

<b>Section:</b>	Leadership and School Management		
<b>Policy:</b>	Complaints and feedback	<b>Policy Number</b>	7.6
<b>Quality Area/s</b>	7	<b>Policy Linked to</b>	
<b>Last Reviewed</b>	Feb 2015; Aug 2018; June 2020; April 2023	<b>Next review date</b>	
<b>Modifications</b>	Reviewed Policy		

## INTRODUCTION

### Purpose and Scope

Our school values the feedback of teachers, teaching assistants, staff, families and the wider community in helping to create a school that meets regulation and the needs of enrolled students and their families. We encourage open communication through opportunities to respond and feedback on the program.

This procedure applies to Karuna Montessori in handling complaints made in respect of services provided by the school or against staff members, which includes employees, contractors and volunteers. A component of this feedback is the ability to put forward a complaint and have this managed appropriately with due consideration for accountability and quality improvement.

This procedure does not extend to personal grievances between parents, guardians or other members of the school community.

### 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 school's 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 school's Staff Grievance Policy.

Complaints regarding unlawful discrimination, harassment or bullying between staff are generally addressed in accordance with the school's Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Statement.

### **Confidentiality**

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

### **AIM**

Complaints can transpire in any workplace. Handling them appropriately is imperative for sustaining a safe, healthy, harmonious and productive work environment. The complaint policy ensure that all persons are presented with a clear procedures that will:

- provide opportunities for consultation, evaluation and review of the service operation and delivery of the education and care program;
- develop a process for making and managing complaints;
- communicate the option and process of making a complaint;
- handle complaints diligently and confidentially.

### **COMPLAINTS**

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.

If a parent/carer or student has a concern about the conduct of a staff member, they should raise their concern with the school in accordance with section 4. If a complaint that concerns the behaviour of a staff member may constitute reportable conduct, the matter will be addressed in accordance with the school's Child Protection Policy. Please refer to the school's Child Protection Policy for information about reportable conduct. Complainants are not required to assess whether their concern meets the threshold of reportable conduct before making a complaint. Any concern about a child's wellbeing may be reported under this policy.

Complaints may be made by a student or parent/carer.

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.

## **RAISING A COMPLAINT**

### **The Complainant**

Informal complaints may be raised by a complainant directly with the person involved.

However, 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 the Principal. Any complaint about the conduct of a staff member should be raised directly with the Principal in the first instance.

Should the matter not be resolved through informal processes, the complainant may raise the matter formally with the school. A formal complaint can be made in writing to the Principal via email: [principal@karuna.com.au](mailto:principal@karuna.com.au) or in writing to the following address:

Karuna Montessori School  
The Principal  
PO Box 368  
Dee Why 2099 NSW

If either party (Complainant or Principal) is not satisfied with the outcome, the matter may be referred to the President within two weeks of the initial discussion, by way of a written submission outlining the problem and proposed solution. The President will then mediate a discussion between the two parties. A record of the interview will be made and signed by all parties. This process may continue until a resolution is reached.

In circumstances where either the complainant or Principal are still not satisfied with the outcome, the dissatisfied party must make a written submission to the Executive Committee: [president@karuna.com.au](mailto:president@karuna.com.au) within two weeks of the last mediation discussion. The Executive Committee may appoint a Dispute Committee or a representative to investigate and make a report back to them within two weeks. They will then reach a final decision on the matter as soon as possible. Notification of the Executive Committee's decision will be given in writing to all parties involved within five working days of their decision.

It is expected that the step above would be the final step of the Complaints procedure. However, complainants with an unresolved grievance are free to contact the relevant external agency (either Department of Education & Communities or the NSW Education Standard Authority).

The complainant or Principal may request that a record of the interview be prepared and signed by both

parties. Either party may request that the President or delegate be present.

Where a person wishes to make a formal complaint concerning the Principal the complaint should be made in writing to the President via email: [president@karuna.com.au](mailto:president@karuna.com.au)

#### **4.2 The School**

The Principal/ President will generally acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint in writing as soon as practicable.

### **HANDLING COMPLAINTS**

#### **Assessing a complaint**

The Principal generally will assess the complaint and determine:

- whether the complaint is one to be addressed under this policy or is a staff grievance or reportable conduct matter which are dealt with by the relevant policies, see section 1.2; and
- the priority of the complaint in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the matter raised; and
- whether the school may be required to report the matter to the Ombudsman, Police, Family and Community Services or other relevant authorities should the complaint relate to possible unlawful conduct or other reportable matters.

#### **Managing a Formal complaint**

The Principal will generally manage a formal complaint by:

- a) advising the complainant of the likely steps that will be undertaken by the School in relation to the complaint;
- b) if appropriate, advising the relevant parties of the complaint at the relevant time and providing them with an opportunity to respond;
- c) collecting any additional information the School considers necessary to assess the complaint;
- d) making a decision about how the complaint will be resolved (“resolution decision”); and
- e) advising the complainant in writing, and any other relevant parties as appropriate, of the resolution decision of the 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.

## SOURCES

- Education and Care Schools National Regulation
- National Quality Standards
- ACECQA
- AIS
- NSW Ombudsman (2004)
- 'Effective Complaint Handling'. NSW Ombudsman
- NSW Ombudsman (2009) "Complaint Handling Kit". NSW Ombudsman
- Mandatory Reporter Guide: <https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/mrg>

## STATUTORY LEGISLATION & CONSIDERATIONS

- Children (Education and Care Services National Law Application) Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Office of the Children's Guardian: <https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/>