




Complaints Resolution Policy and Procedure

Purpose:	The purpose of this policy is to ensure that complaints about the operations of Montessori Noosa are received, managed and resolved with respect, natural justice and in alignment with our values.
Scope:	This policy applies to any type of complaint about the operations of the school and may include employees, parents/carers, students, clients, contractors, volunteers, directors and agents of Montessori Noosa, persons undertaking work experience or vocational placements and members of the wider community.

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Authorised by:	Elizabeth Goor Board Chair	Signature:	
Policy Owner:	School Governing Body (Education for Generations Ltd)		

References:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2017 (Qld) • Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth) • Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld) • Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) • Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld) • Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth) • Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth) • Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth) • Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) • Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth) • Standards Australia, Guidelines for complaint management in organizations (ISO 10002:2022, NEQ) • Montessori Noosa Child Protection Policy • Montessori Noosa Work Health and Safety Policy • Montessori Noosa Sexual Harassment Policy • Montessori Noosa Disability Discrimination Policy • Montessori Noosa Workplace Bullying Policy • Montessori Noosa Privacy Policy • Montessori Noosa Student Restorative Approach Policy
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Policy Statement

Montessori Noosa acknowledges the right of students, parents/guardians, staff and others to complain when dissatisfied with the school's services, including an action, inaction or decision of the school. The school encourages constructive criticism and complaints.

Montessori Noosa is committed to ensuring that complaints received are handled in a responsive, efficient, consistent, effective, transparent and fair way.

Montessori Noosa will ensure employees can recognise, receive, and appropriately refer complaints to the informal or formal complaints procedure.

Montessori Noosa recognises that time spent on handling complaints can be an investment in better service to students and parents/guardians and a better culture for employees, and views complaints as part of an important feedback and accountability process.

Definitions

Complaint	An expression of dissatisfaction made to or about the school, related to the school's services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required. ¹
Informal Complaint	A complaint about a matter that is likely to be simple, straight forward, easily manageable, or minor, where a simple or quick resolution is appropriate such as discussion of the matter with a relevant staff member.
Formal Complaint	A complaint about a matter that is serious, complex or may pose a threat to the health and safety of any person. Examples include serious allegations or breaches of policy, complaints against a senior staff member, including the principal or an informal complaint that could not be resolved informally. Assessment of the complaint is required by the Principal.
Complainant	The person, organisation or their representative making a complaint. ²
Respondent	The person who is referred to in a complaint by a complainant as the person responsible for their concerns or who can best respond to their concern.

¹ Standards Australia, Guidelines for complaint management in organizations (ISO 10002:2018, NEQ), s.4.3

² Standards Australia, Guidelines for complaint management in organizations (ISO 10002:2018, NEQ), s.4.2



Complaints Handling Principles

Montessori Noosa will manage complaints according to the following (which include principles of procedural fairness):

- complaints will be taken seriously, dealt with fairly and objectively, without judgement and addressed in a reasonable timeframe
- complaints should be resolved with as little formality and disruption as possible, having regard to the nature of the complaint
- interested parties to the complaint (for example, the complainant and any respondent) will be heard and/or may provide relevant information in relation to the complaint
- confidentiality and privacy will be maintained as much as possible
- the complainant and any respondent will be offered support as appropriate
- victimising behaviour towards a complainant, respondent or other people associated with the complaint, will not be tolerated
- complainants that lodge a complaint on reasonable grounds will not suffer any other reprisals on the basis of the lodging the complaint

Complaints that may be Resolved under this Policy

Montessori Noosa encourages anyone who feels impacted by an issue involving the school to file a complaint. Complaints can address matters such as:

- the school, its employees or students having done something wrong
- the school, its employees or students having failed to do something they should have done
- the school, its employees or students having acted unfairly or impolitely
- issues of student or employee behaviour that are contrary to the relevant Montessori Noosa Student Restorative Approach Policy or Staff Code of Conduct, including inappropriate staff conduct as reported by a student.³
- issues related to learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning
- issues related to communication with students or parents or between employees
- issues related to school fees and payments
- general administrative issues
- issues relating to non-compliance with a process outlined in school policies or procedures, for example the child protection policy, discrimination policy, or privacy policy.⁴

Student complaints may be brought by students or by parents on behalf of their children, as appropriate in the circumstances.

Issues Outside this Policy

The following matters are outside the scope of this policy and should be managed as follows:

- Child protection concerns including allegations of sexual abuse, likely sexual abuse or harm to children should be dealt in accordance with the school's Montessori Noosa Child Protection Policy.
- Student bullying complaints should be dealt with under the Montessori Noosa Student Restorative Approach Policy
- Student discipline matters, including matters involving suspension or expulsion, should be dealt with under the Montessori Noosa Student Restorative Approach Policy
- Student or employee violence or criminal matters should be directed to the Principal who will involve the Police as appropriate.

³ Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2017 s.16(2)(a)

⁴ Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2017 s.16(5)



- Disputes relating to a staff member's employment should be directed to the Principal and dealt with under employment law. This does not include disputes about work health and safety matters, which may be dealt with under the school's Complaints Handling Policy
- Disputes between board members, between company members and board members or between company members should be dealt with in accordance with the constitution.
- Formal legal proceedings should be managed as appropriate in the circumstances.

Responsibilities

School

The school has the following roles and responsibilities:

- develop, implement, promote and act in accordance with the school's Complaints Handling Policy
- appropriately communicate the school's Complaints Resolution Policy to students, parents and employees
- ensure that the Complaints Resolution Policy are readily accessible by staff, students and parents
- upon receipt of a complaint, manage the complaint in accordance with the Complaints Resolution Policy
- ensure that appropriate support is made available to all parties to a complaint
- take appropriate action to prevent victimisation or action in reprisal against the complainant, respondent or any person associated with them
- appropriately implement remedies
- appropriately train relevant employees
- keep records
- conduct a review/audit of the Complaints Register in regular intervals
- report to the school's insurer when that is relevant.

All Parties to a Dispute

The complainant and respondent both have the following roles and responsibilities:

- comply with the school's Complaints Resolution Policy
- provide complete and factual information in a timely manner
- not provide deliberately false or misleading information
- not make frivolous or vexatious complaints or retaliatory complaints
- act in good faith and maintain a mutually beneficial relationship of trust and cooperation
- act in a calm, courteous manner and non-threatening manner
- acknowledge that a common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
- recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced
- maintain and respect the privacy and confidentiality of all parties
- not victimise or act in reprisal against any party to the dispute or any person associated with them.

Employees Receiving and/or Managing Complaints

Employees receiving and/or managing complaints have the following roles and responsibilities:

- act in accordance with the school's Complaints Resolution Policy
- refer the complainant to the school's Complaints Resolution Policy and provide additional information as necessary
- maintain confidentiality as far as possible
- keep appropriate records
- forward complaints to more senior employees, including the Principal, if the complaint cannot be resolved at the initial level or if it involves serious issues that require the involvement of more senior employees
- not victimise or act in reprisal against the complainant, respondent or any person associated with them.



Implementation

Montessori Noosa is committed to raising awareness of the process for resolving complaints at the school, including by the development and implementation of this policy and via the clear support and promotion of the policy.

The school will make this Policy and related Procedure readily available to all stakeholders (staff, students, parents and others) through the following ways:

- On the school's website
- Available from Reception upon request
- Items in the newsletter, from time to time, about this Policy & Procedure
- Email contact for complaints posted on the school's noticeboards
- Raised in community and student forums that the school encourages complaints from all stakeholders including students

Montessori Noosa is also committed to regular training of employees on the implementation of this policy. The school will inform staff of the Complaints Resolution Policy at staff professional development days at the start of each term

All employees of the school can receive complaints on behalf of the school. Staff will then bring the complaint to the Principal to respond to, and progress to resolution in accordance with this policy and the Complaints Resolution Procedure.

Complaint Register

Montessori Noosa will maintain a complaint register with details such as the date, source and description of complaints, the employee managing the complaint, the actions taken, outcome and the date the complaint was closed.

The complaint register will be stored securely.

All complaints shall be entered onto the complaint register as soon as practicable after the complaint is received. The complaint register will not contain complaints about the Principal. Records of complaints about the Principal will be maintained by the Board with access restricted to the Board.

To safeguard confidentiality and maintain the integrity of the complaint process, access to the entire complaint register will be limited to the Principal and the Board.

The Principal may authorise the sharing of specific, relevant entries from the complaint register with other designated staff members (such as the senior leadership team), provided measures are taken to protect the confidentiality of all parties involved, particularly ensuring that respondents to a complaint do not gain inappropriate access to information about the allegations against them.



Complaint Resolution Procedure



1. Lodging a Complaint

- a) Complaints can be lodged with the most appropriate staff member at the local level, for example, the initial contact point for many complaints is the student's relevant classroom teacher.
- b) Complaints about the principal must be lodged with the Board – board@montessorinoosa.qld.edu.au
- c) Complaints can be lodged through various methods, including:
 - i. Phone
 - ii. Email
 - iii. In-person (by appointment)
- d) If the complainant is unsure where to direct their complaint, they can contact the Principal for guidance.
 - i. If the complainant is uncomfortable directing the complaint to the most appropriate member at the local level, or wants to make a formal complaint, they can submit a complaint by email to the Board – board@montessorinoosa.qld.edu.au
- e) Where an anonymous complaint is lodged, the school will follow the complaints handling policy, when there is sufficient information to do so.

2. Acknowledgement, Assessment and Referral

- a) The staff member receiving the complaint will:
 - i. acknowledge the complaint within two (2) business days, outlining the next steps and where possible the estimated timeframes.
 - ii. assess the complaint, using the definitions of informal and formal complaints in this policy, and refer the complaint to the informal or formal complaints process.

3. Registration and Support

- a) The recipient of the complaint will promptly enter it onto the complaints register, regardless of whether it proceeds through the informal or formal process.
- b) The recipient of the complaint will offer support to the complainant as appropriate, which may include assistance with completing forms or understanding procedures.
- c) If a student is a complainant, respondent or victim, or the child of a complainant, respondent or victim of a matter being managed through this policy, the school may offer the student support where appropriate e.g. discussing suitable adjustments with parents/caregivers.

4. Informal Complaints Handling Process

- a) The informal process is designed to resolve issues promptly and collaboratively at the local level.



- b) It may involve constructive discussion and negotiation between the complainant and the relevant staff member(s).
- c) If the complaint cannot be resolved informally, it will be escalated to the formal process.

5. Formal Complaints Handling Process

- a) The formal process begins with the assessment of the complaint by a designated staff member (e.g., the Principal or the Board Chair for complaints against the principal)
- b) The staff member may gather additional information through investigation, interviews, or evidence review
- c) The staff member will determine appropriate action, which may include:
 - iii. Mediation
 - iv. Disciplinary measures
 - v. Implementation of policy changes
 - vi. Referral to external agencies (e.g., police)
 - vii. Provision of written updates to the complainant throughout the process
 - viii. Other actions the Principal or Board Chair determine as appropriate in the circumstances.

6. Complaint Closure

- a) The complaint register will be updated with the date the complaint is closed and a brief summary of the outcome.
- b) The complainant will receive written notification of the outcome and any actions taken where appropriate.

7. Appeals Process

- a) Complainants may appeal the outcome of a complaint by writing to:
 - i. the Principal (for complaints not previously managed by the Principal) – principal@montessorinoosa.qld.edu.au
 - ii. the Board Chair (for complaints previously managed by the Principal, or complaints about the principal) – board@montessorinoosa.qld.edu.au

Employees receiving Complaints

All complaints are to be received in the following manner:

- with respect and openness;
- if possible, resolve the complaint or otherwise assure the complainant that the complaint will be addressed and referred appropriately;
- provide the complainant with a copy of the Complaints Resolution Policy and this Procedure; and
- thank the complainant for the complaint.

If receiving the complaint verbally:

- take notes and summarise the issues to help ensure that the complaint is recorded accurately;
- do not be defensive or apportion blame;
- remain positive;
- do not perceive anger as a personal attack;
- empathise with the complainant and acknowledge their feelings;
- find out what the complainant wants to happen as a result of the complaint; and
- advise the complainant that the support of a third party is available if needed.