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Complaints Handling Policy

Purpose:	The purpose of this policy is to provide written processes about receiving, assessing, investigating and otherwise dealing with complaints.[1]	
Scope:	Any person directly affected by the subject of a complaint. Examples may include staff, students or a student's parent or guardian, contractors, or community members.	
Status:	Approved	**Supersedes:** None – Initial policy
Authorised by:	Authorised by the School Board	**Date of Authorisation: On** 16/3/2026
References:	• *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) • Wonderwood Montessori School Enrolment Contract • Wonderwood Montessori School Complaints Handling Procedure • Wonderwood Montessori School Child Protection Policy • Wonderwood Montessori School Work Health and Safety Policy • Wonderwood Montessori School Code of Conduct • Wonderwood Montessori School Anti-Discrimination Policy • Wonderwood Montessori School Sexual Harassment Policy • Wonderwood Montessori School Disability Discrimination Policy • Wonderwood Montessori School Student Bullying Policy • Wonderwood Montessori School Workplace Bullying Policy • Wonderwood Montessori School Privacy Policy • Wonderwood Montessori School Ltd - Constitution	

[1] *Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulations 2017, s.7*

Review Date:	Authorised by the School Board on 16/3/2026	**Next Review Date:** Board on 16/3/2028
Policy Owner:	School Governing Body	

Policy Statement

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

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

Wonderwood Montessori School 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.[2]
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 Executive Head of School or an informal complaint that could not be resolved informally. Assessment of the complaint is required by the School Board.
Complainant	The person, organisation or their representative making a complaint.[3]

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

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

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.

Complaints Handling Principles

Wonderwood Montessori School 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 complaint 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

Wonderwood Montessori School 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 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. [5]

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

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

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 Child Protection Policy.
- Student bullying complaints should be dealt with under the school's Student Bullying Policy.
- Student discipline matters, including matters involving suspension or expulsion, should be dealt with under the Behaviour Management Policy.
- Student or employee violence or criminal matters should be directed to the Executive Head of School who will involve the Police as appropriate.
- Disputes relating to a staff member's employment should be directed to their manager and dealt with under the enterprise agreement and/or 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 Directors of Wonderwood Montessori School Ltd, or between the Member (Montessori Children's Foundation) and Directors, must be managed in accordance with the dispute resolution procedure set out in clause 8.8 of the WMSL Constitution. Complaints about the School Board or an individual Director by any person directly affected may be managed under the Complaints About the Governing Body section of this policy.
- Formal legal proceedings should be managed as appropriate in the circumstances.
- Complaints relating to the education and training services provided by the school to an overseas student should be dealt with in accordance with the *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* and National Code and the school's Overseas Student's Complaints and Appeals Policy and Process.

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 Handling Policy to students, parents and employees
- ensure that the Complaints Handling Policy are readily accessible by staff, students and parents
- upon receipt of a complaint, manage the complaint in accordance with the Complaints Handling 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:

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

- comply with the school's Complaints Handling 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 Handling Policy
- refer the complainant to the school's Complaints Handling Policy and provide additional information as necessary
- maintain confidentiality as far as possible
- keep appropriate records
- forward complaints to more senior employees, including the Executive Head of School, 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

Wonderwood Montessori School 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 Wonderwood Montessori school will continuously publicise this policy through internal newsletters and internal phone lists of the contact persons.

Wonderwood Montessori School is also committed to regular training of employees on the implementation of this policy. Wonderwood Montessori School will train employees during induction and annually thereafter.

Complaint Register

Wonderwood Montessori School 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 Executive Head of School. Records of complaints about the Executive Head of School 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 Executive Head of School.

The Executive Head of School 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 Handling 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 Executive Head of School must be lodged with the Board via email address ceo@mcf.ngo.

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 school's administration office for guidance.

e) 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:

   i. Completing the online complaint form (available on the school website)

   ii. Using the anonymous reporting system

iii. Other methods such as reporting to a member of the executive

f) 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., a member of the senior leadership team or the board chair for complaints against the Executive Head of School)

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 including the Executive Head of School determining the appropriate action 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 Executive Head of School (for complaints not previously managed by the Executive Head of School,)

ii. the board chair (for complaints previously managed by the Executive Head of School, or complaints about the Executive Head of School).

8. Complaints About the Governing Body

a) Scope

This section applies to complaints made by any person directly affected by the actions, decisions or conduct of the School Board (governing body) of Wonderwood Montessori School Ltd, or of an individual Director acting in their capacity as a Director. This includes parents and guardians, students, staff, contractors and community members. Complaints that may be addressed under this section include:

- a decision of the Board that directly and adversely affects the complainant;
- conduct of an individual Director alleged to be unfair, unreasonable or contrary to school policy; or
- a failure by the Board to act on a matter within its responsibilities.

b) Receiving Complaints About the Governing Body

Complaints about the School Board or an individual Director must be directed as follows:

- Where the complaint concerns an individual Director (other than the Chairperson): the complaint must be submitted in writing to the Board Chairperson at admin@wonderwoodmontessori.com.au for forwarding to the Board.
- Where the complaint concerns the Chairperson, or where the Chairperson is otherwise conflicted: the complaint must be submitted in writing directly to the Member (Montessori Children's Foundation) at ceo@mcf.ngo.
- Where the complaint concerns the Board as a whole, or a majority of Directors: the complaint must be submitted in writing to the Member at ceo@mcf.ngo.

The school's standard complaint form may be used for this purpose. Complaints should be in writing and include sufficient detail of the action, decision or conduct that is the subject of the complaint.

c) Procedural Fairness Principles

All complaints about the governing body will be managed in accordance with the following principles of procedural fairness:

- **Independence:** Complaints must be managed by persons who are not the subject of the complaint and have no conflict of interest in relation to it. Any Director who is the subject of a complaint, or who has a conflict of interest, must recuse themselves from all stages of the assessment, investigation and determination of that complaint. Where recusal would leave fewer than two Directors available to oversee the process, the matter will be referred to the Member, who will appoint an independent person or persons to manage the complaint.
- **Right to be heard:** The complainant will be given a fair and reasonable opportunity to present their concerns and provide relevant information. Any Director who is the subject of the complaint will be given a fair and reasonable opportunity to respond before any finding or determination is made.
- **Evidence-based decision making:** All findings and decisions will be based on relevant facts and evidence. Irrelevant considerations, assumptions, personal relationships and biases must not influence the outcome.
- **Timely resolution:** The process will be conducted within a reasonable timeframe. The complainant will receive an acknowledgement within five (5) business days of lodging the complaint and will be kept informed of progress at regular intervals throughout the process.
- **Transparency:** The complainant and any Director who is the subject of the complaint will be informed in writing of the outcome and the reasons for the decision.
- **Confidentiality:** Information relating to the complaint will be kept confidential to the extent possible, disclosed only to those who need to know for the purposes of managing and resolving the complaint.

d) Process

Complaints about the governing body will be managed as follows:

- **Receipt and acknowledgement:** The complaint is acknowledged in writing within five (5) business days of receipt, including confirmation of the next steps and estimated timeframes.
- **Assessment:** The Chairperson (or, where the Chairperson is conflicted, the Member or their nominee) assesses the complaint to determine whether it falls within scope and identifies any Directors who must recuse themselves from further involvement.
- **Investigation:** The non-conflicted Directors, or the Member or an independent person appointed by the Member, investigate the complaint. Investigation may include gathering documentary evidence, seeking written submissions from relevant parties and conducting interviews. The Director(s) who are the subject of the complaint will be given the opportunity to respond.
- **Determination:** A written determination will be made and communicated to the complainant within thirty (30) business days of the complaint being received. If a longer timeframe is required due to the complexity of the matter, the complainant will be advised in writing with an updated estimate.

- **Implementation:** Any remedial actions or policy changes identified through the determination will be implemented by the Board as soon as practicable. Where the determination requires action by the Member, the Board will notify the Member accordingly.

e) Escalation and External Bodies

If a complainant remains dissatisfied after the process in this section has been completed, they may escalate to the following external bodies as appropriate:

- **Non-State Schools Accreditation Board (NSSAB):** for matters relating to the school's accreditation or compliance with the *Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act 2017* (Qld).
- **Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC):** for matters relating to the governance of the school as a registered charity, including compliance with the ACNC Governance Standards.
- **Other relevant authorities:** including the Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland, the Fair Work Commission or other government bodies, as appropriate to the nature of the complaint.