



Complaints Policy

At times, parents/carers/students/visitors/volunteers may have concerns about the service provided. Anybody who has a concern about any aspect of the provision is encouraged to speak to the preschool management team.

We believe that most complaints are made constructively and can be sorted out at an early stage. We also believe that it is in the best interests of the preschool and the parents that complaints should be taken seriously and dealt with fairly and in a way which respects confidentiality.

The difference between a concern and a complaint

A concern may be defined as *'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'*.

A complaint may be defined as *'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'*.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. We take concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible. Most concerns can be resolved through discussion and taking appropriate and prompt action, however if this is not possible then a formal complaint can be made in writing or by email

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised with either the Manager or Deputy. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Time scales

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

Complaints received outside of term time

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, we want to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- An explanation
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- An assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- An explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- An undertaking to review preschool policies in light of the complaint
- An apology.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing

Complaints Procedure

There are 5 stages to making a complaint

Stage 1

Any parent who has a concern about an aspect of our setting's provision talks over his/her concerns with our manager first of all. Most complaints should be resolved amicably and informally at this stage. We record the issue, and how it was resolved, in the child's file. The management team will seek to resolve the problem with the parent in a calm and professional manner

Stage 2

If this does not have a satisfactory outcome, or if the problem recurs, the parent moves to this stage of the procedure by putting the concerns or complaint in writing. For parents who are not comfortable with making written complaints, there is a template form for recording complaints in the Complaint Investigation Record; the form may be completed by the manager and signed by the parent. Our setting stores all information relating to written complaints from parents.

When the investigation into the complaint is completed, the manager meets with the parent to discuss the outcome. We inform parents of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of him/her making the complaint. When the complaint is resolved at this stage, we log the summative points in our Complaint Investigation Record, which is made available to Ofsted on request.

If we believe that the issue has Child Protection implications, we must inform the DSL immediately according to the procedure set out in the Child Protection Policy. If any party involved in the complaint has good reason to believe that a criminal offence has been committed, then have a legal obligation and responsibility to contact the police.

Stage 3

If the parent is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, he or she requests a meeting with our manager and owner. The parent may have a friend or partner present if they prefer and our manager should have the support of the management team. An agreed written record of the discussion is made, as well as any decision or action to take as a result. All of the parties present at the meeting sign the record and receive a copy of it. This signed record signifies that the procedure has concluded. When the complaint is resolved at this stage, we log the summative points in our Complaint Investigation Record.

Stage 4

If at the stage three meeting the parent cannot reach agreement with us we invite an external mediator to help to settle the complaint. This person should be acceptable to both parties, listen to both sides and offer advice. A mediator has no legal powers, but can help us to define the problem, review the action so far and suggest further ways in which it might be resolved. We would seek advice from our Early Years Advisor who may be able to suggest a suitable person to act as mediator.

The mediator keeps all discussions confidential. She/he can hold separate meetings with our staff and the parent, if this is decided to be helpful. The mediator keeps an agreed written record of any meetings that are held and of any advice s/he gives.

Stage 5

When the mediator has concluded her/his investigations, a final meeting between the parent and the management team is held. The purpose of this meeting is to reach a decision on the action to be taken to deal with the complaint. The mediator's advice is used to reach this conclusion. The mediator is present at the meeting if all parties think this will help a decision to be reached. A record of this meeting, including the decision on the action to be taken, is made. Everyone present at the meeting signs the record and receives a copy of it. This signed record signifies that the procedure has concluded.

Records

In the event of a formal complaint the parties will be provided with a copy of the complaints record on completion of the investigation, identifying any action taken. This will be done within 28 days of the complaint being received.

If a complaint raises child protection concerns, the Surrey Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB) guidelines will be followed, LADO, Ofsted and the Disclosure and Barring services (DBS) will be contacted. Please see our Safeguarding Policy.

If parents wish, they can report their concerns directly to Ofsted.

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk,

Write to: Piccadily Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD

Telephone: 0300 123 1231, between 8am – 6pm.

