

TREETOPS MONTESSORI SCHOOL

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Complaints Policy

Introduction

Treetops Montessori School's Complaints Policy provides parents (and guardians), students, staff and members of the public with the opportunity to be heard and to have complaints listened to and addressed, even though the resolution may not be the one desired by the complainant.

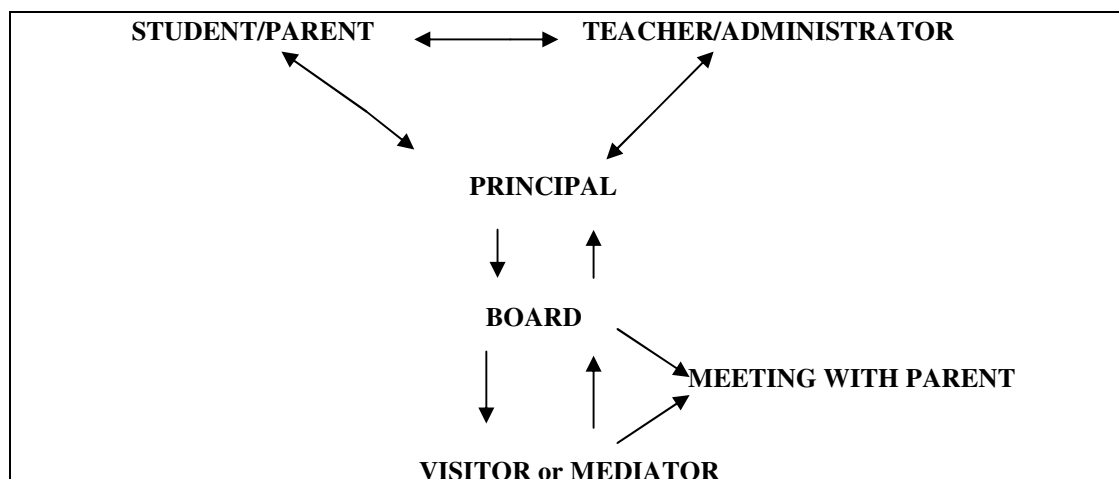
The process of handling complaints needs to be consistent and have an end process in sight. Parents, students and staff should all be made aware of the process and each step in the process should be documented.

The Nature of Complaints

There are four main sources of complaint: parents (and guardians), students, teachers and members of the public. While parents will often wish to raise issues on behalf of their children there are other issues which the children may wish to raise on their own behalf and which are best raised by them.

Complaints from members of the public will be treated in the same way as complaints from parents, although most of these complaints would be referred directly to the Principal or a senior staff member.

Complaints from staff regarding aspects of their work are covered under a separate policy.



Complaints from Parents or Guardians

Parents/guardians at Treetops should feel valued and listened to. They should feel free to voice complaints. It is best to have a direct complaint to a member of staff than to have parents sharing dissatisfaction with other parents.

Step 1 If a parent/guardian has a complaint the first step is to discuss this with the relevant teacher or the school administrator. The discussion should be fully documented.

Step 2 If the complaint remains unresolved the complaint should then be directed to the next most senior person, usually the Principal. If the complaint involves a student the Principal may need to talk with the student with or without the parent/guardian being present. All meetings should be fully documented.

Step 3 If after Step 2 the problem is not resolved the Chairperson of the school Board will need to be involved. This will usually be with the parent/guardian present but does not involve the student. The parent/guardian will be informed that this step has been reached. The Chairperson should discuss the matter fully with the Principal and be provided with relevant documentation. If a briefing is required from a staff member this should occur in the presence of the Principal.

The Chairperson should then respond to the parent/guardian notifying them that he/she is reviewing the matter and asking if they wish to add anything further. The Chairperson should also provide a date by which the parent/guardian may expect a response. The response should be clear and detailed and should include the offer of a meeting if the parent/guardian remains troubled.

Step 4 If a meeting is requested parents/guardians should be permitted to bring along a support person. Others involved should be the Chairperson, the Principal and, if appropriate, one other member of staff.

Step 5 If Step 4 does not resolve the matter the Chairman should consider seeking the advice of an independent arbitrator.

Complaints from Students

The principles that apply to parental complaints should also be applied to student complaints. Students should feel free to be able to raise concerns with any member of staff with whom they feel comfortable. Complaints that appear trivial should be handled seriously. Students should feel confident that they will be listened to.

If the complaint is a painful one for the student, he/she may need support from another student or an adult. They should be encouraged to choose a person whom they feel comfortable with.

The complaints procedure needs to be fully explained to the student.

The principles that apply to parental complaints should also be applied to complaints and concerns from students. All aspects of the handling of the complaint should be fully documented.

Complaints from the Public

Complaints from the public will be treated in a similar way to complaints from parents.

Reducing anxiety

People making complaints may feel vulnerable. Treetops can reduce this by making it clear that the matter will be taken seriously and that due process will be followed. Complaints should be acknowledged and followed up as soon as possible but no later than five working days after the complaint has been lodged. The complainant should be notified as to what approach is being taken.

Documentation

An effective log should be kept for three reasons:

- The complaint may become a case of legal action
- Patterns in the record may indicate a need for action
- The Principal should be able to report on the complaint regularly, if necessary, to the Board.

The log should contain the following information:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of complainant
- Name of student
- Brief statement of the issue
- Member of staff handling the issue
- Brief statement of action taken and outcome

Confidentially

All complaints should be treated in a confidential manner. It may be possible to deal with an issue without naming individuals. However, it may be impractical to deal with some issues without naming individuals.

Staff members have a right to know about complaints which may damage their reputation. Treetops is aware of the need to provide support for staff against whom a complaint is made. A member of staff who is not otherwise involved should provide this support.

Anonymous complaints

Anonymous complaints from the public should be dealt with on a general basis. If a complaint is about behaviour of students, the students should be reminded about school expectations.

Parents/guardians and students should be encouraged to give their names and should be reassured on the matter of confidentiality. If they persist in remaining anonymous it becomes the Principals discretion as to what action to take.

Resolution

Satisfaction for a complainant will come in any of the following ways:

- Knowing that changes have been made
- Knowing that the school is now alert to a previously unknown situation
- Feeling by the complainant that the matter has been satisfactorily dealt with
- A considered letter
- An apology

The complainant should receive a letter outlining the issue, action taken and outcome.