

DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS POLICY

PURPOSE

Village Early Education welcomes feedback and recognises complaints and grievances as an important opportunity to address concerns, strengthen relationships and improve our practices.

All complaints and grievances will be taken seriously and managed respectfully, fairly, promptly and confidentially. Children's safety, rights and best interests are the paramount consideration in all decisions and actions.

This policy applies to complaints and grievances raised by or involving children, families, staff, educators, students, volunteers, visitors and members of the community, including workplace grievances raised by employees.

Complaints will be managed in accordance with principles of procedural fairness, child safety, privacy and applicable legal and regulatory requirements.

OUR APPROACH TO COMPLAINTS

Village Early Education will provide a complaints process that is:

- accessible and easy to understand
- respectful and non-judgemental
- child-focused and culturally safe
- fair and impartial
- responsive to individual communication and accessibility needs
- confidential as far as reasonably possible
- free from victimisation, intimidation or retaliation
- appropriately documented
- focused on resolution and continuous improvement.

A person will not be disadvantaged for raising a genuine complaint or participating in a complaint process.

Where appropriate, concerns may be resolved informally. More serious, complex or unresolved matters may require a formal complaint, investigation or referral to an external authority.

PROCEDURAL FAIRNESS

Where a complaint requires investigation or may adversely affect another person, Village Early Education will apply procedural fairness.

This includes:

- providing relevant parties with a reasonable opportunity to be heard
- ensuring decisions are made impartially
- considering relevant information and evidence
- providing a person who is the subject of a complaint with sufficient information about the concerns to allow them to respond
- ensuring the person responsible for investigating or deciding the matter does not have an inappropriate conflict of interest
- communicating outcomes to relevant parties where appropriate.

A support person may attend complaint or investigation meetings where appropriate.

A support person may provide practical and emotional support but does not act as the investigator, mediator or decision-maker.

MAKING A COMPLAINT

Complaints may be raised verbally or in writing and may be raised with a staff member, Centre Manager, Approved Provider or other appropriate Village Early Education management representative or an appropriate external authority.

Where possible and appropriate, minor concerns should initially be discussed with the person best able to address the issue.

The name and contact details of the person to whom complaints may be addressed, and the contact details of the Regulatory Authority, will be displayed as required by the National Regulations.

RECEIVING A COMPLAINT

A person receiving a complaint will:

- listen respectfully and without judgement
- take the concern seriously
- clarify the nature of the concern where necessary
- avoid making promises about outcomes
- maintain confidentiality
- document relevant information objectively
- refer or escalate the complaint where it is outside their authority or requires further action.

Complaints requiring formal management will be referred to the Centre Manager, Nominated Supervisor, Approved Provider or other appropriate management representative.

Complaints involving child safety, alleged misconduct, significant workplace concerns or possible breaches of law must be escalated immediately.

COMPLAINT MANAGEMENT

Complaints will be assessed to determine:

- the nature and seriousness of the concern
- whether immediate action is required
- whether a child's or person's safety or wellbeing may be at risk
- whether the matter can be resolved informally
- whether a formal investigation is required
- whether the matter falls under another Village Early Education policy or procedure
- whether external advice, investigation or notification is required
- whether there is a conflict of interest affecting who should manage the matter.

Formal complaints will be managed in accordance with the Dealing with Complaints Procedure

Where an investigation is required, relevant parties will be given an opportunity to provide information and respond to matters relevant to them.

CHILD-FOCUSED COMPLAINTS

Village Early Education is committed to ensuring children are safe, heard and supported to raise concerns.

Children will be supported to:

- understand that they can speak to a trusted adult if something makes them feel unsafe, worried or uncomfortable
- express concerns in ways appropriate to their age, development, communication style and individual needs
- be listened to respectfully
- have their concerns taken seriously
- understand, in an age-appropriate way, what may happen after they raise a concern.

Educators and staff must recognise that children may communicate concerns through:

- words
- behaviour

- emotional responses
- play
- drawings or other communication
- physical signs or changes in behaviour.

A complaint or concern raised by a child must not be dismissed because the child cannot provide a detailed or formal account.

Where a complaint relates to a child's safety or wellbeing, immediate action will be taken where necessary to protect the child or others.

CHILD SAFETY CONCERNS, ALLEGATIONS AND DISCLOSURES

A complaint involving any concern, allegation or disclosure relating to:

- child abuse or neglect
- grooming
- inappropriate conduct towards a child
- physical or sexual abuse
- harmful sexual behaviour
- a breach of child safety requirements
- any other concern that a child may be at risk of harm

must be treated as a child safety matter and managed immediately in accordance with the Child Protection Policy, Child Safe Environment Policy and relevant reporting procedures.

The complaint process must not delay:

- immediate action required to protect a child
- mandatory reporting
- reporting to police
- regulatory notification
- reportable conduct notification
- any other legally required notification.

Where another authority is investigating the matter, Village Early Education will cooperate with that authority and ensure any internal action does not compromise the external investigation.

COMPLAINTS INVOLVING HARMFUL SEXUAL BEHAVIOURS

Complaints or concerns that a child is exhibiting sexual behaviour that may be harmful to themselves or another child will be managed as a child safety matter.

Immediate consideration will be given to the safety and wellbeing of all children involved.

Educators and staff will:

- respond calmly and appropriately
- avoid blame or judgement
- immediately escalate the concern
- follow the Child Protection Policy and associated procedures
- meet mandatory reporting and regulatory notification requirements where applicable
- ensure children and families receive appropriate support.

STAFF-RELATED COMPLAINTS AND WORKPLACE GRIEVANCES

Staff members are encouraged to raise workplace concerns early so they can be addressed appropriately.

Where appropriate, a staff member may raise a minor workplace concern directly with the person involved in a respectful and professional manner.

Direct discussion is not required where the staff member:

- feels uncomfortable or unsafe
- believes the matter is serious
- is concerned about bullying, harassment, discrimination or misconduct
- is concerned about child safety
- believes a law, policy or employment requirement may have been breached
- has a complaint about their direct supervisor or manager.

In these circumstances, or where direct discussion has not resolved the issue, the staff member may raise the matter with the Centre Manager, Nominated Supervisor, Approved Provider or another appropriate management representative.

Staff involved in a workplace complaint must:

- communicate professionally
- provide relevant and accurate information
- maintain confidentiality
- avoid involving persons who are not relevant to the matter
- cooperate reasonably with the complaint process.

Staff will not be prevented from contacting a union, legal representative, regulator or other external body where they are entitled to do so.

COMPLAINTS ABOUT A MANAGER OR PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR HANDLING THE COMPLAINT

A person must not investigate or determine a complaint where they have a conflict of interest that may affect, or reasonably be perceived to affect, their impartiality.

Where the complaint involves the Centre Manager, Nominated Supervisor, Approved Provider or another person who would ordinarily manage the complaint, the matter will be referred to another appropriate management representative or independent person.

An external investigator, mediator or conflict resolution service may be engaged where appropriate.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Complaints and grievances will be managed in accordance with the Privacy and Confidentiality Policy.

Information will only be shared with persons who need the information to:

- manage or investigate the complaint
- provide procedural fairness
- protect a child or other person
- obtain professional or legal advice
- meet a legal, regulatory or reporting obligation.

Absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where disclosure is necessary to investigate the complaint, provide procedural fairness, protect a person from harm or comply with legal obligations.

All persons involved in a complaint are expected to respect the privacy of others and maintain confidentiality.

PROTECTION FROM VICTIMISATION

No person will be subjected to victimisation, intimidation, retaliation or adverse treatment because they:

- made a genuine complaint
- raised a child safety concern
- provided information as part of an investigation
- supported another person during a complaint process
- contacted an external authority.

Any allegation of victimisation or retaliation will be treated seriously and may result in further action.

NOTIFIABLE COMPLAINTS AND REGULATORY REPORTING

A complaint may require notification to the Regulatory Authority where it alleges:

- a serious incident has occurred
- a child's health, safety or wellbeing has been compromised
- the Education and Care Services National Law or National Regulations may have been contravened
- physical or sexual abuse of a child has occurred or is occurring at the Service.

Where required, notification must be made within the prescribed timeframe.

The Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor will ensure required notifications to the Regulatory Authority are completed.

Where allegations or concerns are also subject to child protection, police, reportable conduct, workplace safety or other external reporting requirements, those requirements must also be followed.

COMPLAINTS RELATING TO CHILD CARE SUBSIDY

Complaints relating to the administration of Child Care Subsidy will initially be referred to the Centre Manager or Nominated Supervisor and managed in accordance with this policy and the relevant CCS policies and procedures.

Families may also raise concerns directly with the Australian Government Department of Education or other relevant authority.

RECORDING COMPLAINTS

Formal complaints, grievances, investigations and outcomes will be appropriately documented.

Records may include:

- the complaint or grievance
- relevant correspondence
- notes of meetings or discussions
- evidence considered
- actions taken
- investigation findings
- outcomes
- external notifications

- follow-up actions.

Complaint records will be stored securely and only accessed by authorised persons.

Records will be maintained in accordance with the Record Keeping and Retention Policy and applicable legal requirements.

OUTCOMES AND FOLLOW-UP

The outcome of a complaint will be communicated to relevant parties where appropriate and subject to privacy and confidentiality requirements.

Where a complaint results in agreed actions, these will be monitored as appropriate.

The complainant may be provided with information about further internal or external options where they remain dissatisfied with the outcome.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT/EVALUATION

Our *Dealing with Complaints Policy* will be evaluated and reviewed on an annual basis or earlier if there are changes to legislation, ACECQA guidance or any incident related to our policy. Feedback will be requested from children, families, staff, educators and management. All families will be notified 14 days before any policy change that may have a significant impact on the provision of education and care to any child enrolled at the Service or the family's ability to utilise the Service.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 4: STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS		
4.1.1	Organisation of educators	The organisation of educators across the service supports children's learning and development.
4.1.2	Continuity of staff	Every effort is made for children to experience continuity of educators at the service.
4.2	Professionalism	Management, educators and staff are collaborative, respectful and ethical.
4.2.1	Professional collaboration	Management, educators and staff work with mutual respect and collaboratively, and challenge and learn from each other, recognising each other's strengths and skills.
4.2.2	Professional standards	Professional standards guide practice, interactions and relationships.
QUALITY AREA 6: COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS		
6.1	Supportive relationships with families	Respectful relationships with families are developed and maintained and families are supported in their parenting role.
6.1.2	Parent views are respected	The expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families are respected, and families share in decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing.

6.2	Collaborative partnerships	Collaborative partnerships enhance children's inclusion, learning and wellbeing.
QUALITY AREA 7: GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIPS		
7.1.2	Management systems	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service that is child safe.
7.2.1	Continuous improvement	There is an effective self-assessment and quality improvement process in place.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL LAW AND NATIONAL REGULATIONS

S. 2A	Paramount consideration—safety, rights and best interests of children
S.166A	Offences relating to inappropriate conduct
S. 172	Offence to fail to display prescribed information
S.174	Offence to fail to notify certain information to Regulatory Authority
12	Meaning of serious incident
84	Awareness of child protection law
168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures
170	Policies and procedures to be followed
171	Policies and procedures to be kept available
172	Notification of change to policies or procedures
173	Prescribed information to be displayed—education and care service other than a family day care service
175	Prescribed information to be notified to Regulatory Authority
176	Time to notify certain information to Regulatory Authority
183	Storage of records and other documents

SOURCES

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2025). [Guide to the National Quality Framework](#)

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2023). [Using Complaints to support continuous improvement](#).

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2025). [NQF Child Safe Culture Guide](#).

Australian Government Department of Education. [Child Care Provider Handbook](#) (Amended 2025)

Australian Human Rights Commission: <https://www.humanrights.gov.au>

Commissioner for Children and Young People- Western Australia. [Monitoring of Child-Focused Complaints Systems Report](#).

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010. (Amended 2023).

[Education and Care Services National Regulations](#). (Amended 2023).

Fair Work Australia: <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/>

Queensland Government- [Guide for effective complaints management](#)

REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED BY	Kelsey Pearce		
POLICY REVIEWED	AUGUST 2026	NEXT REVIEW DATE	AUGUST 2027
VERSION NUMBER	V20.08.26		
MODIFICATIONS	• annual policy review • merged the <i>Dealing with Complaints Policy (Staff)</i> into this policy • added the paramount consideration principle • introduced headings and improved structure for clarity and ease of use; reorganised content for a better flow • removed duplicative content • distinguished between general complaints/grievances and child-related concerns or complaints • reviewed and updated references and sources		