



BALLARA PARK KINDERGARTEN



PARENT CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

At Ballara Park Kindergarten we believe parents are partners in the education of children. Regular two-way communication between parents / carers and educators is essential in helping children achieve their potential.

Our preschool is committed to a complaints procedure that ensures anyone with parental responsibilities for a child can raise a concern or complaint, with confidence that it will be heard and responded to within an appropriate and timely fashion.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Our procedures are underpinned by the following principles:

1. The safety of children is always the first priority.
2. All persons in the Ballara Park Kindergarten community including children, parents, employees and volunteers have the right to be treated with respect and courtesy.
3. Parents have the right to raise concerns and make enquiries or complaints about any aspect of preschool life.
4. Information about how, where and to whom complaints can be made should be visible and accessible.
5. Complaints should be acknowledged and addressed promptly within agreed timelines.
6. Individual complaints should be assessed objectively and without bias using principles of natural justice.
7. The rights and responsibilities of all parties should be considered and balanced in finding a mutually acceptable outcome to complaints.
8. The confidentiality of all parties should be maintained.

Step 1: Talk to us

If your concern or complaint relates to an issue concerning your child's educator, you should talk to the person as soon as possible. Our staff are available following sessions or can be contacted on 8296 2928.

You may prefer to organise a mutually convenient time to meet the educator rather than discuss the issue via a telephone conversation. If you prefer a face-to-face meeting, you can bring a support person with you, if you wish. *"All of the parties involved in a DECD complaint management process can bring a support person to any of the meetings held to resolve your complaint."*

Our staff will:

a) following a direct complaint made about their work:

- listen to the complainant
- consider relevant legislation, DECD policy & guidelines and Ballara Park Kindergarten procedures and/or seek advice / support

- apologise for any behaviour that may have caused distress
- identify & discuss possible courses of action & timeline that could resolve the complaint as soon as reasonably possible (5 working days)
- follow up on actions and ensure complainant is satisfied with the outcome
- document the complaint, progress and outcome
- if appropriate, refer the matter to the Director of the preschool.

b) following a complaint made about another staff member or issue outside their responsibility:

- direct or discuss with the complainant the preschool's complaint procedures
- assist, if required, the complainant with making a complaint
- refer the complainant to the Director of the preschool.

Please note: Issues that involve Governing Council decisions can be raised with members of the Governing Council or with the preschool director to take, on your behalf, to Governing Council.

If the matter is not resolved, is preschool wide or you wish to have a person act as a mediator, you may want to meet and raise the issues with the Director.

The Director will:

- acknowledge receipt of the complaint as soon as reasonably possible (within 5 working days)
- listen to the complainant
- determine if support needs to be provided to complainant or educator while the complaint is considered
- consider relevant legislation, DECD policy and guidelines, preschool procedures and/or seek advice
- investigate, consider & determine the most appropriate way to resolve the issue fairly & promptly including negotiations between parties
- inform all parties if there has been a delay in the process
- document the complaint process and outcome
- communicate the outcome to the parties involved verbally and, if appropriate, in writing including the right to refer the matter to the Regional Office.

Please note:

- Interpreters and Aboriginal Education Coordinators are available to assist parents in communicating with us. Please contact the Director 8296 2928 or Regional Office 8207 3700 for assistance.
- 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.

Step 2: Contact our local DECD Regional Office

If you don't feel the issue has been addressed by Ballara Park Kindergarten, contact our local DECD regional office.

Southern Adelaide Regional Office

5th Floor Noarlunga House

NOARLUNGA CENTRE SA 5168

Phone: 8207 3700

Regional office staff will:

- refer, if appropriate, any complaint that has not been raised at the preschool level to the preschool
- determine the appropriate person to handle the complaint for example the Manager, Regional Support Services or the Assistant Regional Director
- acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing
- make an *assessment* of the complaint and if required, a negotiated /mediated solution or undertake a *formal review* following DECD guidelines
- if no solution or agreement is made with the delegated regional office person contact the Regional Director who oversees your local regional office.
- your Regional Director will review the complaint and make a decision in relation to the complaint according to the weight of the evidence and on the balance of probabilities.

Step 3: Contact the Parent Complaint Unit

If your complaint remains unresolved after working together with Ballara Park Kindergarten, regional personnel and the regional director, you should submit, in writing, your complaint to:

Manager, Parent Complaint Unit

Level 6

31 Flinders Street

ADELAIDE SA 5000

Ph : 8226 1000 There is also a Freecall number 1800 677 435.

Email: DECD.parentcomplaint@sa.gov.au

You should include information about the complaint including why it remains unresolved and an outline of what actions could be feasibly taken to resolve the complaint.

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 (this includes preschools) that:
 - a review is not warranted and that the complainant is to be advised that no further action is considered necessary and that the complaint is now concluded; or
 - a review is necessary; or
 - the complaint should be referred to an external agency for investigation or review.

The Head of Schools will review the advice and decide that the complaint (in full or in 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.

In circumstance where the complaint remains unresolved contact the State Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman will assess and investigate the complaint and try to resolve the problem.

Further information available at: www.ombudsman.sa.gov.au

Additional Information

Scope of these procedures

These procedures apply to parent concerns and complaints in relation to Ballara Park 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.
- Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare related issues.
- Health support planning.

Requesting your identity to remain confidential

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.

While every effort will be made to comply with a request to keep the parents identity confidential, Freedom of Information requirements may result in a parent's identity becoming known. More information about confidentiality in the complaint management process is detailed in the '*DECD Complaint resolution for employees procedure*'.

Anonymous complaints

Ballara Park Kindergarten will assess every complaint that is made. The extent to which an anonymous complaint can be investigated will be limited, as 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 Ballara Park Kindergarten Director, the relevant Regional Director will make the determination and for Regional Directors, the Head of Schools will make the final decision.

Possible approaches that may be used to resolve a parent complaint

The approach taken by our preschool to resolve a parent's concern or complaint may include:

- 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
- an opportunity for an apology to be made by any of the parties involved for any behaviour/actions that may have caused distress to another party
- acknowledgement that the situation could have been better handled (this does not constitute an admission of negligence)
- 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 or practices

For more information, see DECD policies on the website www.decd.sa.gov.au/parentcomplaint

This policy has been developed and endorsed by the staff and Governing Council. It is reviewed every three years or as necessary.

Last review and endorsement 31st July 2012