

Complaints Policy

Policy Statement & Commitments

It is important to BEPS OSHC Service that children experience respectful relationships between families and educators in a positive environment, with an appropriate avenue to raise issues with BEPS OSHC Service as they arise.

Brunswick East Primary School Outside School Hours Care Service (BEPS OSHC Service) values feedback as a means of improving its service delivery, and upholding positive relationships between the Service and its stakeholders.

BEPS OSHC Service understands that negative feedback or issues may threaten the communication between families and the Service, and how these issues are responded to will determine BEPS OSHC Service's ongoing relationships with families.

BEPS OSHC Service provides families with opportunities to influence decisions about their child's experiences at the Service, ensuring that families experience that their primary influence on their children's lives is respected and supported. Educators ensure that families are kept informed about any issue or incidents that affect their child, and that any concerns are taken seriously and acted upon.

Through implementation of this policy, Educators at BEPS OSHC Service experience regular open two-way communication with families, where educators have time to speak with families about any concerns, and the confidence that complaints will be dealt with in a positive and open manner.

BEPS OSHC Service is committed to:

- a fair and equitable complaints process
- ethical conduct
- a service culture free from discrimination and harassment
- the opportunity for review and further investigation
- open communication between families.

This policy applies to all educators and families who of BEPS OSHC Service, ensuring that all stakeholders have the right to a positive and sympathetic response to concerns.

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| Approved | July 2017 | Review date: | July 2018 |
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Procedures for Making Complaints

- Every family is provided with clear written guidelines detailing grievance procedures, included in BEPS OSHC Service’s Family Handbook.
- Families may make a complaint directly to the Coordinator or the person in charge in the Coordinator’s absence. This may include the School Principal.
- Families and children will be surveyed regularly to provide them with an opportunity to identify areas of concern, or ways in which BEPS OSHC Service could be improved, along with areas of strength.
- BEPS OSHC Service provides other means for input through daily contact with children’s educators, invitations to attend special and social events, email surveys, and advisory committees.
- Educators will discuss complaints procedures with children and encourage them to raise any issues they have with their educators and families, where appropriate. Children’s complaints will be taken seriously and resolutions will be sought.
- In order to assist families that wish to contact the regulatory authority, contact details for the Victorian Government Department of Education and Training are included in the Family Handbook, and are on display in the hall.
- A current copy of the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* and the *Education and Care Services National Regulations (2011)* are available in the OSHC office in the hall for educators and families to read at any time.

Procedures for Managing Complaints

- All complaints or grievances will be dealt with promptly and confidentially in a manner that:
 - o values the opportunity to be heard
 - o promotes conflict resolution
 - o encourages the development of harmonious partnerships
 - o ensures that conflicts and grievances are mediated fairly
 - o is transparent and equitable.
- Where possible, complaints will be dealt with on the spot by the child’s educator as this is usually the person with the closest relationship with the family. If the complaint is about an issue that the educator considers to be outside their control, or the family does not feel they wish to share it with the educator, the family may be directed to the Coordinator, or the School Principal for their complaint to be resolved.
- Educators will always welcome feedback, particularly that which raises a complaint or issue of concern, and explain why they appreciate the opportunity to improve BEPS OSHC service or rectify a mistake.
- All confidential conversations and discussions with families will take place in a quiet area away from the children, other families and educators who are not involved.

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- Where a family wishes their grievance to remain confidential this will be honoured. However, families will be advised that issues cannot always be resolved if they choose to remain anonymous.
- Where an educator believes they will have to share a confidence with another person in order to resolve and issue, or the nature of a complaint requires that a third party has to be informed in order to meet legislative requirements, they will inform the family of the need prior to any further discussions on the matter.
- The complaint will be documented and any legal requirements in relation to the complaint considered, such as the need to notify regulatory authorities. BEPS OSHC Service has an obligation to inform the Victorian Government Department of Education and Training (as the regulatory authority) of complaints alleging *‘that the safety, health or wellbeing of a child or children was or is being compromised while that child or children is or are being educated and cared for by the approved education and care service, or that the Education and Care Service National Law Act 2010 has been contravened’*.
- The complainant will be asked to provide information regarding how the situation could be rectified to their satisfaction.
- The person receiving the complaint will clarify issues by actively listening and questioning the complainant to further understand the issues.
- If possible, the problem will be resolved immediately. If this is not possible, the complainant will be advised that the issue will be given high priority and dealt with as soon as possible.
- If the issues are complex, the complainant will be asked to put their concerns in writing.
- Where mediation is required, all parties will have the right to agree to the appointment of the mediator. School Council will advise BEPS OSHC Service of the appropriate procedures for this.
- If the complaint is about an issue outside of the control of BEPS OSHC Service, the person receiving the complaint will explain this to the complainant and let them know who they should contact if they wish to take the matter further.
- Any promises made to the complainant in regard to addressing the issue will be followed up and the results given to the complainant as soon as possible.
- A few days after the resolution of the incident, BEPS OSHC Service will contact the complainant to find out if they are happy with the way the problem has been resolved.
- Each complaint will be evaluated to determine how BEPS OSHC Service responded and whether further action is required.

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Procedures for Dealing with Complaints

BEPS OSHC Service has developed grievance procedures for dealing with the following possible complaints. The following points are subject to the above items in this policy on making, managing and dealing with complaints, and should be read in conjunction with these.

Complaints made by a child

- If a child wishes to raise a complaint **against another child** at BEPS OSHC Service, they will be encouraged to talk to their primary educator/s about the issue. Educators will support children to manage their relationships and behaviors at BEPS OSHC Service in accordance with BEPS OSHC Service’s policies on *Interactions and Relationships with children*, and *Children’s behavior*.
- If a child wishes to raise a complaint **against an educator** at BEPS OSHC Service, the child will be encouraged to talk to another educator, or the Coordinator. Children are supported to discuss their experiences at BEPS OSHC Service with their families.
- If a child wishes to raise a complaint **against another family member or other adult**, the educator will assess the complaint and discuss any serious issue with the Coordinator who will advise on the resolution of this. For any serious allegations, refer to BEPS OSHC Service’s policy on *Establishing a protective care environment*.
- If a child has a concern about anything or anyone at BEPS OSHC Service, they are encouraged to discuss the issue with the educator they know best.
- Educators support children to talk about things they like and things they don’t like with their families.
- Families may need to assist children to communicate with educators about issues at BEPS OSHC Service, and a time to talk about these may be arranged during pick up or collection.

Complaints made by a family member

- If a family member wishes to raise a complaint **against a child or other family member** at BEPS OSHC Service, the child’s educator will discuss the issue with the family member raising the complaint. The child or family member who the complaint is about will not be included in any conversation or confrontation by the family member, and in allegations of a serious nature the Coordinator will use professional discretion when assessing the other child and their family’s involvement.
- If a family member wishes to raise a complaint **against an educator** at BEPS OSHC Service, this is to be communicated with the Coordinator only, and where possible be provided in writing.
- If a family member wishes to raise a complaint **against the Coordinator** at BEPS OSHC Service, the complaint must be provided in writing to the OSHC Management Sub-committee of School Council, outlining what the issue is and how the family member would like the issue rectified.
- If family members have any queries, concerns or issues regarding the care of the children or the management of BEPS OSHC Service, they are asked to address these concerns to the

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Coordinator. If this is deemed inappropriate, given the nature of the concern, or the parent feels their issue was not adequately addressed, any further communication should be directed to the Brunswick East Primary School Council.

- All grievances and complaints received by the Coordinator will be discussed with the OSHC Management Sub-committee of School Council and/or the School Principal.

Complaints made by educator or employees

- If an educator wishes to raise a complaint **against a child** at BEPS OSHC Service, this is to be communicated with the child (where appropriate) if the complaint is about interactions, relationships, or behaviour; the educator must discuss the issue with the Coordinator who will advise if further action is necessary.
- If an educator wishes to raise a complaint **against a family member or other adult** at BEPS OSHC Service, this is to be discussed with the Coordinator, and where possible be provided in writing.
- If an educator wishes to raise a complaint **against another educator**, they are encouraged to discuss the issue with the educator and where possible deal with the matter on the spot. Where this is not possible, educators are asked to have these conversations away from children and families and with the support of the Coordinator where necessary.
- If an educator wishes to raise a complaint **against the Coordinator**, it is to be done so in writing to the School Council through the OSHC Management Sub-Committee, and must outline the issue and how the educator would best like the issue rectified.
- If an educator wishes to raise a complaint **against the OSHC Management Sub-Committee of School Council**, they are encouraged to discuss the matter with the Coordinator, and present the issue in writing to the School Principal.
- Procedures for educators to resolve a grievance or complaint **regarding their employment** will follow the appropriate award. Information about these procedures will be made available to educators when they are employed by the School Council.
- Educators can raise comments, suggestions, concerns, grievances or complaints about BEPS OSHC Service during staff meetings, and can raise these with the Coordinator at any time. Educators will actively monitor their own behaviour and practices in line with BEPS OSHC Service policy and procedures.

Complaints made by the School Council or the OSHC Management Sub-committee

- If the School Council or the OSHC Management Sub-committee of School Council wishes to raise a complaint, it will be done in writing, based on advice provided by the Victorian Government Department of Education and Training.
- Complaints made by the School Council may be against:
 - a family member or other adult

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- an educator at BEPS OSHC Service
- an individual involved in the management (School Council Member or OSHC Management Sub-committee of School Council) of BEPS OSHC Service
- the OSHC Coordinator
- a member of the community.

Complaint made by a community member

- Community members may wish for any reason to put forward a complaint about BEPS OSHC Service.
- Community members will be encouraged to put the complaint in writing, addressed to the School Council, which will respond in writing to the community member.
- If the complaint is about an issue outside the control of BEPS OSHC Service, the School Council will explain this in writing to the complainant, and let them know who they should contact if they wish to take the matter further, if known.

Procedures for Follow-up & Review of Complaints

- Each complaint will be viewed as an opportunity for improvement. After the complaint or grievance has been dealt with it will be analysed to find out how the problem occurred and determine if BEPS OSHC Service should implement any changes to policy or operational procedures to avoid similar problems in the future.
- The School Council will follow through to determine that complaints and grievances have been successfully resolved to everyone’s satisfaction. Families will be contacted to determine if they were satisfied with the way the issue was resolved, and educators will be consulted about the outcome from an operational viewpoint.
- BEPS OSHC Service’s Complaints Policy is reviewed annually, and whenever an incident occurs, to ensure the processes are clear and non-discriminatory. Family input is sought each time the policy is reviewed.
- Any complaints that allege that BEPS OSHC Service contravened the Education and Care Services National Law Act, or compromised the health, safety or wellbeing of any child at BEPS OSHC Service, will be reported to the regulatory authority, the Victorian Government Department of Education and Training, as required under the Act. These allegations will be taken most seriously and an immediate resolution will be sought.
- BEPS OSHC Service has an obligation under the Act to notify the regulatory authority of any complaints that include allegations of a breach of legislation, in particular when/if children’s health, safety and/or wellbeing have been compromised.

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This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- General Service Information Policy
- Confidentiality Statement
- Partnerships with Families
- Record Keeping & Confidentiality Policy

Sources & Legislative References

Gonzalez-Mena, J. & Stonehouse, A 2003, 'High-Maintenance Parent or Parent Partner? Working with a Parent's Concern', *Child Care Information Exchange*, July/August, Exchange Press, WA.

National Professional Support Coordinator Alliance 2012, *Getting started with policies for the NQF: Policies in Practice template – Grievance and Complaints Management* www.pscalliance.org.au

National Childcare Accreditation Council 2008, *Managing Challenging Issues*, www.acecqa.gov.au

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| <i>Education & Care Services National Law Act 2010 – Sections 3 (3)(a)&(e); 174 (2)(b)&(4)</i> |
| <i>Education & Care Services National Regulations (2011) – Regulations 75, 76, 80, 88(2), 93(2)&(5), 94(2), 99, 157, 168</i> |
| <i>National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education and Care & School Age Care (2010) – Standards 6.1 & 6.2; Elements 1.1.4 & 7.3.4</i> |
| <i>Framework for School Age Care in Australia 'My Time, Our Place (2011) – Outcomes 1, 2 & 3</i> |

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