



**The Maria Montessori Training Organisation
Trading as
The Maria Montessori Institute**

Complaints Policy

Introduction

The Maria Montessori School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its children. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School with care and in accordance with this Complaints Procedure. The Maria Montessori School makes its Complaints Policy available to all parents of children and of prospective children on the School's website and in the School office during the school day, and the Maria Montessori Institute will ensure that parents of children and of prospective children who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and of the form in which it is published or available, and of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year. In accordance with paragraph 32(1) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulation 2014, the Maria Montessori School will also make available, on request, to Ofsted or the Department for Education (DfE), details of this Complaints Procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

Scope and Application

- Requests for financial awards, such as claims for compensation or damages are outside the scope of this policy.
- All complainants should be aware that regardless of the nature of a complaint and whether or not it is upheld, complainants are not entitled to details of any related sanctions imposed on any person (including but not limited to staff, pupils or parents).
- Anonymous complaints will not normally be investigated. However, the Head of School, or where appropriate, the Executive Director, may determine, if appropriate and having regard to all the circumstances, that such a complaint warrants an investigation.
- Complaints must be received within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this timeframe only where appropriate and having regard to all the circumstances.
- We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.
- Although this Policy is made available to parents of prospective children in our School, it is not available for use by them; it may only be used by parents of current children.
- Complaints by parents of former children at our School will be dealt with under this Complaints Procedure only if the complaint was initially raised when the child to which the complaint relates was still registered as a child at the School. The only exception to this is if the complaint is a review of a decision taken by the Executive Director to exclude or require the removal of a child under clause 7 of the School's



Terms and Conditions in which case such a review must be requested by no later than five working days from the date of the decision to exclude or require the removal of a child.

“Parent(s)” means the holder(s) of parental responsibility for a current child about whom the complaint relates.

Regulatory framework

- This policy has been prepared to meet the school's responsibilities under
 - Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014;
 - Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, March 2017); 3
 - Education and Skills Act 2008;
 - Equality Act 2010.

Publication and availability

This policy is published on the school’s website and is available in hard copy on request.

What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the School as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff, and any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the School is within the scope of this procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The School is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you raise in good faith.

Process:

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. However, if concerns cannot be satisfactorily resolved informally, then the formal complaints procedure below should be followed.

The Three-Stage Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.

If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their child's Lead Teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Lead Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for them to consult the Head of School.

Complaints made directly to the Head of School will usually be referred to the relevant Lead Teacher unless they deem it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.

The Lead Teacher will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved **within 20 working days** or in the event that the Lead Teacher and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Complaints Procedure.

If, however, the complaint is against the Head of School, parents should make their complaint directly to the Executive Director whose contact details are available from the School Office on request.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head of School. The Head of School will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

In most cases, the Head of School will speak to the parents concerned, **within 10 working days** of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.



It may be necessary for the Head of School, or their nominee, to carry out further investigations.

The Head of School will **keep written records** of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

Once the Head of School is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head of School will also give reasons for their decision. In most cases, the Head of School will make their decision and provide the parents with reasons within 15 working days of the complaint being put in writing.

If the complaint is against the Head of School, the complaint should be made to the Executive Director. The Executive Director or their nominee will call for a full report from the Head of School and for all the relevant documents. The Executive Director may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Executive Director or their nominee is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Executive Director or their nominee will give reasons for their decision.

If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they should do so in writing to the Chair of the Steering Committee within 5 days of receiving the decision at Stage 2, setting out their grounds of appeal. Any supporting evidence which the parents wish to rely on should also be provided with their grounds of appeal.

The Chair of the Steering Committee will then refer the appeal to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the School. The Complaints Panel will appoint one of the Panel members to act as the Chair of the Panel. The Chair of the Steering Committee on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint within **5 working days** and schedule a hearing to take place **within 20 working days**.

If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing or further investigation be carried out. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties **not later than 5 working days** prior to the hearing.

The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not be appropriate. The Panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend.



The manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the Panel.

If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.

After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, **the Panel will make findings as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and accordingly decide whether to:**

Dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part;

Uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part; and

may make recommendations.

The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, **within 5 working days of the hearing** (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing). The decision of the Panel will be final. **A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chair of Trustees and the Head of School. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Chair of Trustees and the Head of School.**

Any complaint of a decision taken by the Executive Director to exclude or require the removal of the child under clause 7 of the School's Terms and Conditions (Parent Contract) will be governed by this Stage 3 of the School's Complaints Procedure. In such circumstances, the Panel may only uphold the complaint and ask the Executive Director to reconsider their decision if they consider, having regard to the process followed by the Executive Director, that the decision to exclude / require the removal of the child was not a reasonable decision for the Executive Director to have taken.

Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously, sensitively and within clear and reasonable timescales.

It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the School's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure **within 35 working days**. Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed **within a further 20 working days**.

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, **working days** refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays. This means that during School holidays it may take longer to resolve a complaint although the School will do what is reasonably practicable to avoid undue delay. It may also take longer to resolve a complaint during periods of significant disruption to School life or as a consequence of unavoidable staff absence, however deviation from the normal timescale for resolving a complaint during term time will only be permitted on an exceptional basis, and the School will take all reasonable steps to limit any such delay.



Persistent correspondence

Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this may be regarded by the School as vexatious and outside the scope of this procedure.

Recording Complaints and use of personal data

Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all formal complaints, whether they are resolved at Stage 1 (informal stage),] the formal stage (Stage 2) or proceed to a Panel hearing (Stage 3) and any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld).

The School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice When dealing with complaints the School (including any Panel member appointed under the Stage 3 process) may process a range of information, which is likely to include the following:

Date when the issue was raised

Name of parent

Name of child

Description of the issue

Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)

Witness statements (if appropriate)

Name and contact details of member (s) of staff handling the issue at each stage

Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)

Notes/minutes of the hearing, and

The Panel's written decision

This may include 'special category personal data' (as further detailed in the School's *Privacy Notice* and/or *Data Protection Policy*, but potentially including, for instance, information relating to physical or mental health) where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint. This data will be processed in accordance with the School's *Data Protection Policy*.

The School will keep records of formal complaints and Complaints Panel hearings, as required by regulation. It will do so in accordance with its *Privacy Notice*, *Data Protection Policy* and *Retention of Records Policy*.



Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.

Parents of children in our Children's Houses who are in the EYFS should follow the three stages of this Complaints Procedure. If parents remain dissatisfied and their complaint is about the School's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, then parents may take their complaint to Ofsted. Parents will be notified by Ofsted of the outcome of the investigation into their complaint within 28 days of the complaint being received.

The Maria Montessori School will provide Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any such complaints will be kept in accordance with its Privacy Notice and Retention of Records Policy

Parents may complain directly to Ofsted if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements.

Ofsted can be contacted on 0300 123 1231 or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD

In the academic year 2021-22 no formal complaints were received by the School.