

COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Policy Reference B8.02 | Operational | Risk Section

Document Owner Executive Administrator	Version 2 — 2025	Date Created April 2025	Review Date January 2026
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1. Policy Statement and Purpose

This policy applies to Woodbury Autism Education and Research Limited (Woodbury) in handling complaints made in respect of services provided by the school, or against staff members, which includes employees, contractors, and volunteers.

Woodbury is committed to:

- Providing a clear, accessible, and fair process for raising and resolving complaints
- Treating all complaints seriously, consistently, and with respect for all parties
- Maintaining confidentiality throughout the complaints handling process
- Continuously improving services and practices through feedback and complaints

⚠ Important: This policy does not extend to personal grievances between parents, guardians, or other members of the school community, nor to whistleblowing disclosures. See Section 3 for related policies.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All complaints made in respect of services provided by Woodbury
- Complaints made against staff members, contractors, or volunteers
- Complaints raised by students, parents/carers, or any member of the school community

This policy does not apply to:

- Personal grievances between parents, guardians, or members of the school community
- Whistleblowing disclosures (refer to the Whistleblowing Policy)
- Matters listed in Section 3 that are governed by separate policies

3. Definitions

Term	Definition
Complaint / Grievance	An expression of dissatisfaction made to the school about an educational and/or operational matter relating to services provided by the school, or the behaviour or decisions of a staff member, contractor, or volunteer, including misconduct.
Complainant	The person making the complaint — which may be a student, parent/carer, or any member of the school community.
Reportable Conduct	Conduct by a staff member, contractor, or volunteer that may require mandatory reporting under the Children’s Guardian Act 2019. Refer to the Child Protection Policy.
Whistleblowing Disclosure	A disclosure of alleged misconduct, improper conduct, or illegal activity made by a board member, staff member, supplier, or related person. Governed by the Whistleblowing Policy.

Term	Definition
Clinical Director / Delegate	The primary responsible officer for receiving, assessing, and managing complaints under this policy, or their nominated delegate.
Support Person	A person chosen by a complainant or respondent to be present at any meeting related to the complaint. Must be approved as appropriate by the school.

4. Related Policies

Certain types of complaints fall outside the scope of this policy and are governed by the following specific policies and procedures:

Complaint Type	Applicable Policy / Procedure
Reportable conduct / child protection	Child Protection Policy
Student grievances (bullying, behaviour)	Student Code of Conduct / Behaviour Management Policy / Anti-bullying Policy / Student Wellbeing Procedures
Staff grievances (work matters, relationships)	Staff Grievance Policy
Unlawful discrimination, harassment or bullying between staff	Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Statement
Teacher accreditation matters	Teacher Accreditation Procedures
Whistleblowing disclosures	Whistleblowing Policy

Note: Complainants are not required to assess whether their concern meets the threshold of reportable conduct before making a complaint. Any concern about a child's wellbeing or staff conduct may be reported under this policy and will be directed to the appropriate process.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Board Chair / Delegate	Receives and manages complaints made against the Clinical Director; final escalation point for unresolved complaints
Clinical Director / Delegate	Primary point of contact for all complaints; assesses, manages, and resolves complaints under this policy
Executive Administrator	Supports record keeping and administrative processing of complaints; assists with acknowledgement correspondence
All Staff, Contractors & Volunteers	Required to maintain confidentiality; support fair and timely resolution; cooperate with any investigation

6. Confidentiality

All parties involved in the complaints handling process are required to maintain appropriate confidentiality, including in relation to:

- The identity of the complainant and any other parties involved
- The nature and details of the complaint
- The handling, progress, and outcome of the complaint

- The storage and access of all complaint records

⚠ Important: Where a complaint involves possible reportable conduct, the school may be bound by privacy or other confidentiality requirements that limit the information that can be shared with the complainant regarding the outcome of any investigation.

7. How to Make a Complaint

7.1 Complaints About General Matters or Staff Conduct

Complaints may be raised directly with the person involved. However, if the complainant does not feel comfortable doing so, or the matter is not appropriate for direct discussion, a complaint can be made to the Clinical Director.

Clinical Director

Email: feedback@woodbury.org.au

Written complaints by email preferred. Staff members may also scan the QR code on Wellbeing posters located around the school.

7.2 Complaints About the Clinical Director

Where a person wishes to make a complaint concerning the Clinical Director, the complaint must be made in writing to the Chair of the Board or their Delegate.

Chair of the Board / Delegate

Email: feedback@woodbury.org.au

In this situation, all references in this policy to the Clinical Director should be read as references to the Chair of the Board / Delegate.

7.3 General Policy Enquiries

For any general enquiries about this policy, contact:

Woodbury School Office

Email: office@woodbury.org.au

8. Complaints Handling Process

All complaints received by Woodbury are managed through the following step-by-step process:

1

Receipt and Acknowledgement

The Clinical Director/Delegate acknowledges receipt of the complaint in writing as soon as practicable after it is received.

2

Assessment

The Clinical Director/Delegate assesses the complaint to determine: (a) whether it falls under this policy or should be redirected to a related policy (see Section 4); (b) the priority level based on urgency and seriousness; and (c) whether the matter may need to be reported to the Office of the Children's Guardian, Police, Department of Communities and Justice, or other relevant authorities.

3 Advising the Complainant
The Clinical Director/Delegate advises the complainant of the likely steps the school will take in relation to the complaint and provides a realistic timeframe for resolution.


4 Notifying Relevant Parties
Where appropriate, the Clinical Director/Delegate advises the relevant parties (e.g. the staff member the complaint is about) of the complaint and provides them with an opportunity to respond.

5 Information Gathering
The Clinical Director/Delegate collects any additional information considered necessary to fully assess and understand the complaint. This may include interviews, documentation review, or other inquiries.

6 Resolution Decision
The Clinical Director/Delegate makes a decision about how the complaint will be resolved. The decision is based on the information gathered and the school's obligations and values.

7 Communication of Outcome
Where appropriate, the Clinical Director/Delegate advises the complainant and any other relevant parties of the resolution decision in writing, including any proposed actions to be taken.

8 Record Keeping
All complaints, correspondence, investigation notes, and resolution decisions are recorded and stored securely in accordance with Section 10 of this policy.

 **Note:** *There may be circumstances where some of the steps above are not appropriate. Woodbury will determine, on a case-by-case basis, the most appropriate method of handling each complaint.*

9. Support Persons

A complainant and any relevant party that a complaint is about may choose to have a support person present at any meeting with school representatives about the complaint.

- The school maintains the right to determine whether the preferred support person is appropriate
- The school may decline the attendance of a support person where they are considered inappropriate (for example, due to a conflict of interest)
- The complainant and relevant parties will be advised in advance of any such determination

10. Record Keeping

The Executive Administrator (under direction of the Clinical Director) is responsible for maintaining records of all complaints. Records must include:

- Date the complaint was received
- Name and role of the complainant (where provided)
- Nature and description of the complaint
- Actions taken at each stage of the process
- Resolution decision and outcome
- Date of resolution and communication to the complainant
- All supporting correspondence and documentation

All records must be:

- Securely stored in Woodbury’s records management system
- Accessible only to authorised personnel
- Retained in accordance with applicable legislative and regulatory requirements

Note: Complaint records may be requested during NESAs audits, regulatory investigations, or legal proceedings. Records must be maintained in a format suitable for formal review.

11. Monitoring and Review

- Compliance with this policy is monitored by the Clinical Director, with oversight from the Executive Administrator and Board of Directors
- A de-identified summary of complaints received, actions taken, and outcomes is provided to the Board periodically
- This policy is reviewed annually (next review: January 2026), or immediately following a significant complaint, change in legislation, or NESAs requirement update
- Identified trends in complaints are used to inform continuous improvement of school operations and services

12. Non-Compliance

Failure to comply with this policy may:

- Breach Woodbury’s obligations under the Education Act 1990 (NSW) and relevant registration standards
- Expose Woodbury to regulatory action or reputational risk
- Constitute misconduct and lead to disciplinary action for the responsible staff member
- Result in escalation of the complaint to external bodies (e.g. NESAs, NSW Ombudsman, Office of the Children’s Guardian)

13. Policy Approval and Version Control

Version	Date	Approved By	Summary of Changes
1.0	Prior to April 2025	Board of Directors	Initial policy document
2.0	April 2025	Board of Directors	

This document is approved by the Board of Directors of Woodbury Autism Education and Research Limited