Dealing with Complaints Policy

(Sourced: Education and Care Services National Regulations ACECQA March 2026, VECRA and NQF)

Policy Statement Snuggles Early Learning Centre is committed to:

- Provide clear procedures for making and dealing with complaints at the service.
- Fairness and equity in dealing with disputes, complaints and complainants.
- Compliance with all legislative and statutory requirements.
- Keeping confidential, where practicable the information provided by any person involved with a complaint.
- Investigate all complaints, dealing with them as soon as practicable.
- The resolution, where possible of complaints to the mutual satisfaction of those involved.
- Snuggles Early Learning Centre considers the safety, rights and best interests of children as the paramount consideration when developing policies and procedures.

All reports that are child sensitive will be managed with the best interests and supports recommended by leading authorities modelled on DFFH - PROTECT templates, VECRA and SSR recommendations.

Policy Background

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, parents/guardians and children who attend Snuggles Early Learning Centre and Kindergarten.

All notifiable complaints will be handled under this Complaints Policy.

All other complaints received by the service will be dealt with under this policy except for:

- Complaints relating to sexual and other forms of harassment which will be dealt with under the **Policy on the Prevention and Management of Sexual and other forms of Harassment**. **as outlined by Fairwork.**
- Complaints relating to equal opportunity, which will be dealt with under the **Equal Employment Opportunity Policy as outlined by Fairwork.**
- Complaints related to industrial or employment matters where the Directors will act in accordance with specific staffing policies and the requirements specified under relevant awards, industrial agreements or legislation.
- Complaints reflecting the Child Safe Standards will be addressed in accordance with the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act

The Directors may, in relation to complaints concerning the unacceptable behaviour of a specific child or children, refer to the resolution procedures set out the **Behavioural Guidance Policy** if this is seen to be appropriate in resolving the issue.

Legislative requirements

Snuggles Complaints policy refers to the following legislative requirements for dealing with complaints

Section / Regulation	Description
Section 2A	Paramount consideration - safety, rights and best interests of children
Regulation 170	Policies and procedures to be followed
Regulation 173	Prescribed information to be displayed
Regulation 175	Prescribed information to be notified t regulatory authority
Regulation 176	Time to notify certain information to Regulatory Authority

Principles to inform policy

All decision-making should be carried out in accordance with the principles of service's complaints policy.

- Children's safety, health and wellbeing is our key priority. In line with regulatory requirements, we notify the regulatory authority of any complaints alleging the occurrence of a serious incident or contravention of the *Education and Care Services National Law.*
- Our families are integral to our service. We welcome their input into all aspects of our service's operation, including any complaints they may have.
- We welcome complaints as an opportunity to enhance the quality of our education and care practices. We reflect on each complaint received, identifying any issues or areas of improvement for our service.
- When adults are making decisions that affect children, children have the right to say what they think should happen and have their opinions taken into account.
- Process to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused

Key terms

Some of the key terms referred in this policy

Term	Meaning	Source
Complaint	Expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organization, related to its products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required	Australian and New Zealand Standard Guidelines for complaint management in organizations – AS/NZS 10002:2014

Complaints handling	Effective resolution of a problem before it becomes worse and providing a remedy.	Commonwealth Ombudsman - Better practice complaint handling fyude
Investigation	A formal and systematic inquiry to establish facts about a complaint by collecting, documenting, examining and evaluating evidence. An investigation is not an end in itself. Throughout an investigation, the investigator should keep an open mind about the possible outcomes of the investigation, such as education, compliance action, or a decision not to pursue the matter.	Guide to the NQF (Regulatory Authority Powers – Monitoring, compliance and enforcement)
Personal information	Information or an opinion about an identified individual, or an individual who is reasonably identifiable: (a) whether the information or opinion is true or not; and (b) whether the information or opinion is recorded in a material form or not	Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)

Reference to Policy and Philosophy

This procedure is critical to ongoing open relationships and communication with our community.

The policy is reflected in our philosophy through

- Inclusion involves taking into account a child's social, cultural and linguistic diversity including learning styles, abilities, disabilities, gender, family circumstances and geographic location. Equitable access to our facilities and spaces both indoor and outdoor for all children is fundamental to our philosophy.
- Developing responsive, warm, trusting, respectful relationships with children, promotes their wellbeing, self-esteem and sense of security.
- The maintenance of high hygiene standards is essential in caring for the wellbeing of the Snuggles community.
- A strong sense of health, wellbeing and safety is supported by our emphasis on the nutritional, physical and the personal wellbeing of the community at Snuggles.
- To be able to act when required educators must have an understanding of current child safe policies and procedures inclusive of current legal responsibilities.
- Reflective practice and critically evaluating practice is a core element of educational practice at this service. It is at the heart of maintaining a learning culture and is linked with continuous improvement.
- Staff to child ratios are maintained and bettered where possible.
- Staff qualifications are celebrated and professional learning is supported.
- Respectful, reciprocal relationships are encouraged and supported at Snuggles.
- Professional standards guide practice, interactions and relationships.

- In genuine partnerships with families and educators each partner values each other's knowledge and roles, facilitating communication and respectful engaged relationships whereby shared decision making is fostered and supported. Staff at Snuggles support families in their parenting role acknowledging and respecting their values and beliefs about childrearing learning and development.
- Effective leadership promotes a positive organizational culture and builds professional respect and a professional learning community.
- When effective administration, records and management systems are in place, supported by policies and procedures, we can ensure the primary focus can be on the delivery of quality education and care for children and establishing productive partnerships with families.

Procedures

- Those involved with a complaint will have the opportunity to present their point of view.
- Complaints to the service will be investigated as soon as practicable after being received.
- All complaints will be treated seriously and investigated, regardless of whether they are being investigated by an external organisation such as the Department of Education
- Child Protection Protocol process for addressing a report is referenced to this policy (Refer: A step by step guide to making a report to Child Protection PROTECT, Compliant Handling – Upholding the rights of children and young people Overview) https://www.vic.gov.au/report-mandatory-report-abuse-family https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/Uploads/Early-Years-Reporting-Flowchart.pdf

A Documented Complaint

The community member will be asked if they are raising a complaint and if so, the complaint will be managed using the following methodology. If however, they are raising a suggestion/preference or providing feedback, this will be managed through our Room Record.

Step 1: Receiving the complaint

Complainants can use various ways, for instance, phone, email or in person to make a complaint. It is encouraged that all complaints are done in writing, to make the terms or basis of any complaint as clear as possible. When in the case of a child complaint they are guided through the process with an adult of their choosing

Unless the complaint is resolved at the first point of conduct, details of the complaint should be recorded along with other relevant information.

Step 2: Recording the complaint

Key complaint details will be recorded using the Complaint Record Form. This includes details about the complainant, any additional communication or support required; details about the subject of the complaint, the complaint issues, how the complaint was resolved/investigated; risk managed and the complaint outcome.

Step 3: Acknowledgement of the complaint

- Written complaints are to be addressed to Management.
- A contact point for the child and their parent/carer is identified.
- Information of the complaint-handling process, the likely next steps and expected timeframe is provided to the complainant.
- If in the case of a child complaint, pictorial representation and child appropriate language will be used

Step 4: Assessment of the complaint and address immediate risk

On the receipt of a complaint, Management will determine:

- Whether the complaint should be dealt with under the Complaints Policy, another of the service's policies or under the grievance procedure. Please refer to Reporting Child Abuse Policy if related to disclosure or. where the management of a complaint that alleges a child is exhibiting harmful sexual behaviours.
- Whether the complaint is a notifiable complaint under Regulation 84 174 175 176 Education and Care Services National Regulations and if it is, notify the Department of Education, VECRA, ACECQA within the specified timeframe
- Whether there is any immediate risk to the safety or wellbeing of a child or any person involved in the complaint
- Whether steps need to be taken to address and manage risks throughout the complaints process
- Whether the child or person affected by the complaint require any additional supports during the complaint process.
- What evidence needs to be immediately secured/kept confidential
- How serious, complicated or otherwise urgent are the issues raised in the complaint
- Whether the issue raised is within your organization's control and whether the outcome sought by the complainant is viable
- Where a complaint is received that should be dealt with under this policy, the Director or in their absence the Nominated Supervisor will follow the following process within a timely manner.

When handling a complaint from children, Snuggles will refer to the Complaint Handling Guide: Upholding the rights of children and young people (Complaint Handling Guide: Upholding the rights of children and young people | National Office for Child Safety).

Step 5: Planning the involvement of the complainant and processing the complaint
Management will:

- Develop a plan to meet the complainant, involving them in key stages of the process. This includes how information will be communicated to them and how they will be supported throughout the process.
- Consider the nature and the details of the complaint
- Give the complainant the opportunity to meet with them to discuss the complaint and to provide additional information where relevant.
- Maintain appropriate records of the information and data collected.
- Respect the confidential nature of information relating to the complaint.

Step 6: Investigate the complaint and gather relevant information
Management will:

- Meet individually with all witnesses to any alleged incident, giving right of reply to the person or persons against whom the allegations are made in relation to any accusation or information relating to an alleged incident.
- Review relevant information and documents.
- Obtain any information or documentation that will assist them in trying to resolve the complaint.
- Seek advice where appropriate from individuals and organizations that may be able to help resolve the complaint.

In the case of serious complaints, an evidence-based approach will be adopted.

- Further investigation will be conducted using the Complaint Handling Guide Checklist for responding to serious complaints involving the conduct of staff members and volunteers (including 'reportable allegations').
- Complainant will be kept informed of the progress.

Step 7: Resolving complaints

Management will wherever possible endeavour to resolve the complaint by mutual agreement of the parties involved, making a decision on the action if any, to be taken including relevant review mechanisms.

In the event that the complaint has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the parties involved, the Director or Nominated Supervisor will seek advice from Department of Education and Training.

Step 8: Providing the final outcome, closing the complaint and recording the outcome

- Final findings will be reported to the complainant and other stakeholders.
- The complaint is closed and a comprehensive record will be kept about:
  - The outcome
  - Any recommendations and/or outstanding actions and how they have been addressed.

Complaint records should be accurately maintained and securely stored in compliance with legal requirements.

Strategies for monitoring and implementing procedures.

- All regulated policies (168) are accessible on the google drive for staff and the website for families, students and volunteers, and are reviewed and published accordingly with community collaboration
- Processes are discussed and scenarios reviewed within teams to support the principal of partnerships and secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships will all members of our community
- The attached **Complaint Record Form** is used to conduct and record complaints of serious nature.
- Records of complaints are recorded in the Providing a Child Safe environment log book

Roles and responsibilities

Roles	Responsibilities
Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisor	• Take reasonable steps to ensure that nominated supervisors, educators and staff follow the dealing with complaints policy and procedures • Inform families and the broader service community of the Dealing with complaints policy and procedures • Ensure that the complaint is investigated, and all stakeholders involved with the complaints are informed of the final outcomes • Adjustments will need to be made for practice weakness identified.
Educators	• Understand and implement the Dealing with complaints policy and procedures • Report all complaints received to Management promptly so timeframes can be adhered to • Support Management in the investigation and/or resolution of complaints • Complete the complaint record form and inform all stakeholders involved with the complaints the final outcomes
Families	• Be familiar with and follow the Dealing with complaints policy and procedures • Raise any issues or complaints in line with the policy and procedures • Cooperate with service representatives dealing with complaints.
Children	• Express views freely and those views are to be given due weight in accordance with the developmental capacity of the child or young person and the circumstances.

Links to other policies

- Providing a Child Safe environment
- Incidents, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
- Interactions with Children Policy
- Behavioural Guidance Policy
- Enrolment and Orientation Policy
- Governance and Management Policy
- Staff and Recruitment Policy
- Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy
- Payment Service Fees Policy
- Sleep and Rest Policy
- Nutrition, food and beverages, dietary requirements policy
- Reporting Child Abuse Policy
- Safe Use of Digital Technologies and online environments Policy and procedures inclusive of the CCTV policy and procedures

Induction and ongoing training

- Child Protection - Mandatory reporting
- Child Safe Standards requirements
- Links to Inclusion Support and PSFO
- Links to Allied Health
- Links to the Reportable Conduct Scheme
- Links to the Code of Conduct and Victoria Teaching Professionals Code of Conduct
- Mentoring and coaching at Snuggles Early Learning Centre
- Performance Appraisal System inclusive but not limited to critical reflection
- Practiced in alignment with EMP review and implementation
- Induction processes engage educators, students and volunteers
- The Snuggles Child safe standards Audit documents (NQF Child Safe Culture Guide)

Snuggles Early Learning Centre is committed to the ongoing training and development of our Educators. Professional development is offered to Educators regularly to support the development, health and wellbeing of children and to support our community.

All regulated policies (168) are accessible on the google drive for staff and the website for families, students and volunteers, and are reviewed accordingly with community collaboration.

Policy created / reviewed

Last reviewed: May 2026
This policy shall be reviewed as required

Complaint Record Form

Date:	**Staff Involved:**
Your name: **Position:**	**Complaint assigned to:**
How was the complaint received (e.g. phone, email, in person):	
Name of complainant 1. Name of child or young person involved in the complaint: 2. Name of person making the complaint [if different to above]:	
3. Name of the person who the complaint was made about [if applicable]:	
Complainant Contact Details 4. Phone number: 5. Email:	
Details relating to the child or young person: 6. Age: 7. Gender: 8. Do they identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander? 9. Are they from a culturally and linguistically diverse background? If, yes, specify: 10. Are they in out-of-home care? 11. Do they have a disability? If, yes, provide any relevant details _____ 12. Do they have communication support needs? If yes: € Was the child or young person offered an interpreter? € Was the child or young person offered a communication assistant? € Was the child or young person offered a support person, advocate, family member? € Any other supports? 13. Provide any relevant information relating to the child or young person's preferred communication methods, support needs, and involvement in the complaint-handling process: 14. If the complainant has a disability, provide any relevant details relating to their guardianship, advocacy or other decision-making arrangements (e.g. the name and contact details of any nominees authorized to receive information on their behalf):	
Details relating to the complainant (if made by an adult on behalf of the affected child or young person) 15. Age: 16. Gender:	

17. Relationship to the affected child or young person:
18. Do they identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?
19. Are they from a culturally and linguistically diverse background? If yes, specify:
20. Do they have a disability? If, yes, provide any relevant details _____
21. Do they have communication support needs? If yes:
    - € Was the complainant offered an interpreter?
    - € Was the complainant offered a communication assistant?
    - € Any other supports?
22. Provide any relevant information relating to the complainant's preferred communication methods, support needs, and involvement in the complaint-handling process:

Nature of the complaint:

23. Complaint description (accurately record the issues, concerns, details of any witnesses, as far as possible in the community member's or child's own words):

24. What outcome to the complaint is the complainant seeking?

Immediate risk considerations: 24. Details of any injuries and if the child or others received medical attention: 25. Does the complaint indicate the possibility of criminal conduct? Yes/No/Unsure 26. Is a mandatory child protection report required? Yes/No 27. Does the complaint involve a reportable allegation/incident? Yes/No/Unsure 28. Is any immediate risk management action required? Yes/No
Next steps:
Final Outcome (The Outcomes, Recommendations or Outstanding Actions):
Signed: _____ Date: _____

SNUGGLES

Educating Children Birth to Kindergarten

Print Name: _____

Phone 98866112 FAX 98866117 Address: 552 Highbury Rd Glen Waverley, 3150
ABN 65 338 594 006