NEWCASTLE WALDORF SCHOOL

GRIEVANCE POLICY

Date of Implementation: May 2011

Date of Next Review: February 2014

Approved by: Co-Principals

Modification History: May 2010
GRIEVANCE POLICY

Introduction
Newcastle Waldorf School acknowledges that from time to time parents and students may raise concerns, complaints or allegations about matters regarding their experiences with the School. The following policy and procedures outline processes that are designed to address concerns before they turn into complaints or allegations. If parents raise concerns early, and they are addressed informally by class and subject teachers or the Principal, the likelihood that they will turn into formal complaints is greatly reduced.

PROCEDURES

Concerns
If a parent has concerns about any aspect of their child’s education at the School, their first port of call should be their child’s Class Teacher or Guardian or if that is not appropriate, the School Principal. Parents should expect that concerns raised informally in this way will be taken seriously by the Class Teacher or Guardian and referred to the College of Teachers or Principal where 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, the Principal should be included in the concern to assist in achieving a satisfactory resolution.
Complaints

If a concern is not dealt with to the satisfaction of the parent, the parent may choose to make a formal complaint. Also, formal complaints may be appropriate when the issue is already perceived to be beyond the level of a concern.

All staff members will be familiar enough with this policy to be able to direct parents who wish to make a complaint to the Principal and to this policy and procedures. The Principal will then be in a position to do ensure that the correct procedure is followed.

The following complaints procedure requires a complaint to be made in writing so that it may be resolved effectively and efficiently. All complaints using this procedure will be acknowledged and considered. If complaints are not put in writing, the School is unable to guarantee efficiency in the resolution process.

Procedure:

Make an appointment with the person(s) involved in an attempt to resolve the problem. Both parties may take notes of meeting.

Resolved

If unresolved a formal complaint should be made in writing to the Principal (or to the Board of Directors if, and only if, it is about the Principal). The Principal will decide on an appropriate course of action that may involve an appointment to meet with all parties separately or jointly in an attempt to resolve the problem. All parties are permitted to bring a support person to such appointments and all should take notes. The process may also involve discussion with the College of Teachers, depending on the nature of the complaint.

If there is a satisfactory resolution using this process, it will be recorded and given in writing to the complainant.

If the complainant or any other parties involved feel that the resolution is unsatisfactory, they may escalate the matter to Board of Directors and this must be done in writing to the Chairperson.

The Board of Directors will now have the responsibility for making a final decision on the matter. The Board of Directors may request any outcome from previous negotiation discussions and meetings, all relevant information, any relevant school policy and anything else reasonable to help them make a decision.

Resolved
The Principal’s, or if needed, the College’s or Board’s decision may be one or more of the following: dismiss the complaint, declare that resolution is not possible as the parties are unable to come to an agreement, conclude the complaint has been substantially resolved, uphold the complainant and implement a specific action to address the concerns, determine that the complaint be referred for investigation or disciplinary action if evidence of a serious breach is uncovered.

The complaints procedure requires:

- The Principal to consult and be the representative of the College of Teachers wherever appropriate.
- Acknowledgement to the complainant from Principal in writing within 5 working days of receiving the complaint.
- Resolution to be achieved within a reasonable timeframe.
- Both parties to be notified of any decision in writing, with reasons, within 5 working days of any decision.

Allegations

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 that the ‘Children and Young Persons [Care and Protection] Act requires MANDATORY REPORTING of reportable conduct (listed above and defined in the NSW Ombudsman Child Protection Practice Update 2011). The following documents are relevant to allegations:

- Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998
- NSW Ombudsman Child Protection Practice Update 2011
- Ombudsman Amendment (Child protection and Community Services) Act 1998
- Crimes Act 1900 (Amendment up to 1999)
- Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998

In accordance with legislation, all staff are required to report allegations of a serious breach that has been made by any member of the school community. All allegations MUST be investigated.

Confidentiality

The school regards as crucial the need to protect the safety, privacy and integrity of children, staff and members of the community. As a result, and in accordance with legislation, any information gleaned during a negotiation or an investigation MUST be treated as totally confidential.

Allegation Procedure
An investigation into an allegation of a serious breach necessitates competency and fairness. It requires the assignment of an investigator, who gathers evidence, conducts interviews and draws a conclusion. The matter may be referred to an external investigator from the ombudsman’s office that is likewise qualified. The investigator reports progress and disclosure of outcome to the School Principal.

Put allegation in writing and forward it to the Principal. If desired, make an appointment with the Principal to discuss.

Principal initiates investigation.

Principal acknowledges allegation in writing within 5 working days and notifies the ombudsman’s office if the matter concerns reportable conduct.

Principal determines who should conduct investigation. ie Appointed internal investigator or an external investigator. Investigator conducts interviews and collects evidence and recommends appropriate outcome.

Principal keeps in contact with all parties. In writing, regarding the progress of the investigation. (No more than 6 months)

Principal reports investigation procedure and outcomes to the Ombudsman and CCYP as appropriate.

Complainant and person(s) involved to be advised in writing of the outcome of the investigation.

A decision is then made regarding the appropriate action to be taken.
Typical outcomes of the investigation procedure include:

- Withdrawal of the allegation.
- Allegation is unsubstantiated.
- Allegation is proven to be false and malicious (in which case the respondent may wish to seek civil action.)
- Allegation is proven and disciplinary action is taken by the Board of Directors as set out in the Act or regulations under which the person is employed.
- If proven that the allegation constitutes a criminal act, then the matter may be referred to the police.

If a disciplinary action is taken, the respondent has a right to make a determination to appeal within ten working days of receipt of disclosure of the outcome.

If the allegation is about the Principal, then the matter should be referred to the Board of Directors.