

# Elizabeth O'Grady Kindergarten Policies & Procedures

6 Charles Sturt Ave Grange SA 5022, 8356 8035

## ELIZABETH O'GRADY KINDERGARTEN

### PARENT COMPLAINT RESOLUTION POLICY

*At ELIZABETH O'GRADY KINDERGARTEN we believe parents are partners in the education of children. Regular two-way communication between parents/carers and the preschool is essential in helping children achieve their potential.*

*Our preschool is committed to ensuring that anyone with parental responsibilities for a young person can raise a concern or complaint, with confidence that it will be heard and responded to in an appropriate and timely fashion.*

#### RATIONALE

Safety of children is always the first priority. Our procedures are underpinned by the following principles:

1. All persons in the ELIZABETH O'GRADY KINDERGARTEN community including children, parents, staff and volunteers have the right to be treated with respect and courtesy in accordance with the preschool's values.
2. Parents have the right to raise concerns and make enquiries or complaints about any aspect of preschool life.
3. Information about how, where and to whom complaints can be made should be visible and accessible through preschool procedures.
4. Complaints will be acknowledged and addressed promptly within specified timelines.
5. Individual complaints will be assessed objectively and without bias using principles of natural justice.
6. The rights and responsibilities of all parties will be considered and balanced in attempting to find a mutually acceptable outcome to complaints.
7. The confidentiality of all parties will be maintained wherever possible.

#### PROCEDURES

##### Step 1: Talk to us

We try to resolve concerns or complaints at the local level wherever possible. If your concern or complaint relates to an issue concerning your child's education or experiences, you should talk to an educator as soon as possible. Make a time to talk to them to discuss your concerns, either in person or over the phone. You may want to put your concerns in a letter or email.

Our staff will, following a direct complaint:

- Listen to the complaint
- Record what you say
- Identify actions to resolve the concern
- Let you know what will or has been done
- Get back to you to see how things are going

If your concern has not been resolved following discussions with the staff member, you should contact the preschool director.

If your concern is about an educator, then you may wish to contact the kindergarten director. The director will look into your concerns and get back to you. They will work with you and the staff member to resolve the issue. Most complaints are resolved quickly, often within days.

The preschool director will:

- acknowledge receipt of the complaint as soon as reasonably possible (within 5 school days)
- listen to you
- provide support to you if necessary while the complaint is being considered

- investigate, consider and determine the most appropriate way to resolve the issue fairly and promptly
- consider relevant legislation, DECD policy and guidelines, preschool procedures
- inform you if there is a delay in the process
- ensure your complaint and the outcome is documented
- ensure that the outcome of the process is communicated to you verbally and, if appropriate, in writing including the right to refer the matter to the Education Complaint Unit.

The director will aim to resolve your complaint within four weeks, although complex and contentious matters may take longer. If this is the case, we will advise you.

**Please note:**

*Interpreters and Aboriginal Education Coordinators are available to assist parents in communicating with us.*

**Step 2: Central resolution**

If you are not satisfied that your complaint has been resolved at the local level, you may choose to seek support from our complaints resolution services:

**Complaints about education and early childhood services**

Education Complaint Unit

Phone: 1800 677 435

Email: [DECD.EducationComplaint@sa.gov.au](mailto:DECD.EducationComplaint@sa.gov.au)

Who can help you by:

- providing advice and support about the issues behind the complaint
- advocating with local sites to ensure all options for resolution have been explored
- objectively reviewing complaints that have not been resolved at the local level, including through a formal review.

**Step 3: Other ways to resolve your issue**

If we can't resolve your issue through the previous steps, you may choose to seek independent advice and review by an external agency. The circumstances of your complaint will influence whether this option is available.

**External agency contact point:**

SA Ombudsman

Toll free: 1800 182 150

Phone: 8226 8699

Email: [ombudsman@ombudsman.sa.gov.au](mailto:ombudsman@ombudsman.sa.gov.au)

[www.ombudsman.sa.gov.au](http://www.ombudsman.sa.gov.au)

**Please Note:**

*Any written or verbal complaints that contain personal abuse, inflammatory statements, and comments of a threatening nature or intended to intimidate will not be addressed and the parent will be advised accordingly.*

*Parents can call the Education Complaint Unit on 1800 677 435 at any stage for information, advice and support.*

*In some circumstances it may be appropriate that a concern or complaint is escalated directly to Education Complaint Unit. In these instances, the parent will be advised of where the matter will be referred to and why.*

*Parents can also contact the Education and Early Childhood Services Registration and Standards Board of South Australia (EECSB) Ph: 1800 882 413 or the State Ombudsman: [www.ombudsman.sa.gov.au](http://www.ombudsman.sa.gov.au) for information, advice, and support and in circumstances where the complaint remains unresolved.*

### **Confidentiality:**

Confidentiality should be adhered to throughout the complaint resolution process. This means that the complaint should only be discussed with those people directly involved in the resolution process. Parents may request that their identity remain confidential when making a complaint. In this situation, every effort will be made to keep the parent's identity confidential but this may limit options for negotiating a resolution. (For example, an apology is unlikely to be forthcoming if the identity of the complainant is not known.) These circumstances also raise issues in relation to procedural fairness for those who have a complaint made about them as they have a right to know the particulars of the complaint.

The Director will determine upon receipt of an anonymous complaint to what extent the complaint will be investigated. Where the complaint is in relation to a Director, the Education Complaint Unit will make a determination and the Head of Child Development will make the final decision.

While every effort will be made to comply with a request to keep the parent's identity confidential, Freedom of Information requirements may result in a parent's identity becoming known.

### **Approaches that may be used to resolve a parent complaint**

Our preschool may take one of the following approaches to resolve a parent's concern or complaint:

- an acknowledgement that the complaint is valid and is worthy of investigation (overall or in part)
- identification of areas of agreement between the parties involved
- opportunities for all the parties involved to express their concerns, explain their point of view and clarify any misunderstandings
- acknowledgement that the situation could have been better handled (this does not constitute an admission of negligence)
- an opportunity for an apology
- recognition that the situation presents an opportunity for changes or alternate arrangements to be made to resolve the complaint
- discussion with the parties about the steps that will be taken to ensure that the event complained about will not reoccur
- an undertaking to review policy, procedures or practices.

### **Additional Information**

These procedures apply to parent concerns and complaints in relation to ELIZABETH O'GRADY KINDERGARTEN. These procedures do not apply to matters where there are legislated requirements or existing policies and processes of appeal, such as:

- Concerns and allegations of misconduct by staff, volunteers and service providers (criminal matters, child protection, corruption, etc)
- Employee disputes and grievances. (Employees should refer to HR17 Complaints resolution for employees 2000 for these types of complaints.)
- Complaints or appeals relating to student suspension and expulsion
- Duty of care or mandatory reporting responsibilities
- Work Health and Safety related issues
- Health support planning

This policy is not applicable where a parent has employed a third party (e.g. legal representation) in relation to their complaint. In these circumstances the complaint must be referred to the department's Legislation and Legal Services Unit for action.

### Concluding statement

This policy has been developed by the Governing Council, and will be reviewed and evaluated regularly by both Staff and Governing Council and modified as required to ensure continued relevance for the Centre. This policy was endorsed by the Governing Council on \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Director \_\_\_\_\_ Chairperson \_\_\_\_\_

Review date: Term \_\_\_\_ / 20 \_\_\_\_