

Complaints Policy

Approval Date	<p>Considered by People, Culture & Performance Subcommittee on 19 March 2026</p> <p>Approved by Board 27 March 2026</p>
Purpose	<p>The purpose of this policy is to ensure any complaints from parents, whānau, kaimahi, or other stakeholders are handled in a fair, timely and respectful manner in accordance with Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles and relevant legislative and regulatory requirements.</p> <p>This policy forms part of Central Kids’ documented system for managing and resolving complaints, in accordance with the Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008 and associated Licensing Criteria for Early Childhood Education and Care Centres.</p>
Explanation	<p>This policy aims to ensure that complaints are resolved promptly and effectively, and the organisation learns from any feedback or concerns that may arise.</p> <p>The policy also outlines the role of the Ministry of Education as the regulator of early childhood education services, and the circumstances in which matters must be escalated to the Ministry. This policy is based on the principles of natural justice, confidentiality, and continuous improvement.</p> <p>This policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – identifies delegated authority for complaint handling and escalation; – links complaint management to the Protection of Tamariki, Health and Safety, and Privacy policies, where triggered; – supports Board oversight and organisational learning from complaints.
Scope	<p>This policy applies to complaints, whether verbal or written, formal or informal, that relate to any aspect of Central Kids service operations, management, curriculum, health and safety, environment, or staff conduct.</p> <p>Where a complaint involves the person with delegated authority to manage it, the complaint must be escalated to the next governance tier.</p> <p>Complaints may relate to alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct Policy, Fairness and Disciplinary Policy, or any Central Kids operational policy.</p> <p>Where complaints involve matters that fall within the responsibilities of external agencies or legal processes, Central Kids will receive and assess the complaint and refer the matter to the appropriate authority where required.</p> <p>Where complaints involve disputes between private parties, Central Kids will focus on matters within the service’s responsibilities and may encourage parties to seek appropriate independent resolution where required.</p>
Definitions	<p>A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction or concern about the service, its practices, decisions, environment, or the behaviour of a person associated with the service or its operations, where a response or resolution is expected.</p>



A **serious complaint** is a complaint that raises concerns about the safety or wellbeing of a tamaiti or tamariki, legal or regulatory compliance, professional conduct, or significant organisational risk and must be escalated to the appropriate Delegated Authority Holder for investigation and consideration of regulatory notification where required.

A **complainant** is the person who makes a complaint.

A **respondent** is the person whose conduct, actions or decisions are the subject of the complaint, or who is responsible for responding to the matter raised.

A **resolution** is the outcome of a complaint process, which may involve an apology, an explanation, corrective action, a change of practice, a disciplinary action, or a referral to another process or authority.

Delegated Authority Holder is the person responsible for receiving, managing, or escalating a complaint at the relevant level of the organisation.

Delegated authority for complaints is defined as follows:

- Complaint about centre kaimahi/staff → Kaiwhakaako/Head Teacher
- Complaint about Mātauranga Ake kaimahi → Mātauranga Ake Manager
- Complaint about Kaiwhakaako/Head Teacher → Regional Manager
- Complaint about Regional Manager/Mātauranga Ake Manager → Kaihautū/Chief Executive Officer
- Complaint about Kaihautū/Chief Executive Officer → Board Chair (with independent investigation)
- Complaint about Board Member → Board Chair or Deputy (independent process)

Regulatory notification decisions, including Ministry of Education notifications, must be made by the Kaihautū/CEO or their delegated authority.

Te ao Māori principles

Complaints resolution at Central Kids is guided by Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles, and by Te ao Māori values. These principles guide how concerns are raised, heard, and resolved across the organisation.

Whanaungatanga - Partnership: Central Kids seeks to establish and maintain positive relationships with all parties involved in a complaint and recognise the importance of listening to, and acknowledging the perspectives and experiences of whānau, tamariki, and kaimahi. Communication is open and honest, and culturally appropriate including kanohi ki te kanohi engagement where appropriate. Any relevant support people or representatives that the parties may wish to have, such as whānau members, advocates, or mediators are welcome.

Manaakitanga - Participation: All parties involved in a complaint are treated with care, respect and dignity. Central Kids will ensure that the parties are well-informed and supported throughout the complaint process -including access to any resources or services that they may need, where appropriate.

Kaitiakitanga - Protection: Central Kids will act as a responsible steward and guardian of the quality and safety of the education and care that it provides. Complaints are taken seriously, and investigated, fairly and impartially. Where issues are identified, appropriate actions must be taken to address them and prevent recurrence. Where required, matters must be escalated or reported in accordance with relevant legislation and regulatory requirements.

	<p>Tikanga: Central Kids acknowledges that tikanga Māori (Māori customs and protocols) provides a culturally appropriate framework for resolving concerns. Complaint resolution should seek to restore balance, uphold mana, and support the well-being of tamariki, whānau and kaimahi.</p> <p>Through these principles, Central Kids aims to ensure that complaints are managed fairly, transparently, and in a way that supports learning, improvement, and strong relationships with whānau and communities.</p>
<p>Policy statement</p>	<p>Central Kids welcomes feedback and complaints as an opportunity to improve its quality and responsiveness to the needs and expectations of its community. Central Kids will treat all complaints seriously, confidentially, and respectfully, and will ensure that the rights and interests of both complainants and respondents are protected.</p> <p>Central Kids will acknowledge all complaints promptly and will aim to resolve them as quickly and effectively as possible, following the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness.</p> <p>Central Kids will keep the complainant and the respondent informed of the progress and outcome of the complaint process and will document all the steps and decisions taken.</p> <p>Central Kids will review its policies and practices regularly and will implement any changes or improvements that are identified because of a complaint.</p> <p>Where a complaint triggers child protection, health and safety, or privacy obligations, the relevant policy must be followed immediately.</p> <p>Where a complaint involves alleged abuse, neglect, or risk of harm to tamaiti, the Protection of Tamariki Policy and Report of Concern procedures must be followed immediately and take precedence over the complaints process.</p> <p>All complaints must be documented and recorded in Central Kids complaints register or approved complaints management system.</p> <p>Where a complaint identifies potential misconduct or serious misconduct by a staff member, the matter must be managed in accordance with the Fairness and Disciplinary Policy. The complaint investigation does not replace or duplicate formal employment processes.</p> <p>Complaints with potential reputational impact must be escalated to the Kaihautū/CEO and managed in accordance with the Media Policy.</p> <p>Decisions regarding regulatory notifications must be made in accordance with the Delegations of Authority Policy. Legal correspondence or regulatory engagement must be managed by the delegated authority holder.</p> <p>Serious or systemic complaints must be assessed for inclusion in the organisational Risk Register in accordance with the Risk Management Policy.</p> <p>Information explaining how parents and visitors may raise concerns or complaints about the service, including contact details for the Ministry of Education, must be made available in accordance with the Licensing Criteria.</p>
<p>Linked policies and procedures</p>	<p>Complaints Procedure and Poster. Protection of Tamariki Policy. Protected Disclosures Policy. Human Resources Policy.</p>



	<p>Delegations of Authority Policy.</p> <p>Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy.</p> <p>Privacy Policy.</p> <p>Fairness & Disciplinary and Code of Conduct Policy.</p>
Governance and Approval	<p>The Board will receive periodic summaries of Serious Complaints and regulatory notifications.</p> <p>Complaint trends should inform internal evaluation and continuous improvement planning.</p>
Policy review	<p>This policy must be reviewed at least every three years, or earlier if legislation or regulations change.</p>