

Grievance and Complaint Policy

BELLA GRACE EARLY LEARNING CENTRE

Background

Feedback from families, educators, staff and the wider community is fundamental in creating a Service that meets regulations, meets the needs of enrolled children and their families, and continues to improve the quality of education and care it provides to children.

It is inevitable that feedback will include differing opinions, occasionally resulting in complaints.

Policy statement

This Policy details the Service's procedures for receiving and managing informal and formal complaints. Parents and staff therefore can lodge a legitimate grievance in the knowledge that it will be managed diligently and confidentially.

Strategies and practices

- The Service's processes for airing concerns/complaints are communicated to families at enrolment.
- Details of the Service's email address and telephone number, the email address and telephone number of the Service's Approved Provider, together with the full contact details of the Regulatory Authority are displayed in the entrance of the Service, and are also listed in the Parent Handbook.

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- The Service prioritises open, respectful and confidential exchange of information between the Service and its families. Parents are provided with many avenues for verbal and written communication about the Service's operations. Parents are informed when any of their feedback has led to improvements in the way the Service operates.
- The Nominated Supervisor models respect and a problem-solving approach to the receipt of grievances and complaints across the Service.
- Educators and staff receive professional development on ways to receive parents' concerns/complaints and to value the opportunity this feedback affords the Service for quality improvement.
- Staff/educators, students and volunteers are informed of the Service's *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* before commencing at the Service and are required to sign a Confidentiality Agreement to strictly adhere to that Policy.
- At all times the parents' right to air a grievance will be respected and no discrimination will be applied to either the family or child/ren as the result of the grievance.
- Parents are encouraged to raise informally with the child's primary educator or the Nominated Supervisor any concerns they have about the daily care of their child.
- Formal complaints can be raised verbally with the Nominated Supervisor who will document the complaint clearly and objectively on the Service's Grievance and Complaint Form. If the grievance is about the Nominated Supervisor, the matter can be directed to the Approved Provider.
- The Service maintains a register of written complaints and actions taken in response through its Grievance and Complaint Register. The register is reviewed regularly (e.g. nature, recurrence, outcome) to determine if the actions taken are consistent with the Service's Quality Improvement Plan and if changes to the Service's Policies are required.

Procedure for formal written complaint

- Complaints are to be submitted in writing using the Service's Grievance and Complaint Form. Information requested on the form includes the:
 - Name of the person making the complaint
 - Postal address and/or telephone number of the person making the complaint
 - Details of the complaint
 - Details of any witnesses.
- The complaint will be dealt with in the strictest confidence. The Nominated Supervisor/Approved Provider or delegated staff member involved in investigating the complaint will ensure that information is restricted only to those who genuinely need to be notified in order to deal with the complaint. If information specific to the complaint needs to be disclosed to others during its resolution, the complainant will be informed prior to this occurring.

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- The complaint will be entered into the Service's Grievance and Complaint Register, and written acknowledgment that the complaint has been received sent to the complainant.
- The Nominated Supervisor/Approved Provider/Operations Manager will investigate the complaint in an equitable, transparent and fair manner, and document the findings. Investigations involve consulting with the relevant stakeholders (including any person who may be the subject of the complaint) and reviewing documentation such as attendance records, accident reports and the Service's Policies.
- Actions to address the complaint will be determined, and the complainant notified in writing of those actions.
- Approved Providers are required to notify the regulatory authority of a complaint that alleges: a serious incident has occurred or is occurring while a child is being educated and cared for by a service or that the National Law and/or National Regulations have been contravened. Reporting to the Regulatory Authorities must be done within 24 hours of the complaint using the NQAITS portal. It may also be necessary to notify other relevant authorities.
- Where a serious grievance is raised against an educator it may be appropriate to ask that educator to stand down from duties with children while the investigation is conducted and may be asked to "show cause". If this occurs the team member should remain on full pay and may be relocated to another suitable position. The team member must be considered innocent of allegations until an investigation is concluded.

Grievance Resolution Procedure

- If families, educators or others have a concern, they should follow the Grievance Resolution Procedure below. If the person is unable to or not comfortable in following a particular step or they are not happy with the outcome, they should move onto the next step in the process.
 1. Raise your concern in a calm manner with the person with whom you have the grievance.
 2. Raise the concern with the Nominated Supervisor at the Service
 3. Contact the Management Team
 4. Contact the Approved provider
 5. When an issue cannot be resolved at the Service, the complainant can contact the Regulatory Authority.
- The same processes as those set out above apply to educators and staff in submitting formal complaints about any aspect of the Service's operations. However, staff grievances are dealt with under its Staff Grievance and Complaint processes.

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Steps for Handling a Grievance

- Actions taken in a grievance settlement procedure will remain confidential to the parties concerned.
- When a grievance is raised by a parent/guardian, team member or visitor, the following steps must be followed in a fair and just manner;
 - Listen carefully to the grievance
 - Advise the person who has raised the grievance, that you will investigate fully and will advise them of the outcome in a timely manner
 - Ensure the Director and Management are advised of the Grievance
 - Fully investigate the Grievance following the principles of procedural fairness and natural justice.
 - Ensure all discussions are documented.
 - Consider all information gathered and, in consultation with management decide on an appropriate course of action
 - Advise all relevant parties of the outcome of the investigation including the person who has raised the grievance.
 - Record the grievance on the Grievance & Complaints Form.
 - Monitor grievances for patterns and use these to guide further improvements
 - Where the grievance is between two staff members it may be appropriate to set an action plan which identifies barriers and acknowledges agreed goals.
- In instances where ongoing grievances pose a potential risk to the safety and wellbeing of educators and other staff, Service management will arrange a meeting with the family in the hope of working together to resolve the situation. Where this does not result in improvements, the Service Provider may choose to end the enrolment, allowing the family to seek alternative arrangements that may better suit their needs.

Links Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, National Quality Standard 2011

Regs	168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures
	173	Prescribed information to be displayed
	176	Time to notify certain information to Regulatory Authority

QA	4.2.1	Professional standards guide practice, interactions and relationships
	6.1.1	There is an effective enrolment and orientation process for families
	6.1.2	Families have opportunities to be involved in the service and contribute to service decisions
	6.1.3	Current information about the service is available to families
	7.1.1	Appropriate governance is in place to manage the service
	7.1.2	The induction of educators is, co-ordinators and staff members is comprehensive
	7.1.3	Every effort is made to promote continuity of educators and co-ordinators at the service
	7.2.3	An effective self-assessment and quality improvement process is in place
	7.3.1	Records and information are stored appropriately to ensure confidentiality, are available from the service and are maintained in accordance with legislative requirements
	7.3.3	The Regulatory Authority is notified of any relevant changes to the operation of the service, of any serious incidents and of any complaints which allege a breach of legislation
	7.3.4	Processes are in place to ensure that all grievances and complaints are addressed, investigated fairly and documented in a timely manner
	7.3.5	Services practices are based on effectively documented policies and procedures that are available at the service and are reviewed regularly

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Sources, further reading and useful websites

- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Guide to the National Quality Standard 2011

Sources, further reading and useful websites

- Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority – <http://www.acecqa.gov.au/> accessed 26 December 2017
- Bhatthela, M., Dunn, L., Tregillgas, T. (2008) *Ask a child care adviser (sic): Managing challenging issues with families*. http://ncac.acecqa.gov.au/educator-resources/pcf-articles/ACCA_Managing_Challenging_Issues_Sep08.pdf accessed 26 December 2017
- Department of Education and Training (Victorian State Government). (2017). *Parent Complaints - Child Care or Children's Services* <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/complainec.aspx> accessed 26 December 2017
- Owens, A. (n.d.). *Managing complaints*. http://ncac.acecqa.gov.au/educator-resources/factsheets/qias_factsheet_5.pdf accessed 26 December 2017
- ACECQA. (2017). *Reporting requirements about children*. <http://www.acecqa.gov.au/reporting-requirements-about-children> accessed 26 December 2017

Policy Review

The Service encourages staff and parents to be actively involved in the annual review of each of its policies and procedures. In addition, the Service will accommodate any new legislative changes as they occur and any issues identified as part the Service’s commitment to quality improvement. The Service consults with relevant recognised authorities as part of the annual review to ensure the policy contents are consistent with current research and contemporary views on best practice.

REVIEW DETAILS:

Review Date	Details of Changes
January 2018	Updated to changed NQF requirements 1 Feb 2018
May 2018	Reviewed. Minor wording changes made.
August 2018	Contact names updated.