

GRIEVANCE POLICY

Approver: Board

Owner: Principal

Last Reviewed By: Board

Next Review Date: June 2022

BACKGROUND

This document is a Policy of Melbourne Montessori School.

There are a number of sources that determine what Melbourne Montessori School does:

- Corporations Law (MMS may be a school but its also an incorporated body)
- Industry regulations (e.g. Registered Schools Board requirements; pre-school rules that effect cycle 1 etc.)
- Market forces (e.g. capturing and retaining customers; capturing and retaining quality staff)
- Member's desires (all parents are members/shareholders of Melbourne Montessori School) which are set (for example) at strategic planning sessions held every few years.

This policy describes the policy and procedure for the resolution of grievances (issues).

PURPOSE

The aims of this policy are:

- Describe the types of grievance and how they should be resolved.
- Describe the values important to Melbourne Montessori School when dealing with grievances.
- Provide a procedure for escalation.
- Describe the parties involved in each type of grievance and their responsibilities.
- Provide Melbourne Montessori School management, staff and Board with the guidelines for evaluating grievances and managing the resolution process.
- Provide Melbourne Montessori School Management and Board with a documented procedure to determine when and how external mediation or arbitration should be applied.
- Describe what documentation is required to support the resolution of a grievance.

This policy is intended as a direction for authority and decision making. This policy is intended as a procedure to be followed.

WHY THIS POLICY IS IMPORTANT

This policy is important to MMS for the following reasons:

- It is important for grievances to be handled because an unexpressed grievance can fester and express itself in far more negative ways than the grievance itself.
- When adults face and solve their differences with respect for the other person, this presents a good role model for children.
- Poor grievance resolution wastes the time of all parties involved.
- The results of poor grievance resolution are severed relationships, financial hardship and bad publicity.

SCOPE

This policy covers the areas of:

- Types of grievance
- Escalation

- Responsibilities of the parties
- External mediation/arbitration
- Documentation requirements

STAKEHOLDERS AFFECTED BY THIS POLICY

The stakeholders affected by this policy are:

- Parents
- Students
- Staff
- Principal and any other Management
- Board

TYPES OF GRIEVANCE

A grievance may be one of the following categories:

- **Educational:** Parent concern about the quality of education received by their child, including teaching/learning activities, excursions, camps and any other curriculum related activities. Also includes any issue relating directly to a child such as safety, bullying and harassment.
- **Administrative/Financial:** A difficulty with the administrative logistics, accounts or ability to pay fees.
- **Industrial:** Issue between MMS as an employer and a member of staff as an employee. Note that for employment related grievances, attention must be paid to all legal and award requirements.
- **Governance:** Issue arising from the conduct of the Board, both in exercising its powers and carrying out its directorial responsibilities.

If there is uncertainty within which category a grievance lies it shall be resolved by the Principal or the Board Chair as is appropriate.

ESCALATION

When a grievance occurs, it commences in *Level 1*. There are a number of *Levels* in grievance resolution. Levels identify when a grievance requires additional parties to be involved. Grievances should be satisfactorily resolved between those directly concerned in an open and constructive manner. Time should be set aside to discuss the matter calmly, privately, respectfully and without distraction.

Irrespective of the type of grievance, any party to the grievance has the right to initiate an escalation to the next level, provided that a genuine attempt to resolve the grievance has been met.

EXTERNAL INVESTIGATIONS, MEDIATION AND ARBITRATION

Despite the best attempts, some grievances may remain unresolved. The Board has an option to approve the appointment of an external consultant to conduct investigations, mediation and/or arbitration.

It should be understood and remembered, that when the Board is involved it represents all of the members. The appointment by the Board of an external party to perform such investigations, mediation or arbitration duties will therefore be carefully considered in an holistic manner.

Should a grievance reach the level where the Board is involved, the Board's decision will be final.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Any party involved in the resolution of a grievance who has a conflict of interest with respect to its potential resolution, should declare that conflict of interest to all other parties involved as early as is feasible.

VALUES

The values that Melbourne Montessori School consider important in grievance resolution include:

- **Natural justice:** each side must be heard.
- **Procedural fairness:** any *conflicts of interest* to be declared, and such individuals may be excluded from decision making.
- **Timeliness:** a time table for following up resolution outcomes.
- **Written records:** consistent, well-structured, concise and complete information is on file for current and future reference.
- **Appropriate communication:** the correct parties are involved in an appropriate way at the appropriate time.
- **Respect:** is to show appreciation for another person's worth or qualities or point of view. It implies an attitude of trustworthiness and confidentiality.
- **Flexibility:** in your response to grievances.
- **Co-operative:** non-adversarial manner.
- **Containment:** of the grievance to the important facts.
- **Identification:** of both the specific and systemic issues related to a grievance.

DOCUMENTATION

It is appropriate that consistent, well-structured, concise and complete information is on file for current and future reference. Each meeting conducted during the grievance resolution period should be documented with a *worksheet* containing:

- The date and location of the meeting (including phone conversations)
- The author of the worksheet
- The persons attending, and any apologies
- Who chaired the meeting (if applicable)
- Who initiated the meeting
- For each issue discussed:
 - a description of the issue
 - the claimed impact
 - whom it impacts
 - what is claimed will happen if the issue is not resolved
 - what was/is requested in order to resolve the issue
- For each issue considered resolved:
 - why it is considered resolved
 - how it was resolved
- For each action item resulting from the meeting:
 - whom is the action item against
 - a description of the action item
 - a date when it is to be performed by
- When, where and who should attend the next planned meeting.

DESTRUCTION OF RECORDS

Except where dictated otherwise by law, all records of grievances shall be retained by Melbourne Montessori School for a minimum of one year after the family, child or staff member has left Melbourne Montessori School before being destroyed. Such records shall be kept secured by the Principal or the Board as is appropriate.

GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE

Should the grievance be escalated to the Board, a grievance committee shall be constituted by the Chair of the Board, the composition of which shall be determined by the Chair and approved by the full Board.

PARTICIPANTS

The following groups of people should participate as follows for each type of grievance:

<i>Type of Grievance</i>	<i>Level 1</i>	<i>Level 2</i>	<i>Level 3</i>	<i>Level 4</i>
Educational	Parent Teacher	Parent Teacher Principal	Parent Teacher Principal Board	Parent Teacher Principal External Mediation
Administrative Financial	Parent Bursar	Parent Bursar Principal	Parent Bursar Principal Board	Parent Bursar Principal External Mediation
Industrial	Staff Member(s) Principal	Staff Member(s) Principal Board	Staff Member(s) Principal Board External Mediation	
Governance	Parent Member Board	Parent Member Board External Mediation		

PROCESS TO FOLLOW

Before commencing a formal grievance process, attempt to resolve the grievance directly with the appropriate person, but failing that proceed as follows.

Here are the steps to follow when commencing a grievance:

1. Determine the type of grievance from Section 7.
2. Ensure the appropriate participants are enlisted as per Section 15.
3. Remember to apply the values as set out in Section 11.
4. Don't forget to declare any conflicts of interest as described in Section 10.
5. Try to ensure adequate documentation is kept as per Section 12. If in doubt keep your own records but circulate them to the other participants.
6. If you determine that escalation is required after consulting Section 8, then firstly inform the other participants, and then enlist the new participants for the next level as per Section 15.

REVIEWED 2019