

Complaints procedure

Statement of intent

Our pre-school believes that children and parents are entitled to expect courtesy and prompt, careful attention to their needs and wishes. We welcome suggestions on how to improve our pre-school and will give prompt and serious attention to any concerns about the running of the pre-school. We anticipate that most concerns will be resolved quickly by an informal approach to the appropriate member of staff. If this does not achieve the desired result, we have a set of procedures for dealing with concerns.

Aim: We aim to bring all concerns about the running of our pre-school to a satisfactory conclusion for all of the parties involved.

Methods: To achieve this, we operate the following complaints procedure.

How to complain

Stage 1

- Any parent who is uneasy about an aspect of the pre-school's provision talks over, first of all, his/her worries and anxieties with the pre-school manager.

Stage 2

- If this does not have a satisfactory outcome, or if the problem recurs, the parent moves to Stage 2 of the procedure by putting the concerns or complaint in writing to the pre-school manager.
- Most complaints should be able to be resolved informally at Stage 1 or at Stage 2.

Stage 3

- The parent requests a meeting with the pre-school manager. Both the parent and the manager can ask to have a partner present if required. An agreed written record of the discussion is made. 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.

Stage 4

- If at the Stage 3 meeting the parent and pre-school cannot reach agreement, an external mediator is invited 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 to define the problem, review the action so far and suggest further ways in which it might be resolved.
- The mediator keeps all discussion confidential. S/he can hold separate meetings with the pre-school personnel (pre-school manager) 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, the pre-school manager. 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.

The role of the Ofsted Early Years Directorate and the Area Child Protection Committee

Parents may approach Ofsted directly at any stage of this complaints procedure. In addition, where there seems to be a possible breach of our registration requirements, it is essential to involve Ofsted as the registering and inspection body with a duty to ensure the National Standards for Day Care are adhered to.

The address and telephone number of our Ofsted regional centre

These details are displayed in the pre-school's entrance hall. If a child appears to be at risk, our pre-school follows the procedures of the Area Child Protection Committee in our local authority.

In these cases, both the parent and pre-school are informed and the pre-school manager works with Ofsted or the Area Child Protection Committee to ensure a proper investigation of the complaint followed by appropriate action.

Records

A record of complaints against our pre-school and/or the children and/or the adults working in our pre-school is kept, including the date, the circumstances of the complaint and how the complaint was managed.

Data Protection

When the Preschool receives a complaint from a person a file is created containing the details of the complaint. This normally contains the identity of the complainant and any other individuals involved in the complaint.

The Preschool will only use the personal information collected to process the complaint and to check on the level of service we provide. The Preschool does compile an annual report showing information like the number of complaints we receive, but not in a form which identifies anyone.

The Preschool will usually have to disclose the complainant's identity to whoever the complaint is about.

The Preschool will keep personal information contained in complaint files. This means that information relating to a complaint will be retained for five years from closure. It will be retained in a secure environment and access to it will be restricted according to the 'need to know' principle.

Similarly, where enquiries are submitted to the Preschool we will only use the information supplied to us to deal with the enquiry and any subsequent issues and to check on the level of service we provide.