

Quality Area: 7.1.2 Management Systems: Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service.

**BERALA JACK & JILL
PRE-SCHOOL**



Complaints handling

Policy Reviewed: February 2026

Next Review Date: February 2027

Statement: Our service affirms that people have a right to question and influence decisions made and services provided. We take complaints seriously and manage them in a confidential, timely, transparent and meaningful way. We achieve this by:

- Maintaining the confidentiality of all parties in line with policy and legislative requirements.
- Acknowledging that the common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties.
- Acting in good faith and in a calm and courteous manner.
- Showing respect and understanding of each other's point of view and value difference, rather than judge and blame.
- Recognising that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced.
- Handling complaints objectively and ensuring that complainants do not suffer any reprisals from making a complaint.

Goal: Our service values the feedback of educators, staff, families and the wider community as a mechanism to support the continuous improvement of our service.

Implementation:

Making a direct complaint

- Written guidelines detailing complaint procedures are available in our services handbook and displayed in the foyer for easy reference.
- Families may make a complaint directly to the child's educator, Management Committee or the Nominated Supervisor. This can be in the form of email, phone or face to face. Anonymous complaints can be placed in the 'suggestion box' located in each room.
- The name and telephone number of the person at the service to whom complaints can be made, as well as the Regulatory Authority contact details is displayed in the notice board at the entry to the service.
- Families can make a complaint directly to the Regulatory Authority on 1800 619 113 or via email ececd@det.nsw.edu.au 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.
- Educators will discuss complaints procedures with children and encourage them to raise any issues they have.
- In consultation with children, educators will conduct a yearly review of the children's complaint handling flowchart.

Responsiveness

All complaints will be acknowledged and responded to as soon as practicable. Complaints will be dealt with in a timely manner and complainants will be kept informed about the progress of their complaint and anticipated timeframes. Allegations of suspected harm or risk of harm to a child or possible victims of crime, will be actioned immediately by urgent referral or reporting to the relevant agency. Refer to ACECQA for relevant timeframes:

<https://www.acecqa.gov.au/resources/%20applications/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 Director for their complaint to be resolved. The Director is to talk with all relevant parties to resolve the problem.
- 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, the Director and Management Committee will inform the family of the need prior to any further discussions on the matter.
- Parents/carers will be told that their complaint will be documented and dealt with confidentially as soon as possible.
- The complaint will be documented and any legal requirements in relation to the complaint considered, such as the need to notify regulatory authorities.
- If the issues are complex the complainant will be asked to put their concerns in writing.

- The team member handling the complaint will attempt to diffuse emotions by acknowledging what they are feeling, and state positively that you wish to seek a solution to the issue that is causing concern.
- The team member will ask the complainant if they have any strategies or solutions that they feel could be put in place to resolve their issues.
- 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 and a suitable time and place will be organised to discuss the issue.
- Where mediation is required, all parties will have the right to agree to the appointment of the mediator

Managing a complaint of sexualised behaviour

- Our preschool educators and staff play an important role in making informed professional judgements regarding sexualised behaviour involving children. Not all sexual behaviour involving children poses a risk to their safety. It may be age-appropriate and expected sexualised behaviour.
- Informed judgements regarding sexualised behaviour help to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of children by:
 - supporting healthy sexual development (age-appropriate sexualised behaviour)
 - protecting them from harm or abuse (inappropriate or problem sexualised behaviour).

Note that in some cases, sexualised behaviour involving children may fall within reporting requirements under other laws.

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 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.

A serious incident can include:

- Any incident where you reasonably believe that physical and/or sexual abuse of a child has occurred or is occurring while the child is being educated and cared for by the service.
- Any allegation that sexual or physical abuse of a child has occurred or is occurring while the child is being educated and cared for by the service.
- 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. If a complaint has been made against an educator/staff member, the Nominated Supervisor will ensure that they receive advice, professional development or counselling as needed.

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
- Diarrhoea requiring hospitalisation

- Epileptic seizures
- Head injuries
- Measles
- Meningococcal infection
- Sexual assault
- Witnessing violence or a frightening event

Follow up and Review

- Each complaint will be viewed as an opportunity for improvement. Staff discussions will determine if any policy or procedural changes should occur.

Child-Focused Complaint-Handling

Our service maintains a complaint-handling system that upholds the rights, interest, safety, and wellbeing of children and young people. This system is founded on the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and child safety reforms, and ensures that all children have safe, supported and accessible ways to express concerns, complaints, or disclosures.

1. Embedding Children's Rights

- Children are supported to understand their rights, including their right to be and feel safe, to express their views, and to be treated with fairness and respect.
- The service actively promotes a culture where children are encouraged to raise concerns without fear of reprisal or blame.
- Educators and staff model respectful listening, value children's perspectives, and involve them—where appropriate and put children's rights and interests first in decisions that affect their daily experiences within the service.

2. Access and Visibility

- Information about the complaints process is displayed in clear, age-appropriate, and culturally inclusive formats (for example, child-friendly complaints visual posters, pictorial symbols, or simplified statements).
- Child-friendly prompts such as "I feel..." posters or SAFE series displays and Floorbook are available in accessible areas to help children identify and communicate concerns such as the Office of the Children's Guardians Child Safe Reporting Poster.
- Educators regularly remind children that they can speak to any trusted adult at the service if they are worried, uncomfortable, or unsure about something.

3. Multiple Avenues to Raise a Complaint

- Children may raise a concern in any form that feels comfortable—verbally, in writing, through drawing or play, or using communication tools (such as a floorbook).
- All educators are responsible for responding appropriately when a child raises a concern, ensuring it is taken seriously, documented accurately, and referred to the Nominated Supervisor immediately.
- The service maintains multiple, accessible reporting pathways to ensure that children’s voices can be heard and responded to promptly.

4. Support, Equity and Inclusion

- Educators are trained to recognise the various ways in which children express dissatisfaction, distress, or discomfort, including through non-verbal cues and behavioural changes.
- Reasonable adjustments are made to remove barriers to participation, such as providing interpreters, visual supports, or calm environments for communication.
- Engagement with Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, and culturally or linguistically diverse children and families is undertaken in a culturally safe, inclusive and respectful manner that recognises individual identity and background.

5. Documentation and Feedback

- All complaints or concerns raised by children are documented in the Complaints and Grievances Register (Book in office) using the child’s own words wherever possible.
- Children are informed, in developmentally appropriate terms, about the actions taken and any outcomes or decisions that relate to their concern.
- The Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisor review complaint trends to identify systemic issues and incorporate findings into ongoing quality improvement and governance processes.

6. Responding to Allegations of Harmful Sexual Behaviours

- Any complaint that alleges harmful sexual behaviour by a child is managed with sensitivity, urgency, and adherence to trauma-informed practice.
- Immediate steps are taken to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all children involved. Mandatory notifications and referrals are made to the relevant child protection authority or police, consistent with legislative obligations.

matter is handled lawfully, respectfully, and with a focus on minimising further harm.

7. Building Confidence and Organisational Capacity

- All staff engage in regular professional learning on child-safe complaint handling, managing disclosures, and responding to trauma.
- The service regularly consults with children and families on the accessibility and effectiveness of the complaint-handling system and uses their feedback to strengthen practice.

- Leadership ensures that reflective practice, supervision, and training maintain staff confidence and consistency in responding to children’s voices and concerns.

Sources:

Education and Care Services National Law
Education and Care Services National Regulations
NQF Resource Kit. Standard 7.3
CELA

Please refer to these policies:

- Confidentiality
- Governance and Service Management
- Parent, Family and Carer Participation