



The Maria Montessori Training Organisation
trading as
The Maria Montessori Institute

Complaints Policy

The Maria Montessori School is committed to providing a quality Montessori education for children and working in an open and accountable way that builds the trust and respect of all families connected with it. One of the ways in which we can continue to improve our service is by listening and responding to the views of our parents, and in particular by responding positively to complaints, and by putting mistakes right.

Therefore we aim to ensure that:

- making a complaint is as easy as possible;
- we treat a complaint as a clear expression of dissatisfaction with our service which calls for an immediate response;
- we deal with it promptly, politely and, when appropriate, confidentially;
- we respond in the right way - for example, with an explanation, or an apology where we have got things wrong, or information on any action taken etc;
- we learn from complaints, use them to improve our service, and review annually our complaints policy and procedures.

We recognise that many concerns will be raised informally, and dealt with quickly. Our aims are to:

- resolve informal concerns quickly;
- keep matters low-key;
- enable mediation between the complainant and the individual/s about whom the complaint has been referred.

An informal approach is appropriate when it can be achieved. But if concerns cannot be satisfactorily resolved informally, then the formal complaints procedure should be followed.

Definition: The Maria Montessori School defines a complaint as 'any expression of dissatisfaction (with a member of staff, or with the MMI Management or Board of Directors) that requires a formal response'.

Purpose: The formal complaints procedure is intended to ensure that all complaints are handled fairly, consistently and wherever possible resolved to the complainant's satisfaction.

The Maria Montessori School's responsibility will be to:

- acknowledge the formal complaint in writing;
- respond within a stated period of time (28 days);
- deal reasonably and sensitively with the complaint;
- take action where appropriate.



A complainant's responsibility is to:

- bring their complaint, in writing, to the attention of the Head Teacher should informal processes not be deemed satisfactory;
- explain the problem as clearly and as fully as possible, including any action taken to date;
- allow the Head Teacher a reasonable time to deal with the matter;
- recognise that some circumstances may be beyond the School's control.

Responsibility for Action: Head Teacher, Head of School, Management and Steering Committee of MMI.

Confidentiality: Except in exceptional circumstances, every attempt will be made to ensure that both the complainant and the Maria Montessori School maintains confidentiality. However the circumstances giving rise to the complaint may be such that it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality (each complaint will be judged on its own merit). Should this be the case, the situation will be explained to the complainant.

Methods

To achieve this, we operate the following complaints procedure. We are required to keep a log of all complaints that reach stage 2 or beyond. This is to be made available to parents as well as to Ofsted/HMI inspectors.

Making a complaint

Stage 1- Informal resolution

- Any parent/carer who has a concern about an aspect of the school's provision talks over, first of all, his/her worries and anxieties with their child's teacher.
- The head teacher will be informed of the parent/carer's complaint or concern.
- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved amicably and informally at this stage.

Stage 2

- If this does not have a satisfactory outcome, or if the problem recurs, the parent/carer moves to Stage 2 of the procedure by putting the concerns or complaint in writing to the head teacher.
- A Complaints record form is filled in by the school when written complaints are received (Annex).
- The school keeps written complaints from parents/carers in the child's personal file. However, if the complaint involves a detailed investigation, the head teacher may wish to store all information relating to the investigation in a separate file designated for this complaint.
- When the investigation into the complaint is completed, the head teacher meets with the parent/carer to discuss the outcome.
- When the complaint is resolved at this stage, it is recorded on the Complaints record form in the file. If it is not resolved parents/carers should proceed to stage 3.



Stage 3

- If the parent/carer is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, he or she requests a meeting with the head teacher and the child's teacher. The parent/carer should have a friend or partner present if required.
- An agreed written record of the discussion is made as well as any decision or action to take as a result. All of the parties present at the meeting sign the record and receive a copy of it.
- This signed record signifies that the procedure has concluded. When the complaint is resolved at this stage, a record is made and kept in the file. If it is not resolved, the parents/carers proceed to stage 4.

Stage 4

- If at the Stage 3 meeting the parent/carer and school cannot reach agreement, an external mediator is invited to help to settle the complaint. This person should be acceptable to both parties, listen to both sides and offer advice. A mediator has no legal powers but can help to define the problem, review the action so far and suggest further ways in which it might be resolved.
- Assessors and Mentors from Montessori Education (UK) are appropriate (objective) persons to be invited to act as mediators in addition to members of the Management/Steering Committee of the MMI.
- The mediator keeps all discussion confidential. S/he can hold separate meetings with the staff at the school and the parent, if this is decided to be helpful. The mediator keeps an agreed written record of any meetings that are held and of any advice s/he gives.

Stage 5

- When the mediator has concluded her/his investigations, a final meeting between the parent, the head teacher and the child's teacher if appropriate is held. The purpose of this meeting is to reach a decision on the action to be taken to deal with the complaint. The mediator's advice is used to reach this conclusion. The mediator is present at the meeting if all parties think this will help a decision to be reached.
- A record of this meeting, including the decision on the action to be taken, is made. Everyone present at the meeting signs the record and receives a copy of it. This signed record signifies that the procedure has concluded.

The role of the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, Early Years Directorate (Ofsted), and the Area Safeguarding Children Committee.

- Parents may approach Ofsted/DCFS directly at any stage of this complaints procedure. In addition, where there seems to be a possible breach of the school's registration requirements, it is essential to involve Ofsted as the registering and inspection body with a duty to ensure the National Standards for Day Care are adhered to.
- The telephone number of Ofsted is : 0300 123 4666

The Early Years Complaints Line: 0300 123 4666

- These details are displayed on our school's notice board.



- If a child appears to be at risk, our school follows the procedures of the Area Safeguarding Children Committee in our local authority.
- In these cases, both the parent and school are informed and the head teacher works with Ofsted or the Area Safeguarding Children Committee to ensure a proper investigation of the complaint, followed by appropriate action.

Records

- A record of complaints against our school and/or the children and/or the adults working in our school is kept, including the date, the circumstances of the complaint and how the complaint was managed.
- The written outcome of all complaints is recorded in a separate file which is available for parents and Ofsted/HMI inspectors on request and whether they were resolved following a formal procedure or proceeded to a panel hearing. Any action taken by the school as a result of the complaints is recorded and all correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.