

Handling Complaints

QA7 Governance and Leadership

Policy Statement

Little Graces values the feedback of educators, staff, families and the wider community to support the continuous improvement of the Service.

The Service affirms that people have a right to ask questions, influence decisions and provide input to the service provided. Complaints are taken seriously and are managed in a confidential, timely, transparent, and meaningful way.

The Service acknowledges that the common goal is to achieve outcomes acceptable to all parties and act in good faith to understand each other's point of view and value all differences.

Rationale

The Mandate for the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia 2009 – 2015, asserts that 'Catholic schools can serve as models for all within Western Australia who seek to create genuine communities.'

It is important to all educators at the Service, families are comfortable with the service provided and they feel able to advocate on their child's behalf should concerns arise.

Effective and respectful communication between educators and families' build shared understanding of each other's expectations and supports the establishment of respectful relationships that are fundamental to achieving quality outcomes for children.

Procedures

Making a Complaint

- Families may make a complaint directly to the child's educator, the Nominated Supervisor or the Principal.
- Educators will discuss complaints procedures and encourage all to raise issues that may occur.

Responsiveness

All written complaints will be acknowledged as soon as possible and responded to as soon as practicable. Complaints will be dealt with in a timely manner and complainants will be kept informed as appropriate. Allegations of suspected harm or risk to a child or possible victims of crime, will be actioned immediately by urgent referral and/or reporting to the relevant agency.

Please refer to Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) for relevant timeframes:

<https://www.acecqa.gov.au/resources/applications/notification-types-and-timeframes>

Managing a Complaint

Where possible, complaints will be dealt with immediately, by the child's educator as this is usually the person with the closest relationship with the family. If the complaint is about an issue that the educator considers to be outside their control, or the family does not feel they wish to share it with the educator, the complainant will be directed to the appropriate person for the complaint to be resolved.

Where an educator believes, they will have to share in confidence with another person, in order to resolve an issue, or if the nature of a complaint requires that a third party has to be informed in order to meet legislative requirements, they will inform the family of the need prior to any further discussions on the matter.

- The complaint will be documented and any legal requirements in relation to the complaint considered, such as the need to notify regulatory authorities.
- The complainant will be asked to provide information regarding how the situation could be rectified to their satisfaction.
- If possible, the problem will be resolved immediately. If this is not possible, the complainant will be advised that the issue will be given high priority and dealt with as soon as possible.

If the issues are complex, the complainant will be asked to put their concerns in writing.

Where mediation is required all parties will have the right to agree to the appointment of the mediator.

Notifiable Complaint

Complaints alleging that the safety, health or wellbeing of a child was or is being compromised, or that the law has been breached must be reported by the Approved Provider to the Regulatory Authority within 24 hours of the complaint being made (Section 174(2)(b), Regulation 176(2)(b)).

Refer to the Service Child Protection Policy and Procedure.

Complaints, incidents and serious incidents must be notified, by the Approved Provider, to the regulatory authority through the National Quality Agenda IT System (NQA IT System). Log in to access the portal where you can select the incident or complaint type and enter the required information.

Approved Providers are required to notify the regulatory authority of a complaint within 24 hours that alleges:

- A serious incident has occurred or is occurring while a child is being educated and cared for by a service.
- The National Law and/or National Regulations have been contravened.

A serious incident can include:

- The death of a child while that child is being educated and cared for at the Service or following an incident while that child was being cared for by the Service.
- A serious injury or trauma while the child is being educated and cared for, which:
 - Required urgent medical attention from a registered medical practitioner; or
 - The child attended or should have attended a hospital.
- Any incident involving serious illness at the Service, where the child attended, or should have attended a hospital (e.g. severe asthma attack, seizure or anaphylaxis).

- Any circumstance where a child appears to be missing or cannot be accounted for.
- Any circumstance where a child appears to have been taken or removed from the Service premises by someone not authorised to do this.
- Any circumstance where a child is mistakenly locked in or locked out of the Service premises or any part of the premises.
- Any emergency for which emergency services attended. NOTE: It does not mean an incident where emergency services attended as a precaution.

A serious injury, illness or trauma includes but is not limited to:

- Amputation
- Anaphylactic reaction requiring hospitalisation
- Asthma requiring hospitalisation
- Broken bone/Fractures
- Bronchiolitis
- Burns
- Diarrhea requiring hospitalisation
- Epileptic seizures
- Head injuries
- Measles
- Meningococcal infection
- Sexual assault
- Witnessing violence or a frightening event

Direct Complaints

Families can make a complaint directly to the Regulator Authority where the complaint alleges that:

- The safety, health or wellbeing of a child or children was or is being compromised while that child or children is or are being educated and cared for by the approved education and care service.
- The relevant legislation has been contravened.

Contact details are available in the family handbook and displayed in the foyer of the Service.

Follow-Up and Review

Each complaint will be viewed as an opportunity for improvement. After the complaint or grievance has been dealt with, the following will occur:

- Analyses of the complaint to determine if any policy or procedural changes need to be implemented.
- The Approved Provider, through the Principal, will follow through to determine that complaints and grievances have been successfully resolved to everyone's satisfaction. Families will be contacted to determine if they were satisfied with the way the issue was resolved, and educators' will be consulted about the outcome from an operational viewpoint.



Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

This policy will be monitored to ensure compliance with legislative requirements and unless deemed necessary through the identification of practice gaps, the Service will review this Policy every two years.

Families and staff are essential stakeholders in the policy review process and will be given opportunity and encouragement to be actively involved.

In accordance with Regulation 172 of the Education and Care Services National Regulations, the Service will ensure that families of children enrolled at the Service are notified at least 14 days before making any change to a policy or procedure that may have significant impact on the provision of education and care to any child enrolled at the Service; a family's ability to utilise the Service; the fees charged or the way in which fees are collected.

References

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