



Thorndon Park Kindergarten

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Parent Concerns and Complaints Policy

Rationale

At Thorndon Park Kindergarten we believe that parents are their child's first teachers and therefore are partners with us in their child's learning and developmental journey. To help all children reach their true potential we strive for two-way communication between parents/carers and the centre educators. Providing quality programs that allow each child to reach their maximum potential is at the core of everything we do.

We are committed to ensuring that anyone with parental responsibilities can raise a concern or make a complaint about anything that may impact their child whilst engaged in this service. They can be confident that it will be heard and responded to in an appropriate and timely manner.

This Concerns and Complaints policy outlines the processes and anticipated outcomes when a concern or complaint is raised in regards to any service delivered at Thorndon Park Kindergarten.

In accordance with Quality Area 7. 7.1.2 Management Systems: Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service.

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Managed by:

Thorndon Park Kindergarten

Approved by:

Governing Council

Review Date: May 2018

Next Review: May 2020

Ratified by Governing Council on May 7th May, 2018.

1. TITLE

Parent Concerns and Complaints Policy

2. PURPOSE

Safety of children is always the first priority.

Our procedures are underpinned by the following principles:

- All persons in the Thorndon Park Kindergarten community including children, parents, staff and volunteers have the right to be treated with respect and courtesy in accordance with the centre's values which are based on the Code of Ethics doc.
- Parents have the right to raise concerns and make enquiries or complaints about any aspect of the preschool.
- Information about how, where and to whom complaints can be made should be visible and accessible.
- Individual complaints will be assessed objectively and without bias using principles of social justice.
- The rights and responsibilities of all parties will be considered and balanced in attempting to find a mutually acceptable outcome for all complaints.
- The confidentiality of all parties will be maintained wherever possible.

This policy statement provides information about avenues of communication which strengthens the partnerships between families and the preschool and leads to quality for all. It acknowledges and supports the importance of a relationship between home and the centre.

However, there may be times when you may have concerns.

These concerns may relate to:

- The centre Curriculum program.
- Your child's development
- support to assist the development of appropriate behaviours
- Centre policies
- Reporting on children's progress
- Another child/ren
- Other issues/

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all programmes and services within Thorndon Park Kindergarten on behalf of the centre at alternative sites.

4. POLICY DETAILS

4.1 PROCESSES FOR RAISING A COMPLAINT

Step 1. Talk to us

You should talk to an educator as soon as possible if your concern or complaint relates to an issue concerning your child's development, education or experiences. You may prefer to organise a mutually convenient time to meet the educator rather than discuss the issue via a telephone conversation. You are welcome to bring a support person with you, if you wish. The role of the support person is to provide advice and support during the process and not to answer questions on behalf of any of the parties or interfere with the discussion.

Our staff will, following a direct concern:

- Listen to the concern
- Formally record what you say
- Identify actions to resolve the concern
- Let you know what will or has been done to resolve the issue
- Communicate regularly with you about the concern
- Staff will inform the Centre Director of the concern and the response.

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

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 and centre procedures
- Inform you if there is a delay in the process
- Ensure your complaint and the outcome is documented to 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 DECD Educational Director.

Please note:

Interpreters and Aboriginal Education Coordinators are available to assist parents in communicating with us. Please contact DECD- Northern Adelaide Regional Office on 83144000.

Step 2: Contact the DECD Regional Office

If the complaint is about the Director of the centre or you are not satisfied with the outcome you may contact our local DECD Eastern Adelaide Regional Office on 8336 8800 at 5-11 Briar Road, Felixstow. The Regional Office will:

- Provide written acknowledgement of receipt of your complaint within 5 working days
- Clarify and record the nature of the complaint, including what expectations you have in relation to outcomes
- Investigate, consider and determine the most appropriate way to resolve the issue fairly and promptly
- Refer, where appropriate, any complaint that has not been raised at the centre level back to the Preschool
- 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.

Step 3: Contact the Parent Complaint Unit

If your complaint remains unresolved after working together with our Preschool, regional personnel and the Educational Director, you should submit, in writing, your complaint to:

Manager, Parent Complaint Unit

Level 6/ 31 Flinders Street

ADELAIDE SA 5000

PH: 1800677435

Or by email to DECD decd.parentcomplaint@sa.gov.au

You should include information about the complaint, including why it remains unresolved and an outline of what actions have been taken to resolve the complaint. You should also outline what you think a reasonable solution would be.

The Parent Complaint Unit, on behalf of the Chief Executive, will:

- Acknowledge receipt of the complaint
- Assess and make a recommendation to the Head of Schools or the Head of Child Development that:
 1. A review is not warranted and that you should be advised that no further action is considered necessary and that the complaint is now considered concluded; or
 2. A review is necessary; or
 3. The complaint should be referred to an external agency for investigation or review.

The Head of Schools or the Head of Child Development will review the advice and decide that the complaint (in full or part):

- Can be resolved (all parties agree on an appropriate response)
- Should be dismissed (complaint is either unsubstantiated, vexatious, outside of reasonable expectations in relation to confidentiality, cooperation, courtesy and respect or is orientated towards conflict)
- Remains unresolved and that an independent review by an external agency is required.

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.

4.2 REQUESTING YOUR IDENTITY TO REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL

Parents may request that their identity remain confidential when making a concern. 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 concern made about them as they have a right to know the particulars of the concern.

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.

4.3 ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS

Thorndon Park Kindergarten will assess every complaint that is made. The extent to which an anonymous complaint can be investigated will be limited, as centre staff cannot liaise with the parent about the complaint. Anonymous complaints also raise issues in relation to natural justice 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 the Director, the Educational Director will make the determination and for Educational Directors, the Head of Schools or the Head of Child Development will make the final decision.

4.4 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:

- The acknowledgement that the complaint is valid and is worthy of investigation (overall or in part)
- Identifications 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 will 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 preschool policy, procedures and practices.

4.5 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

These procedures apply to parent concerns and complaints in relation to Lantana 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 or exclusion
- Duty of care or Responding to Abuse and Neglect
- Work, Health and Safety related issues
- Health Support planning.

4.6 FURTHER INFORMATION AND SUPPORT FOR COMPLAINTS

Parents can call the Parent Complaint Unit hotline at any stage on 1800677435 for information, advice and support.

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

Parents can also contact the Education and Early Childhood Services Registration and Standards Board of South Australia (EECSB) Ph: 1800882413 or the State Ombudsman:

www.ombudsman.sa.gov.au for information, advice, support and in circumstances where the complaint remains unresolved.

4.7 ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

www.decd.sa.gov.au/parentcomplaint

DECD-Parent Concerns and Complaints Policy (2012)

<https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/national-quality-standard>

5. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW

Oversight:	Director of Thorndon Park Kindergarten
Implementation:	All Educators
Monitoring:	Thorndon Park Kindergarten Educators

Policy Implementation – 2012. Updated: 2015, 2018.
Current Policy Ratified – May 2018