

# **Information and Records**

## **Parental Complaints**

### **Policy Statement**

Parents of Pre-School children can expect prompt, careful consideration of any comments or complaints they make about their child's experience at Pre-School. Throughout this document 'parents' refers to parents/legal guardians of children currently attending Pre-School. We would expect any formal complaints about a child's experience to be raised by the child's parents.

Our Parental Involvement Policy sets out how we work with parents, carers and other adults in a child's life, to build a friendly, professional, supportive community around a child. We expect that most concerns about a child's wellbeing at Pre-School can be dealt with through this informal network. However, we do recognise that there may be occasions when, for whatever reason, parents wish to pursue a more formal approach to a complaint. This policy and procedure are in place should that occasion arise.

Our complaints policy and procedure are based on guidance published by the Early Years Alliance<sup>1</sup>.

Parents may contact OFSTED at any point in the handling of a complaint. OFSTED have a duty to ensure the setting is adhering to the law, including the delivery of the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The telephone number for OFSTED is 0300 123 466. They can also be contacted through their website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk/contactus](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/contactus).

The Pre-School must notify OFSTED, as soon as possible, and certainly within 14 days, should a serious accident, illness, injury to, or death of, a child occurs whilst in our care. We must also notify local child protection agencies in such circumstances. In line with our Safeguarding: Protecting Children from Abuse Policy, we will notify and work within local procedures should a complaint suggest that a child is at risk of harm.

## **Complaints Procedure**

### **Verbal complaints**

Parents should initially raise any concern about their child's welfare with the Pre-School Leader. The complaint may be expressed verbally or in writing at this stage. It is expected that most complaints can be resolved amicably at this stage.

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<sup>1</sup> Previously known as the Pre-School Learning Alliance, PSLA

### **Written complaints**

If the matter has not been resolved satisfactorily, or recurs, parents may put their complaint in writing. The complaints letter should be addressed to the Pre-School Leader.

The Pre-School Leader will inform the Chair of the Committee any written complaints. Parents may also copy their letter to the Chair of the Committee. If the concern is about the action of the Pre-School Leader, parents may go directly to the Chair of the Committee at any stage.

If parents are not comfortable writing a letter, they may request a meeting with the Pre-School Leader in order to record their concerns. The details of the parent's complaint will be recorded using the Early Years Alliance template form. Parents will be asked to sign the form as a record of their complaint.

### **Investigating a Complaint**

On receipt of the parent's written complaint, the Pre-School Leader will investigate the details of the complaint.

Complaints will be handled on a case-by-case basis. When the Pre-School leader receives a written complaint, she will in turn acknowledge receipt in writing, and will give an outline timescale for her response. We generally expect to have an initial response to parents within five working days of the complaint being received. However, if the complaint is more complex, or should the investigation reasonably require a longer timescale, the Pre-School Leader will inform the parents in writing with a new timescale given.

### **Responding to a Complaint**

Once the Pre-School Leader has investigated the complaint, she will respond to the parents either in writing or through offering a meeting.

All meetings regarding complaints or concerns raised by parents will be attended by two members of the Pre-School. This would usually be the Pre-School Leader and another staff member who is not the subject of the complaint; or the Pre-School Leader and the Chair of the Committee (or their nominee from the Committee), as appropriate.

Meetings will be held on the Pre-School premises during Pre-School hours (9am-12pm). Parents are welcome to have someone to accompany them to the meeting if they wish. Names of attendees from the Pre-School and from the parents should be informed in advance.

Discussion during the meeting will be noted and the outcomes recorded. All parties present at the meeting will be asked to sign the record of the meeting and will receive a copy of the signed version. Should the outcomes of the

meeting be satisfactory to all, the signed record will signify that the complaints procedure has been completed. If follow-up action and/or subsequent meetings are required, this will be detailed in the notes of the meetings.

The Pre-School aims to ensure that further action to progress a complaint is taken promptly and within an agreed timescale. Any timescales set will take account of Pre-School working hours, term dates and holidays and, if appropriate, the availability of the Chair/named members of the parent Committee whom it may be appropriate to consult. We also reserve the right to seek professional legal or other advice as necessary, which again may impact on how quickly we are able to respond.

If the Pre-School Leader responds to a complaint only in writing, copies of all correspondence will be placed on file. The matter will be considered closed with the Pre-School Leader's response unless the parent responds again in writing.

### **Mediation**

If it is proving impossible to resolve the complaint, the Pre-School and/or the parent may propose the involvement of an external mediator to help settle the complaint. The person proposed as an external mediator should be acceptable to both parties, be able to listen to both sides and offer advice. The mediator has no legal powers but can help define the problem, review the action so far and suggest steps towards resolution.

The mediator must work within Pre-School confidentiality and data protection policies. S/he will investigate the details of the complaint. S/he may hold separate meetings with the parties involved, if that is considered helpful. The mediator must keep an agreed written record of any meetings that are held and any advice he/she gives.

Once s/he has completed his/her investigations, the mediator will call a final meeting between the Pre-School and the parent(s). The purpose of this meeting is to offer the outcome of the mediator's investigation and to resolve the complaint. Discussion during the meeting will be noted and the outcomes recorded. All parties present at the meeting will be asked to sign the record of the meeting and will receive a copy of the signed version.

### **Confidentiality and Data**

Subject to the exemptions listed above in relation to notifying OFSTED and the involvement of child protection agencies as appropriate, all matters concerning complaints will be considered confidential.

Verbal complaints received by the Pre-School leader, and the subsequent actions agreed, may be noted by the Pre-School Leader and a copy held on file.

Any written complaints and subsequent actions taken and agreed will be noted and held on file for 7 (seven) years in line with our data protection policy. OFSTED, the Local Authority, and other statutory agencies may request to view the information held on the Pre-School's Complaints file.

**Other useful Pre-school Learning Alliance publications**

- Complaint Investigation Record (2015)

This policy was adopted at a meeting of	<b>Handsworth Pre-school</b>	name of setting
Held on	<b>28 October 2019</b>	(date)
Date to be reviewed	<b>27 October 2020</b>	(date)
Signed on behalf of the management committee		
Name of signatory	<b>Jonny Cooper</b>	
Role of signatory (e.g. chair/owner)	<b>Chair</b>	