



# COMPLAINTS: FAIR TREATMENT AND GRIEVANCE RESOLUTION FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS AND STUDENTS POLICY

## 1. Purpose

To ensure parents/guardians and students feel valued and involved with the school and are encouraged to voice their concerns. Problems are likely to arise if parents/guardians feel that the school is not open to their concerns. It is better to have a direct complaint to a member of staff than to have parents sharing their dissatisfaction with others. The culture of Blue Gum Montessori School is open, and complaints are received in a positive manner to forge continuous improvement across the community.

## 2. Scope

This policy and procedure apply to all parents/guardians and students of children who attending Blue gum Montessori School.

## 3. Policy Statement

Blue Gum Montessori School recognises and acknowledges the entitlement of parent/guardians to complain and aims to work with parents/guardians and students in the best interest of the children and staff in the school community. Complaints are taken seriously, and every effort is made to handle complaints promptly and thoroughly.

The school's complaints procedure is designed to resolve problems and can provide the school with helpful information. Complaints will be treated as constructive suggestions and use to improve standards, which may prevent cause for further complaint.

Blue Gum Montessori School values diversity and does not tolerate and discriminatory practices. To achieve this, we support the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders students and their families.

Blue Gum Montessori School is committed to handling complaints effectively and efficiently. To manage complaints effectively, we have established complaints handling in line with:

- Principals 6 and 9 of the National Child Safe Organisation Principals
- The Australian/New Zealand complaints handling standard (AS/NZS 10002:2014 Guidelines for complaint management in organisations).

To manage complaints efficiently, Blue Gum Montessori School responds to complaints promptly and thoroughly.

Our internal complaints handling process is available at no cost and can be found on Transparent Classroom and in the newsletter throughout the year.

When handling complaints, Blue Gum Montessori School ensures that reporting, record keeping, privacy and employment law obligations are met.

Blue Gum Montessori School complaints handling process conforms to the rules of procedural fairness and confidentiality – information is only shared with those who need to know. Information may be shared verbally or in writing from people that they trust.



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### 4. Procedure and Types of Complaints

#### What constitutes a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to Blue Gum Montessori School, related to our services or operations, or the complaints handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.

Complaints about children abuse, grooming or other harm, or other breaches relating to conduct by:

- Current or former staff members
- Current or former students
- Other people on the School premises or at a School event

A complain may be made of parent/guardian thinks that the school has, for example:

- Done something wrong
- Failed to do something it should have done; or
- Acted in a discriminatory manner
- Acted unfairly or impolitely.

A complaint may be made about the school as a whole, a particular aspect of the school, or about an individual member of staff or member of the Board.

The use of a positive approach, clear communication and consistent implementation of school policies is the best instrument the school has to minimise the number of matters that escalate to a dispute. However, a matter may be escalated to a dispute, either internally or externally, for a variety of reasons, including the nature of the origin complain, the way in which it was handled, or due to ongoing unreasonable expectations and/or lack of satisfaction with proposed resolution of a complaint.

#### How should I complain?

You can contact the school in person, by telephone 9417 4060, at [feedback@bgms.wa.edu.au](mailto:feedback@bgms.wa.edu.au), by submitting a message on the school's website [here](#), by completing our paper based feedback form outside each classroom or by letter to Blue Gum Montessori School, 11 Hope Road, Bibra Lake, 6163. Please ask if you require some assistance in expressing your concern.

When you contact the school, please ask to speak to the Principal or School Coordinator. Be as clear as possible about what is troubling you. Or follow the flow seeking resolution chard below. Please note that analysis of complains and the causes with systematic failures will inform continuous improvement.

Members f staff will be happy to help. If may be best to start with the person most closely with the issue – e.g., the classroom teacher, or subject teacher. They may be able to sort thing out quickly, with the minimum of fuss. However, you may prefer to take the matter to a more senior member of staff, for example the School Coordinator or the Principal.

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### **Informal Complaints Resolution**

Most issues causing concern in schools can be handled quickly and in an informal manner. We therefore ask that, where appropriate, you first raise your concern directly with the relevant staff member. Even if the issue is resolved informally, all staff are required to log issues through our complaints management system, so we are able to identify any systemic issues arising and take appropriate rectification action. Please see the “seeking resolution flow chart” below.

### **How do I make a Formal Complaint?**

If you have been unable to resolve a matter informally, or simply wish to make a formal complaint, you can do so by any of the following means:

1. Provide your feedback/details of the complaint via the “Customer Service Feedback” function on our public website.
2. Sending an email to [feedback@bgms.wa.edu.au](mailto:feedback@bgms.wa.edu.au)
3. Writing a letter to the School addressed to the “The School Coordinator of the Principal”.
4. Telephoning the School and asking to speak to the School Coordinator or the Principal or relevant party.
5. Parents/carers can provide their feedback/details of the complaint via the feedback forms available throughout the school, as well as at Administration.

### **Containment of grievances and work towards resolution –**

#### **4.1. Process of dissemination of information on the process of Grievance Resolution.**

- School Handbook – on enrolment, signed for by parents
- Complaints and Concerns Procedure and Who to Go To
- Discuss with student at class meetings
- Principal open-door policy for all children and parents upon request

#### **4.2. Complaint Handling and Recording**

- The school will publish the complaints policy and procedure and make suggestions to assist member of the BGMS community.
- The school will maintain a detailed complaint register with the following details: date of complaint, name of complainant and relationship to school
- Subject of complaint and names of those being complained about and their relationship to the school
- Date of investigation completed
- Whether complaint was upheld
- Date of referral to review
- Complaint reviewer and relation to the school
- Date of review finalised
- Review resolution agreed with and offer to the complainant.

It is critical that complaints can be made in a culturally safe environment. In 2021, the school is appointing 2 positions as Integrity Officers to assist with the complaints process and making complainants feel comfortable and safe to report a complaint.

#### **4.3. An Open Organisation: Climate and Culture**

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BGMS aims for its school to be culturally safe with the handling of complaints. Problems can arise if parents feel that the school is not open to their concerns. It is better to have a direct complaint of a member of staff than to have parents sharing their dissatisfaction with others. Parents and student like to feel valued and involved with the school and the should be encourage to voice their concerns. Blue Gum Montessori school must ensure that there is evidence:

- That the school is open, listening to parents and students.
- That parents and students are comfortable in contacting the Principal/delegate and the teachers
- That staff and students are comfortable in dealing with complaints
- Teachers assist children to feel safe in making a complaint or to feel heard
- Staff members are encouraged to refer to the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
- Sharing concerns should be a natural part of learning at BGMS
- Staff to share their experiences at staff meetings to support children via best practice and procedural fairness.

#### **4.4. All complaints are handled seriously**

All queries and complaints must be considered important and a response or communication is preferred within 24 hours of receipt of the complaint and no later than 5 days.

In the response, a resolution may be offered immediately or a request for time made. In the request for time, the member of staff must state when the next communication will take place by.

Records must be kept of all complaints

The school will keep a file of complaints and other parental concerns because:

- It may become the cause of legal action in the future
- Patterns in the record may indicate a need for action.

#### **4.5. Lines of Approach**

Clarify you have all available information about the issue. Information can be obtained from:

- Class Teachers
- Senior Staff
- Principal
- Community Life Coordinator (for social class issues)
- Administration
- Board if a governance grievance

Please see the “seeking resolution flow chart” below.

#### **For all education issues:**

Discussion should first take place with the relevant person. Please see the “seeking resolution flow chart” below.

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome then communicating your concerns should be addressed to the Teacher, School Coordinator, Learning Differences Team, School Accountant and Principal/delegate.

At the Principal’s discretion the matter may be taken to the Board Chair for further consideration either the guidelines of a Fair Treatment and Grievance Procedure.

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### **For issues regarding the behaviour of staff:**

If possible, discussion should first take place with the staff member concerned. If you are dissatisfied with outcome or unable to discuss it with the contact person, then communication your concerns should be addressed to the Principal/delegate. You will receive communication from the Principal advising the outcome.

### **If the concern is about the Principal:**

Discussions must take place with the Principal.

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome or are unable to discuss it with the Principal, then a concern should be addressed to the Learning Differences team or School Coordinator for assistance and resolution. If further assistance is requiring, other support services can be actioned. E.g., Medication or investigation to ensure no bias.

### **4.6. Reducing Anxiety**

The school will reduce the anxiety of a complainant by taking the matter seriously and dispelling uncertainty about how the complaint will be handled. This will be achieved by:

- Informing parents, students, and staff about the complaint's procedure
- Acknowledging complaints preferably within 24 hours of receipt of complaint. Staff should inform parents what is happening to their concern or complaint and, if a more detailed response is needed by what date it will be received. The issue should be dealt with as quickly as possible
- Confirming the nature of the complaint and what is concerning the complainant
- Assuring parents that their views matter

### **4.7. Recording**

The school will keep an effective log of complaints and other parents/student concerns because:

- It may become the cause of legal action in the future
- Patterns in the record may indicate a need for action
- The Principal should be able to check the log and report on it regularly

The log should contain the following information:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Brief statement of issue
- Location of detailed file
- Member of staff handling the issue; and
- Brief statement of outcome

Confidential files on all complains will be maintained and kept together, cross-referenced with other files as necessary. The files will contain simple but clear notes of all conversations with parents about any source of dissatisfaction. The applied to friendly chats and to telephone conversations, as misunderstanding easily arise.

### **4.8. Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is an important issue for pupils, parents and staff. It is essential that any complaint is treated in a confidential manner and with respect.

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Parents often seek an assurance of confidentiality before expressing their concerns. If, for example, they wish to discuss a particular member of staff, they may fear that their child will suffer in some way because they have complained.

It is the school's policy that complaints made by parents should not rebound adversely on their children and similarly that complaints raised by pupils should not rebound on them or on other pupils. The question of confidentiality should be discussed sensitively and on an individual basis with the parents and the school's policy should be carefully explained.

Members of staff will be informed about complaints that might be damaging to their reputation. Training and support will be provided to help staff to deal not only with complaints that are made to them, but also to complaints that are made about them. This may involve a colleague who is not involved in the complaint.

Confidentiality applies with respect to both information relating to the person making the complaint and, if relevant, to a person against whom a complaint is made. The School is committed to maintaining the confidentiality of information throughout the complaints process.

Personally, identifiable information about a complaint will only be made available for the purpose of addressing the complaint and (unless the complaint contests) will be actively protected from disclosure.

**If there is a situation involving the Police, the Principal, or next most senior staff member, if the Principal is unavailable, must take responsibility for action in the school and the Board Chair should be informed as soon as possible. Co-operate and meet all employment law obligations.**

### **Anonymous Complaints**

Anonymous complaints may be where there is no name or address supplied, or where the complainants say that they do not wish to be identified.

Parents and pupils should be encouraged to give their names and should be given reassurance on the issues of confidentiality. If they persist in wishing to remain anonymous, it is at the Principal's discretion as to what action, if any, should be taken, depending on the nature of the complaint. It is difficult to follow up on anonymous complaints.

### **Resolution**

Satisfaction for a complaint may come from any of the following:

- Knowing that changes have been made, and that matters will be different in the future
- Knowing that the school is now alert to a possible problem
- Feeling that their concern has been considered seriously
- An outcome which may be different from the one they sought, but which they perceive to be well-considered
- A considered letter
- An apology

If time has been needed to consider matters, parents should receive correspondence. This should assure the complainant that the issue has been understood and the matter is being dealt with.

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The school is not obligated to keep complainants informed as to what action has been taken. This is especially important when the matter involves a staff member. The complainant maybe assured that action has been taken. This will help prevent misinformation being circulated in the school community.

### 4.8 Intractable Complaints

If a complaint becomes intractable, due to its nature or to the way in which it was handled, or possibly because the parent perceives the school to have 'closed ranks' against him or her the complaint will go to mediation in the first instance. If not resolved, investigation may be required and as appropriate, the Principal will discuss further with the Chair to seek resolution.

### Referral to the Chair of the School Board

In the occasional case, the procedure will be that the Principal refers the matter to the Board Chair and informs the parents at this stage that a decision has been reached.

## 5. Further Action

At all stages of a complaints resolution procedure the complainant should be reminded that they can seek legal advice if they wish, especially at the point where the school has done all it can to reach a resolution.

The matter may be referred to a process of an alternative dispute resolution. Alternative (or External) Dispute Resolution is an approach that can be employed with the objective of assisting parties to resolve disputes without progressing to legal action. Again, if incorporates the involvement of a third party. This approach can take the form of mediation, conciliation, or arbitration. In all instances, you will be offered the opportunity to bring a friend with you.

As a final step in the disputes and complaints procedure, if appropriate, school may agree to the engagement of an independent arbitrator to review the matter and facilitate a resolution. It is usual practice for an arbitrator to be:

- Agreed by both parties
- Remunerated by both parties (if appropriate)
- Assured both parties will accept the arbitrator's decision.

**Mediation** is a process where the parties, assisted by a third person, listen to each other, define the dispute, find points of agreement, investigate what is important to each party with the goal of reaching a workable agreement through the development of satisfactory options for resolution for each party.

**Conciliation** is a process whereby a third party assists the parties to a dispute to communicate their concerns to each other with the aim of finding resolutions.

**Arbitration** is a voluntary process, involving a third person (arbitrator), who can impose a resolution. Arbitration may be undertaken after mediation and/or conciliation.

The school recognises and acknowledges your entitlement to complain and we hope to work with you in the best interests of the children and young people in our care.

### ***Involvement of the Chair if the school's governing body***

If involved in a pursues/unresolved complaint by the complainant, the chair should discuss the matter fully with the Principal and be provided with relevant documentation. If a briefing is required from a member of staff, this should occur in the presence of the Principal.



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The Chair should respond to the complaint, notifying them that he/she is reviewing the matter, asking them if they wish to add anything further and providing a date by which they may expect a response. Usually, the role of the Chair would be to review the process that has been implemented to that stage and to assist in the facilitation of a resolution.

The Chair's response should be clear and detailed and may offer a meeting if the complainant remains troubled.

### ***Meeting with the Chair of the school's governing body***

If a meeting is requested, the Chair would offer to meet the complainant at a time convenient to them. Depending upon the nature of the complainant those usually involved are:

- The Chair of the school governing body
- The Principal and, at the most, one other member other staff; and
- The complainant.

The complainant should be permitted to bring with them a supportive friend who is not involved with the complaint. Legal representation would be discouraged at this stage.

The Chair, after questioning and listening to the complainant and the Principal, may be able to find a solution (this may include discussion with members of the governing body). Advice on the resolution should be conveyed, in writing to the complainant. If the complainant wishes to take the matter further, the Chair could consider the involvement of some form of dispute resolution. If this is the case, then the Chair has no further involvement until the person facilitating the dispute resolution reports back.

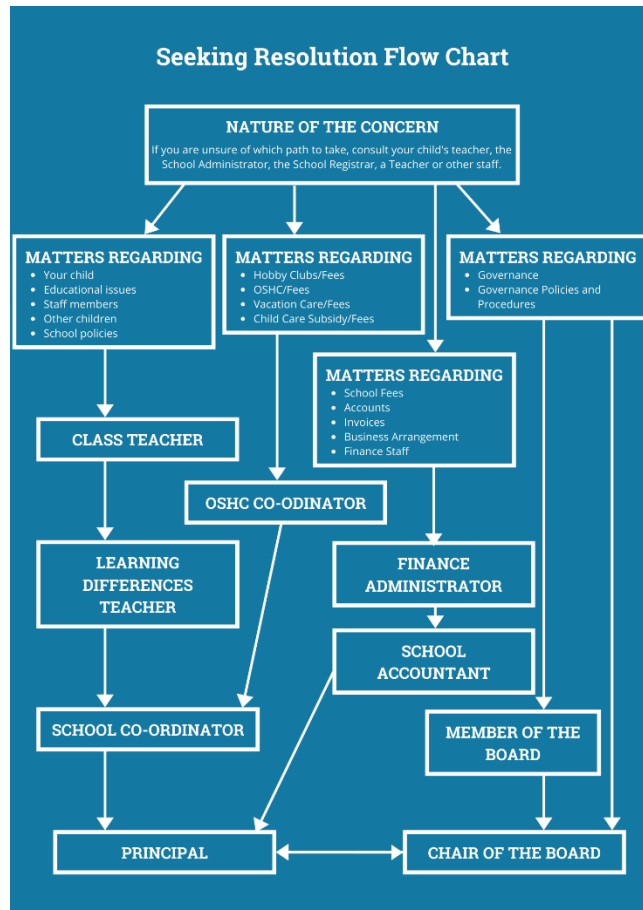
### **Role of the Director General**

*The Director General of the Department of Education is responsible for ensuring that the school observes the registration standards, including the standards about its complaints handling system. Any student, parent or community member is entitled to contact the Director General with concerns about how the school has dealt with a complaint. Information is available on the Department of Education website. While the Director General may consider whether the school has breached the registration standards, she does not have the power to intervene in a complaint or override the school's decision.*



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## 6. Seeking Resolution Flow Chart



## 7. Compliance, Monitoring and Review

### 7.1 Monitoring

Monitoring will be undertaken periodically by Blue Gum Montessori School's Principal and/or Risk Manager.

### 7.2 Review

The Principal/delegate will be responsible for the overall management and recording of this document.

## 8. Reporting

The Principal/delegate will be responsible for the overall management and recording of this document.

## 9. Records Management

Records concerning student will be kept for 7 years after the student reaches 18 years of age.



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Approval and Amendment History	Details	Date
Original Approval Authority and Date		23/9/2016
Amendment Authority and Date	Amendment to the flowchart	17/5/2017
Amendment	Minor changes to flowchart and role changes	17/04/18
Review		22/6/2018
Review	Review in line with AISWA recommendations and Guide to Re registration	21/12/2020