



## **MOUNT HAWTHORN EDUCATION SUPPORT CENTRE**

## **COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL**

**2021 - 2023**

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## *Objectives*

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To ensure that complaints lodged at this school are resolved in a prompt and efficient manner and to promote the highest standard of professionalism in dealing with our community.

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## *Policy*

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Staff at this school are responsible for managing the resolution of disputes and complaints lodged with us.

We will make every effort to resolve promptly any disputes and complaints lodged with us according to the principles of procedural fairness.

Where we cannot resolve a complaint, the complainant or Principal can forward a written complaint to the Director General of the Department of Education and Training.

NB: The Department of Education and Training's Disputes and Complaints Policy and Procedures details the Departmental procedures to be followed in the management of complaints. This document details the procedures to be followed for local management of complaints at this school.

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## *Commitment*

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We are genuinely interested in having complaints resolved at the school level. We recognise a community member's right to complain and to have their complaint dealt with seriously and fairly. We actively seek comments about our performance from our parent community.

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## *Fairness*

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We understand the need to be fair in our complaints handling processes. We follow procedural fairness principles when responding to a complaint. Decisions made, and the reason for them, will be made available to all parties directly involved in a complaint.

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## *Resources*

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We use school resources to effectively manage complaints. We have adequate resources for effective handling of complaints. Relevant staff at this school receive training in the management of complaints. Complainants will have easy access to the person at our school that will be dealing with the complaint.

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## *Access*

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We accept complaints lodged by telephone, fax, in writing and via email. We facilitate people with special needs to access our complaints handling system. Our complaints handling processes recognise cultural diversity and take into account the particular needs of our parent community.

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## *Assistance*

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Upon request, we will provide a complainant with the support needed to formulate and lodge a complaint. Trained staff are available from the department to help complainants formulate and lodge a complaint.

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## *Responsiveness*

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Complaints will be dealt with quickly and efficiently. We will maintain regular contact with complainants to keep them informed of the progress of their complaint.

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## *Charges*

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There will be no charge to the complainant for the raising of a complaint with us.

NB: Where relevant, statutory charges, for example, Freedom of Information requests, still apply.

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## *Remedies*

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Our complaints handling system has the capacity to determine and put in place remedies. Where a complaint results in the identification of changes that should be made to our processes, those changes will be made.

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## *Data Collection*

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Complaints received and their outcomes will be recorded under our school name in the Department of Education and Training's complaints handling database. Data about complaints lodged with our school is collected and stored.

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## *Systemic and Recurring Problems*

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Complaints are regularly analysed for the identification and addressing of systemic and recurring problems. We analyse our Complaints Register to identify areas where changes are required to address systemic and recurring problems.

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## *Accountability*

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We report our complaints handling processes against our documented performance standards. We report on our complaints handling processes as a part of our school review and evaluation procedure.

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## *Reviews*

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We review our complaints handling process regularly.

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## *Definitions*

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### ***Complaint***

A complaint is the expression of dissatisfaction with any aspect of the processes in place at our school. It may be general in nature or relate to particular staff, a part of the organisation, a policy or a decision. Any person may lodge a complaint, however staff employed by the Department of Education cannot use this process if they are acting in an official capacity.

A complaint must contain sufficient detail to enable it to be addressed and recorded.

### ***Locally Managed Complaint***

A verbal or written complaint made in relation to a school, or staff member and managed by the school.

### ***Centrally Managed Complaint***

A complaint lodged in writing with the Director General of the Department of Education and Training, and managed at Central Office.

### ***Complainant***

A person or persons who lodge a complaint.

### ***Receiving a Complaint***

Complaints are to be received and recorded as outlined in this policy.

All complaints are treated equally regardless of the manner in which they are lodged. Where necessary the complainant is to be given help in the framing, writing and lodgement of a complaint.

In all cases complainants are to be treated with courtesy and the contact is to be conducted and ended in a positive way.

### ***Verbal Complaints***

Be courteous and positive to the caller at all times.

Assure the caller that their call will be taken seriously.

Listen to the caller at all times and without admitting any liability, display empathy with what they are saying.

Repeat the substance of their complaint to check understanding of their position.

Explain the course of action that will now follow.

Identify yourself as the caller's contact person with regard to this matter.

Record information on Complaint Recording Form (attached at end of this Policy) / Complaint Recording Database.

### ***Written Complaints***

Record the complaint on Complaint Recording Form (attached at end of this Policy) / Complaint Recording Database noting that it is a written complaint. Write an acknowledgement letter to the complainant, ensuring that the complainant will receive this within the school's identified timeframe. In the letter, explain the course of action that will now follow and identify yourself/relevant person as the complainant's contact person with regard to this matter.

### ***Recording and Registering a Complaint***

It is the responsibility of the person who is the complaint contact person to record the complaint and file it on the School Complaints Register/School Complaints Database. The outcome of completed complaints must be recorded. The Register/Database is used to track and analyse complaints.

### ***Resolving a Complaint***

Local complaints should be resolved within 14 school days where practical. This should be seen as the maximum time and should be less wherever possible.

Where outside support is required or it is judged that the complaint needs to be handled externally to the school (Regional or Central Office) this determination will be made as soon as possible and all relevant material is to be forwarded promptly.

NOTE: The Department's Disputes and Complaints Policy and Procedures details the circumstances under which a complaint is to be managed externally to the school.

Where there are likely to be unavoidable delays, the complainant should be contacted and kept informed of the status of their complaint. This contact may be made by telephone.

For verbal complaints lodged by complainants who do not wish to be formally identified and who do not wish to lodge the complaint in writing, resolution can only be attempted directly with the caller. A written record of the nature of the complaint and the attempts for its resolution should still be recorded.

Where the Principal makes a judgement that a complaint is vexatious, trivial, without substance or does not warrant further action then the complaint is not investigated and the complainant is informed of this decision in writing.

### ***Remedies***

Possible remedies for resolving local complaints include:

Providing options for the resolution of a complaint;

Acknowledgement when a complaint has substance;

Providing a complainant with evidence that a complaint has been addressed in an open and transparent manner;

Apprising the complainant of changes in practices as a result of the complaint;

Provision of a written apology- where necessary; and,

Offering remedies to others who may have been affected in the same way, but who did not make a formal complaint.

### ***Escalation***

Should a complainant be clearly unsatisfied with the school's attempts to resolve a complaint, the following process applies:

- Advise the complainant of their right to take the matter further by writing to the North Metropolitan Education Regional Office.
- Provide the complainant with the name and postal address of the North Metropolitan Education Regional Office.
- Offer the complainant support in the formulation, writing and lodgement of the complaint with the Regional Office.

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## Complaints Record Form

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(To be completed by the staff member receiving the complaint)

Date of Complaint: .....

Complaint received by:.....

- Complaint made via:
- Telephone
  - Letter (attached)
  - In person

Other.....

Subject of Complaint:.....

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Details of the complaint should be written on the next page. If there is insufficient space, attach extra sheets.

Information to be given to the Person making the Complaint:

Reassure the complainant that all complaints are treated confidentially and that they will not experience any loss of support or service because they have made a complaint.

Explain the complaints procedure.

Remind the complainant that they have the right to use an advocate of their choice and refer them to appropriate consumer advocacy services.

Thank the person for their complaint and explain that complaints are valuable in assisting to maintain and improve services provided by Mount Hawthorn Education Support Centre

Name of Complainant: .....

Address: .....

Phone number: .....

Detail of Complaint:

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Comments: .....  
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Action to be Taken:  
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Written Feedback to be Given by: (within 7 days).....  
Outcome: .....  
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Signed: (Coordinator)..... Date:.....

If outcome unsatisfactory, referred on to:

Name:..... Date:.....  
Organisation:.....

Follow up Required and by Whom:.....  
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If further referral required, response required by:.....

Person referred to:..... Contact no:.....  
Position and Organisation:.....  
Outcome:.....  
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Follow up required:.....  
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Signed:..... Position:..... Date:.....