through the process. Maintain confidentiality, respect, and procedural fairness. Model respectful communication and problem-solving.

Complainant (Student/Parent/Carer):

- Raise concerns honestly and respectfully.
- Provide relevant information reasonably available to them.
- Participate constructively in the complaint resolution process.
- Respect the privacy and dignity of others involved in the complaint.

Accessibility

This policy is publicly available:

- On the school's website
- In the school office upon request

Alternative arrangements (e.g. interpreter, support person, or advocate) can be provided for families who require assistance to raise a concern or participate in the complaints process.

Monitoring, Evaluating and Review

This policy will be reviewed three (3) years, or earlier if required due to changes in legislation, NESA guidelines, or identified gaps in practice.

Continuous improvement will be guided by feedback from Guides, staff, families, and, where appropriate, students. As key stakeholders, families and staff will be encouraged to participate meaningfully in the review process to ensure the policy remains relevant and responsive to the needs of the school community.

Related Documents and References

[NESA Registered and Accredited Individual Non-Government Schools \(NSW\) Manual February 2026](#)

[NSW Ombudsman's Guidelines on Complaint Handling](#)

[NSW Reportable Conduct Scheme \(Children's Guardian Act 2019\)](#)

[National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#)