

Positive Grievance Resolution Policy and Appendix

Southern Montessori Education Centre Inc.

Version	Approved By	Date	Maintained By	Next Review
3	Board of Governors	August 2021	Governance	August 2024

Policy Statement

Southern Montessori Education Centre Inc. (Centre) strives to promote responsibility, respect and civility in its day to day interactions with students, parents, and staff and is committed to providing a safe and supportive learning and teaching environment.

All students, parents, teachers and staff have the right to be safe, and feel safe, in their school community. With this right comes the responsibility for not acting in ways that put the safety and wellbeing of others or oneself at risk.

The Centre's standards of behaviour apply not only to students, but also to all individuals involved in the community – staff members, parents or guardians and volunteers – whether they are on Centre property, or at Centre-authorized events.

The partnership between students, their parents/carers and the Centre is vitally important and forms the foundation upon which successful learning takes place. For this partnership to work effectively, there needs to be agreed structures in place to ensure open and effective communication between all stakeholders.

The Centre has a Positive Guidance Policy, underpinned by restorative justice practices, which value respect, honesty, mutual care and trust and places emphasis on taking responsibility for our behaviour and working actively to restore relationships.

While conflict is, at times, inevitable and natural among people who work closely together, when handled appropriately, conflict can serve as a useful motivator for positive change.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Centre's Child Protection Policy

Aim

To ensure that all grievances in the school community are dealt with according to these guidelines, that is - rationally, in the strictest confidence, within an atmosphere of mutual respect and genuine goodwill for matters to be resolved both quickly and to the satisfaction of all concerned.

Some Points to Bear in Mind

- Speaking to people not directly involved may complicate an issue and reduce the chances for its successful resolution.
- It may take some time to resolve an issue and the open and honest input of those directly concerned helps the process.
- It is not acceptable to discuss or 'post' grievances on social media sites or any public-facing forums.
- While constructive feedback appropriately given can be most helpful, criticism of the staff, Board members, fellow parents or students, can seriously undermine trust and confidence and hamper the development of good working relationships. For this reason, all members of the school community are asked to show respect for each other when dealing with areas of concern or conflict.

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- Either party has the right to ask that a discussion be mediated by a union representative or a trained counsellor where other means have not resulted in a satisfactory resolution of the issue.
- Where a staff member is involved in a dispute with management, that staff member has the option of an independent support person, mediator or union representation (if the staff member is a union member).

Positive Grievance Resolution Procedure

First Point of Contact	
Calmly, arrange a discussion with the person with whom you have an issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange a mutually convenient time to meet and discuss the grievance in private. • The issue will, in all probability, be resolved through a calm and frank discussion (in the case of student conflict refer to the Positive Guidance Policy). • Either party has the right to stop the discussion if it ceases to be productive.
If the Issue Is Unresolved	
Arrange a time to meet with the Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Principal will meet with you and assist in determining an appropriate course of action. • This may involve the Principal discussing the matter directly with the person the grievance is with and convening a meeting with both parties.
If the Issue Remains Unresolved	
Address your complaint in writing to the Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Principal will inform the person concerned of the complaint against them. • The person concerned will be given reasonable time to take advice. • The person concerned will meet with the Principal. Either party can request the presence of a mediator or union representative. • The person concerned will present a written summary of the issue to the Principal.
Principal Decides	
The Principal will respond to the complainant in writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Principal will consider all the facts. • The Principal will take any necessary action. • The Principal will inform the complainant of the Centre's decision in writing.

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Referral of a Grievance to the Board of Governors

As a general rule, the President of the Board of Governors and members of the School Board are not directly involved in the first instance with the receipt, investigation or resolution of grievances other than grievances arising within the Board itself.

In instances where a grievance is with the Principal, the same preliminary steps should be followed. After the procedure has been completed, should a person feel the matter cannot otherwise be resolved, a formal complaint may be lodged with the President of the Board. The President of the Board will expeditiously implement all reasonable steps to have the complaint fully investigated and to facilitate a resolution.

In other exceptional circumstances, where a mutually satisfactory resolution is not achieved, the matter may be referred to the President of the Board of Governors who will inform the complainant of the Centre's decision.

Withdrawal of a Grievance

A person may withdraw a grievance at any stage of the resolution process. If a grievance is withdrawn, the matter will be deemed to be closed.

Record Keeping

Accurate, appropriate and secure records will be kept by the person(s) responsible for overseeing or managing the resolution process for a particular grievance.

Appropriate Confidentiality

The Centre recognises that accusations can potentially be defamatory and can involve risks to those concerned, especially if such accusations are without foundation and reputations are damaged without just cause. All persons involved in grievances or complaints should maintain confidentiality unless otherwise required by appropriate circumstances or law, so as to minimise disruption in the Centre, harm to others and the risk of a civil suit for defamation.

Note: Neither the Minister for Education and Child Development nor the Department for Education and Child Development has any power to directly intervene in any complaints relating to the operation of non-government schools.

Supporting Documents

Child Protection Policy
Code of Conduct for Staff Policy
School Community Code of Conduct Policy
Dealing with Difficult Situations Policy

Document History and Version Control Table			
Version	Date Approved	Approved By	Brief Description
1	2014	Board of Governors	Creation of original document
2	March 2018	Board of Governors	Review ratified at Board
3	August 2021	Board of Governors	Review ratified at Board

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Informing the Positive Grievance Resolution Policy and Procedure are the following:

Key values underpinning restorative practices:

- Respect is the foundation for trust and goodwill; it is about being non-judgemental.
- Participation is about being inclusive of everyone and working collaboratively.
- Honesty is required when working together and when trying to meet and understand each other's needs.
- Humility is being aware of our limitations and vulnerabilities. It is about respecting others, acknowledging self-doubt and recognising that we may not know what others need.
- Interconnectedness is understanding that all things are connected, especially within the web of relationships. Therefore, the focus of the restorative process is on re-connection and nurturing relationships.
- Accountability is responding appropriately to the moral obligation to accept responsibility for the repercussions of our actions on others.
- Empowerment sets an expectation that all participants are active in their role, with an opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings about an incident and find an appropriate response to the situation.

A Restorative Process is one which:

- Brings together all those who have a stake in a specific incident
- Recognises who has been affected
- Explores and acknowledges how they have been affected
- Identifies what needs to happen in order to repair the harm caused
- Enables those involved to work out how to put things as right as possible

“The restorative approach models a community building process that works to preserve the dignity of all participants including the ‘wrongdoer’. It models a ‘working with’ rather than a ‘being done to’ approach. In working towards understanding and through listening, it creates an atmosphere which includes rather than excludes.” Dimmendaal (2005)

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