Hills Grammar

Dealing with Complaints Policy

Policy Statement

This policy reflects The Hills Grammar School's commitment to respond positively to critical feedback, ensuring that members of the School and ECEC community have the opportunity to contribute to the continued improvement of the School and Early Childhood Education Centre. It aims to outline clear, fair and effective procedures for the handling of complaints made by students and families including the raising of and responding to matters of concern. The ECEC values feedback of educators, children, staff, families and the wider community. 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.

Rationale

The ECEC affirms that families and children have a right to question and influence decisions made and services provided. Families are encouraged to speak to the staff in the ECEC if they have any concerns or comments that may help us improve our Centre or our performance. Most concerns will be resolved within the context of normal management procedures and do not illicit a formal complaint or require a formal investigation procedure. Complaints will be addressed openly and in a timely manner to increase levels of satisfaction and to maintain harmonious relations in the School and ECEC community. ECEC educators are committed to giving children the opportunity to have a voice and be heard and as such, this policy is both child and adult focussed.

Strategies

From time to time the members of the School / ECEC community and wider community may wish to raise complaints regarding educators, staff, other students and/or parents. In receiving and responding to complaints the terms complaints, grievances and allegations are often used inter-changeably. For the purposes of this policy the following definitions are used:

- A grievance is defined as "a cause for complaint that may or may not be well founded"
- A complaint is defined as "a statement expressing dissatisfaction with something"
- An allegation is defined as "an assertion, especially relating to wrong doing or misconduct on somebody's part that has yet to be proved or supported by evidence"

Making a Complaint

- Written guidelines detailing complaint procedures are available in the ECEC handbook which is available to families on the Intranet in addition to a copy provided on enrolment.
- Families may make a complaint directly to the child's educator, the Approved Provider or the Nominated Supervisor.
- The name and telephone number of the person to whom complaints can be made must be clearly visible at the service (Regulation 168(2)(o) and Regulation 173(2)(b)).
- Educators will discuss complaints procedures with children and encourage them to raise any issues they have.
- The approved provider and nominated supervisor will ensure confidentiality procedures are maintained.

Responding to Complaints

Once a complaint (either verbal and/or in written form) has been received it will be acknowledged and an investigation plan will be formulated that will;

- Ensure that the due process will be followed regarding the complaint
- Ensure that the student or child/parent making the complaint is fully heard
- Include the basis of the complaint and who it relates to
- Outline the requirements to resolve the situation
- Address the complaint in a timely manner
- Ensure confidentiality of information
- Be procedurally fair to all parties
- Include an effective reporting back system

However, the investigation of complaints may require further disciplinary action and lead to the imposition of penalties based on procedural fairness.

Managing a Complaint of Sexualised Behaviour

Providers and educators 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.

The Nominated Supervisor will:

- Comply with the ECEC Privacy and Confidentiality Policy and maintain confidentiality at all times.
- Endeavour to identify, prevent and address potential concerns before they become formal complaints.
- Notify the Approved Provider if the complaint escalates or is unable to be resolved appropriately in a timely manner.
- Work co-operatively with the Approved Provider, in any investigations related to a complaint made.
- Respond to any grievance or complaint professionally and in a timely manner.
- Ensure the inclusion of procedures for managing complaints alleging that a child is exhibiting harmful sexual behaviours.
- Ensure procedures for dealing with complaints include matters relating to the provision of a complaint handling system that is child focused.

- Ensure that the name and telephone number of the person to whom complaints and grievances may be addressed are displayed.
- Ensure that the address and telephone number of the Regulatory Authority is displayed.
- When a complaint or grievance has been assessed as 'notifiable' follow the process to notify the Regulatory Authority within 24 hours.
- 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 at the ECEC.
    - The National Law and / or National Regulations have been breached.

Educators will:

- Act professionally at all times when communicating with families, staff and the wider school community.
- Report all complaints received to the Nominated Supervisor and/or Approved Provider promptly so timeframes can be adhered to.
- Support the Nominated Supervisor and/or Approved Provider in the investigation and/or resolution of complaints.
- Ensure that grievances and complaints are dealt with in accordance with this policy.
- Understand and be aware of child protection law and their individual responsibilities
- Listen to and aim to resolve complaints in a positive way.
- Support children to know who to talk to if they are feeling unsafe and understand the complaint handling processes.
- Report and grievances and complaints to the Nominated Supervisor and maintain all relevant documentation.
- As requested, support the Nominated Supervisor and Approved Provider as required.

Children and young people have a right to feel safe at all times, and the ECEC has a responsibility to promote their safety and wellbeing. ECEC will:

- Support and encourage children's confidence and assist them to develop skills in participation and speaking up.
- Identify barriers experienced by vulnerable children, such as those with a disability, gender diversity, Aboriginal children and young people or from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds by developing and implementing strategies for promoting the empowerment of these children.
- Encouraging children to speak up if they have a problem, concern, need help or are not feeling safe and ensuring they are clear about the ways they can do so.
- Provide education around Respectful Relationships and Body Consent which is age appropriate.
- At all times, reassure and be respectful of children's concerns, ideas, opinions and feedback.

Families will:

- Raise a complaint directly with the person involved, in an attempt to resolve the matter.
- If necessary, make an appointment to meet with the ECEC staff member or Nominated Supervisor.
- Raise any unresolved issues or serious concerns directly with the Nominated Supervisor or Approved Provider.
- Maintain complete confidentiality at all times.
- Co-operate with requests to provide relevant information when requested in relation to the complaint or grievance.

Statutory Legislation and Considerations

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010

Education and Care Services National Regulations

Guide to the National Quality Standard ACECQA

Sources

Community Early Learning Australia www.cela.org.au

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) www.acecqa.gov.au

Australian Childcare Alliance www.childcarealliance.org.au

Office of the Children's Guardian https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/

Review

This policy is reviewed by management, employees and families as required or when legislative requirements change.

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