



**NEWCASTLE WALDORF SCHOOL**  
**GRIEVANCE POLICY**

Date of Implementation:	April 2021
Date of Next Review:	April 2023
Approved by:	Co-Principals
Modification History:	May 2010, May 2014, April 2019, Feb 2021, April 2021

## Introduction

Newcastle Waldorf School understands that from time to time parents and students may raise complaints in respect of services provided by the school or against staff members, which includes employees, contractors and volunteers. The following policy and procedures outlines the way in which complaints will be handled by the school.

If parents raise concerns early, and they are addressed informally by class and subject teachers or a Co-Principal, the likelihood that they will turn into formal complaints may be greatly reduced.

## Whistleblowing complaints

This procedure does not extend to complaints which are whistleblowing disclosures. The procedure for processing whistleblowing complaints are dealt with in the school's whistleblowing policy.

In summary a whistleblowing disclosure is a disclosure which:

- is made by a board member, staff member, a person who supplies goods or services to the school, including a volunteer, an employer of a supplier or a relative of any of these people;
- involves alleged misconduct, an improper state of affairs or circumstances, or illegal activity, and
- is made to a senior staff member, or officer of the school, the school's auditor or a person who the school has authorised to collect such disclosures.

## Related policies

Complaints about reportable conduct will be addressed in accordance with the NWS Child Protection Policy.

Complaints regarding a grievance between staff members about work matters, including work relationships and decision made by other staff members which impact on their work, are addressed in accordance with the *NWS Staff Grievance Policy*.

Complaints regarding unlawful discrimination, harassment or bullying between staff are generally addressed in accordance with the *NWS Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Statement for Employees, Contractors and Volunteers*.

## **What constitutes a 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. This policy deals with complaints made by parents, carers or students.

Complaints may be handled in different ways depending on the nature of the complaint. If a complaint meets the threshold of reportable conduct, it will be dealt with under the NWS Child Protection Policy.

Concerns or complaints about the conduct of a staff member must be raised with a Co-Principal in the first instance.

The school will seek to resolve complaints informally where possible but acknowledges that in some cases a person may wish to make a formal complaint.

## **Procedures**

### ***Making a Complaint***

Informal complaints may be raised by a complainant directly with the Class Teacher/Guardian, subject teacher, or the person directly involved. 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 a Co-Principal. Complainants should expect that concerns raised informally will be taken seriously by teachers and referred to the College of Teachers or a Co-Principal if necessary.

It is important that both parties follow up concerns to ensure that everyone is satisfied with the resolution. If there is no satisfactory resolution, a Co-Principal should be included in the concern to assist in achieving a satisfactory resolution.

Should the matter not be resolved through informal processes, the complainant may raise the matter formally with the school. Formal complaints may also be appropriate when the issue is already perceived to be beyond the level of a concern or informal complaint. Complaints about the conduct of a staff member must be raised with a Co-Principal in the first instance.

All staff members will be familiar enough with this policy to be able to direct complainants to a Co-Principal and to this policy and procedures. The Co-Principal will then be in a position to ensure that the correct procedure is followed. If the complaint is about a Co-Principal, the complainant should address their complaint to another Co-Principal who may then decide to involve the Chair of the Board.

Once received in writing, the Co-Principal or Chair will generally acknowledge receipt of the written complaint as soon as practicable.

### *Complaints Handling Procedure*

A Co-Principal generally will manage a formal complaint by:

- advising the complainant of the likely steps that will be undertaken by the School in relation to the complaint;
- if appropriate, advising the relevant parties of the complaint at the relevant time and providing them with an opportunity to respond;
- collecting any additional information the School considers necessary to assess the complaint;
- making a decision about how the complaint will be resolved (“resolution decision”); and
- advising the complainant in writing, and any other relevant parties as appropriate, of the resolution decision of the Co-Principal 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 is about may choose to have an appropriate support person present at any meeting with representatives of the School about the complaint. However, the School maintains the right to determine whether the person's preferred support person is appropriate and may not approve the attendance of a support person where they are determined by the School to be inappropriate.

### *Steps that may be taken in relation to a complaint*

- A Co-Principal will usually involve another co-principal or the Chair of the Board in managing a complaint
- A Co-Principal may help set up an appointment with the person(s) involved in an attempt to resolve the complaint. Both parties may take notes at the meeting. If the concern or complaint is about the conduct of a staff member the Co-Principal will decide whether the meeting should involve the staff member or not.
- A Co-Principal may decide that meeting with relevant parties separately is more appropriate
- A Co-Principal may discuss the matter with the College of Teachers, depending on the nature of the complaint, and with regard to privacy.
- A Co-Principal may seek external advice from the AIS or other relevant organisation.
- If a Complainant escalates their complaint to the Board of Directors, the Board must be provided with outcomes from previous negotiations, discussions and meetings, all relevant information, any relevant school policy and anything else reasonable to help them make an informed decision. The Board of directors will seek advice from relevant external organisations such as the AIS in finalising the complaint.

### *Complaint Resolution*

In most cases When a formal complaint has been resolved, the school will notify the complainant in writing of the resolution. The complainant may not be entitled to know all/any actions taken as a result of the complaint (for privacy reasons), but they will be given general assurance that appropriate action has been taken.

## Reportable Conduct

In addition to providing a caring and creative educational environment, the Newcastle Waldorf School is committed to the protection of children from sexual, physical, psychological and emotional abuse, neglect and domestic violence.

All staff members are aware through the Child Protection Policy that the following legislation applies to their positions:

- the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* (“Care and Protection Act”);
- the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012* (“WWC Act”);
- the *Children’s Guardian Act 2019* (“Children’s Guardian Act”)
- the *Crimes Act 1900* (“Crimes Act”).

Allegations of reportable conduct are managed through the School’s Child Protection Policy.

## Confidentiality

All parties involved in complaints handling are required to maintain appropriate confidentiality, including in relation to handling and storing records.

## Contacts

All staff members at Newcastle Waldorf School can be contacted at ‘firstname’@newcastlewaldorfschool.nsw.edu.au

If you are unsure where to direct your complaint, please call the school office 0249544853 for contact details.