



Complaints or Grievance Policy and Procedure

Prepared by: Education Administrator
Reviewed by: Principal & Compliance Officer
Monitored by: Principal & Compliance Officer
Status: Current
Related documentation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Protection Policy • Student Welfare Policy • Behaviour Management Policy • Anti-Bullying Policy • Parent Handbook • Staff Grievance Policy • Whistle-Blower Policy and Procedure

Version Control

Version	Date Revised	Changes
ORIGINAL		Initial Release
2024	11/2024	Change 'Education Director' and 'ED' to 'Principal'
2025	05/2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Update FACS to DCJ ○ Add time for school response
2026	04/2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Changed title to 'Complaints or Grievance Policy and Procedure ○ Removed 'Business Manager', where appropriate replaced with 'Operations Manager' ○ Added Section 2 in procedures (Scope and Exclusions)

Introduction

The Armidale Waldorf School (the school) acknowledges that those receiving services from the school may sometimes have a complaint or concern about a decision, behaviour, act or omission that they feel is unacceptable. It is expected that complaints are made in good faith and are not vexatious or malicious.

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.



The school is committed to the following principles in seeking resolutions to complaints:

- complaints will be responded to in a timely, procedurally fair and impartial manner (Appendix 1)
- the person about who the complaint is being made is entitled to know an overview of the substance of the complaint and have an opportunity to respond
- complaints will be handled as confidentially as possible
- complainants will be advised of the complaints resolution process
- the complaints process will be conducted in a manner that is respectful of all parties
- persons making a complaint will not be victimised

This policy provides the processes by which parent(s)/carer(s), students and the wider school community raise complaints, how the alleged complaints will be responded to and how to have the decision reviewed.

Procedures

1. Informal and Formal Complaints

Informal complaints may be raised directly with the person involved. However, if the complainant does not feel comfortable doing so, or where it is not appropriate, a formal complaint may be made to the Principal (or delegate).

If the matter is not resolved through informal processes, the complainant may raise the matter formally with the School in accordance with the procedures below.

2. Scope and Exclusions

Where a complaint relates to child protection, staff misconduct, or reportable conduct, separate procedures apply. These matters must be raised formally and cannot be addressed through informal mechanisms.

Complaints relating to criminal matters will be referred to the relevant authority.

This policy does not apply to whistleblowing disclosures, which are managed in accordance with The Armidale Waldorf School Whistleblower Policy.

Complaints relating to grievances between staff members are addressed in accordance with the School's Staff Grievance Procedure.

Raising Formal Concerns and Complaints

3. Procedures for Students

Students are informed at the beginning of each term of the appropriate processes for raising concerns. Students are encouraged to:



- speak directly with the person involved where appropriate, with the option of a support person (e.g. another student, teacher, or parent/carer);
- if the matter is not resolved, raise the concern with the Principal (or delegate), who will determine the appropriate course of action.

4. Procedures for Parents/Carers

Parents/carers are informed via the Parent Handbook of the procedures for raising complaints.

Concerns should be directed as follows:

- matters relating to individual students, class situations, or teaching and learning → Class Teacher
- matters beyond the classroom (including staff concerns) → Principal (in writing) via principal@waldorf.nsw.edu.au
- financial or administrative matters → Operations Manager
- concerns relating to the Principal → Chair of the Board (in writing) via board_chair@waldorf.nsw.edu.au

Where appropriate, concerns should first be discussed with the relevant person. If this is not suitable or the matter remains unresolved, a formal complaint should be submitted in writing to the Principal (or delegate).

5. Staff Misconduct and Reportable Conduct

Information regarding staff misconduct or reportable conduct is outlined in the School's Child Protection Policy.

Allegations must be made in writing to the Principal (or delegate). If the complaint involves the Principal, their delegate, or the Operations Manager, or where there is a conflict of interest, the complaint must be submitted to the Chair of the Board.

All complaints of this nature must be submitted confidentially. Written complaints may be submitted via email or in a sealed envelope marked *Private and Confidential*.

Complaints of serious sexual or physical assault will be immediately referred to relevant authorities, including the Office of the Children's Guardian, NSW Police, or the Department of Communities and Justice. The School will not commence its own investigation until it is appropriate to do so.

Where a complaint may constitute reportable conduct, it will be managed in accordance with the Child Protection Policy. Timeframes for these matters may be longer than for general complaints.

6. Acknowledgement and Communication



The Principal (or delegate) or Chair of the Board will acknowledge receipt of a complaint in writing as soon as practicable. The School will then assess the complaint and determine how it will be managed.

Where appropriate, the complainant may be updated on the progress of the matter. Disclosure of information may be limited by privacy legislation and the Ombudsman's Act.

Responding to Complaints

7. Investigation Process

The Principal (or delegate) will determine the most appropriate person and process to manage the complaint. This may include:

- requesting further information from the complainant
- outlining the steps to resolve the matter
- advising the respondent of the general nature of the complaint and seeking a response
- gathering information from relevant parties or third parties
- conducting meetings or interviews
- maintaining communication with both the complainant and respondent throughout the process

All parties may have a support person present. The School reserves the right to determine the appropriateness of a support person.

8. Outcome

Once the investigation is complete, the Principal (or delegate) will advise the complainant and the respondent, verbally and/or in writing, of the outcome and any next steps, including the process for appeal.

Where possible, complaints will be resolved within 28 days.

Appeals Process

9. Review of Decision

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, they may request a review by the Principal (or delegate), providing any additional relevant information.

If the matter remains unresolved, it may be escalated in writing to the Chair of the Board, who will review the process and decision and advise the complainant of the outcome.



Record Keeping

10. Documentation

All records relating to complaints, including meetings and interviews, will be securely stored in the Complaints Folder on the School's server. Access is restricted to the Principal or delegated persons.

Records relating to reportable conduct are stored separately in the secure Reportable Conduct Folder.

Appendix 1 : Procedural Fairness

Procedural fairness is a basic right of all when dealing with authorities and Procedural fairness refers to what is sometimes described as the 'hearing rule' and the 'right to an unbiased decision'.

- The 'hearing rule' includes the right of the person against whom an allegation has been made to:
 - know the allegations related to a specific matter and any other information which will be taken into account in considering the matter
 - know the process by which the matter will be considered
 - respond to the allegations
 - know how to seek a review of the decision made in response to the allegations.

- The 'right to an unbiased decision' includes the right to:
 - impartiality in an investigation and decision making and
 - an absence of bias by a decision-maker"