

# What to do if you have a complaint or a concern

We recognise that with the best will in the world, sometimes things go wrong. If you're not satisfied with the service you have received, we need to hear from you.

We encourage regular exchanges of information between staff and service users and we welcome suggestions that may improve the service we are able to provide to our families and the wider community.

We are fully committed to resolving all concerns about the quality and management of the services offered by our School and Centre and appropriate and prompt action is taken on all concerns raised.

We recognise that different types of complaint have to be dealt with in different ways and that while some may be of a serious nature; others are minor matters which are easily rectified quickly and informally. Usually, your best starting point is to speak to a member of staff (eg your child's key person or teacher, or member of the Children's Centre team). We hope to be able to resolve most problems quickly, by talking them through like this.

We have an 'open door' policy. You are welcome to speak directly to a member of our leadership team (the Head Teacher, Assistant Headteacher or Children's Centre Co-ordinator) about any issue which is concerning you – just ask at reception. You can also email us or phone us about your complaint.

## **What if I have tried to resolve my complaint like this but I am still not satisfied?**

You will need to follow our formal complaints procedure which is outlined below.

When investigating complaints, we follow the guidance from Newham Partnership Working on 'Managing school complaints in maintained schools' and you are welcome to see a copy of this policy – please ask at reception.

There is useful advice about how to complain about schools here: [www.gov.uk/complain-about-school](http://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school).

## **Ofsted**

You are strongly recommended to follow the complaints policy outlined below before taking your complaint further. However, if you are not satisfied that your complaint about the nursery school has been addressed, you can contact Ofsted directly on 0300 123 1231 (lines are open between 8am and 6pm, Monday to Friday).

Ofsted are unable to investigate a complaint which is about an individual child.

If your complaint is about the behaviour, conduct or actions of a member of staff, it will be passed onto the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). You can contact the LADO directly on 020 3373 3803.

In the event of a more formal complaint, this will be investigated and parents will be notified of the outcome within 28 days.

To make sure that all concerns are dealt with promptly and efficiently we will observe the following procedures.

### **Ofsted Parent View**

If you are the parent or carer of a child on roll in the nursery school, you can also post your comments about the school on the Ofsted website at [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk). By sharing your views you'll help the nursery school to improve. You will also be able to see what other parents have said about the school.

## **The Four Stages of our Complaints Procedure**

### **a) Stage 1 – Informal**

The complaint is dealt with by an appropriate staff member or designated Stage 1 Complaints Officer (a member of the School Leadership team who is not the subject of the complaint). In the vast majority of cases, a concern can and should be resolved by contacting the appropriate member of staff who is directly involved with the reported problem (e.g. your child's key person or class teacher). The initial communication from the complainant to the member of staff may be by letter, telephone conversation or in person by appointment. The complainant must allow the designated staff member at least 5 days to respond to the concern. If this does not lead to a resolution of the problem then the concern/complaint must be referred to the next stage of the process which is the commencement of the formal process.

### **b) Stage 2 – Formal (if unresolved at Stage 1)**

The complaint is heard by the Headteacher.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response from the member of staff at Stage 1 they should be advised to put their complaint in writing to the Headteacher who will deal with it formally at Stage 2. Where the Headteacher is the subject of the complaint, the complainant should be advised to address it to the Chair of Governors. If the complaint is being dealt with by the Chair of Governors this will bypass Stage 2 and go to Stage 3 of the formal procedure and heard by the Chair of Governors.

The complainant must ensure that they include details of why they are still dissatisfied and what action they would like to resolve the complaint. They can also attach any evidence to support their concerns.

The Headteacher must acknowledge the complaint within 5 days by writing to the complainant. The acknowledgement should state a further communication will follow, within 20 school days that will set out the actions taken to investigate the complaint and the findings.

The Headteacher can delegate another senior member of staff to carry out the investigation and report their findings to them. The Headteacher will then reach a conclusion based on the investigation. All notes relating to the investigation should be kept on file.

The investigating officer may feel it necessary to meet with the complainant. If this happens, then notes should be produced of the meeting. The investigating officer will then compile a report detailing their findings. Any recommendations or actions proposed must be considered by the Headteacher.

Once satisfied that the investigation has been concluded and a decision has been reached, the Headteacher must notify the complainant in writing of the conclusion and any actions that will be taken as a result. The decision can be communicated by the Headteacher to the complainant in writing or, if they may feel it appropriate, meet with them first to communicate their findings and then confirm in writing afterwards.

The complainant will be informed if they are still dissatisfied with the outcome they can write to the Chair of Governors outlining why they are still unhappy.

**c) Stage 3 – Formal (if not resolved at stage 2)**

The complaint is heard by the Chair of Governors (this will be delegated to the vice-chair or other nominated governor if appropriate).

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response from the Head Teacher at Stage 2 they should be advised to put their complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors for consideration at Stage 3 of the procedure.

The complainant must ensure that they include details of why they are still dissatisfied with the decision, the recommendations and actions of the Stage 2 complaint and what they require to resolve the matter. They may also attach any evidence to support their concerns that can be additional to that submitted at Stages 1 and 2.

The Chair of Governors must write to the complainant within 5 days of receipt of the complaint to acknowledge this. The letter should state that another letter will follow within 20 school days setting out the actions taken to investigate the complaint and the findings.

The Chair of Governors will look at all the information pertaining to the complaint submitted by the complainant and the investigatory evidence by the school at Stages 1 and 2. The Chair may want to talk with the complainant or investigating staff members to establish facts and obtain further information.

Once satisfied that the investigation has been concluded and a decision has been reached on the complaint, the Chair of Governors will notify the complainant in writing of the conclusion.

The conclusion could be:

- The evidence indicates that the complaint was substantiated and therefore upheld
- The complaint was substantiated in part and what action will be taken
- The complaint is not substantiated by the evidence and therefore not upheld

The complainant is also informed if they are still dissatisfied they can write to the Governing Body directly via the school or, Governor Services or School Management Support at Newham Partnership Working outlining why they feel the complaint is unresolved.

#### **d) Stage 4 – Formal (if not resolved at Stage 3)**

The complaint is heard by the Governing Body. This is the final stage of the process.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response from the Chair of Governors (or Vice-Chair) at Stage 3 they should be advised that the next stage is to put their complaint in writing to the School Governing Body at Stage 4.

The complainant must ensure that they include details of why they are still dissatisfied with the decision of the Chair, recommendations and actions of the Stage 3 complaint and what they feel would resolve the matter. They can also attach any evidence to support their concerns in addition to that submitted at Stages 1, 2 and 3.

The complaint will be acknowledged within 10 school days.

The complaint is considered by a panel of Governors who form a complaints appeal panel. The panel must be independent and impartial. No governor may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.

The panel must have a cross-section of categories of governors and sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religious affiliation. If appropriate the panel can be made up of governors from another school. The panel must convene a meeting to discuss the complaint and all the investigation evidence to make a final decision on how to progress. A clerk will be appointed to take notes of the meeting and records must be kept.

The Headteacher has a statutory duty for the internal organisation and management of the school, which they must carry out in accordance with any rules, regulations or policies laid down by the governing body. Therefore the remit of governors' consideration of a complaint about a matter of internal organisation and control will be as to whether the Headteacher has followed any relevant school policies; it is not to substitute its own operational judgement for that of the Headteacher.



The panel can decide:

- To convene a meeting with the complainant. If a meeting is to be convened, the person chairing the meeting either the Chair or Vice-chair (whomever did not deal with the complaint at Stage 3), will write to the complainant to acknowledge the complaint within 10 school days. The letter would also include the date, time and venue of the convened meeting to hear the complaint.
- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- For non-complex complaints, not to meet with the complainant, but to use all the information available to them and make a decision on the complaint as there is enough information to allow for a decision to be made.

Possible outcomes for the Panel

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- Recommend changes to school systems or procedures to ensure that similar do not occur

An outcome letter will be sent to the complainant within 20 school days of the meeting.

#### 4. Further information

The outcome letter from the School Complaints Panel exhausts the 4 Stage procedure. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the process, they are able to contact

The Secretary of State for Education,  
The School Complaints Unit (SCU) Department for Education  
2nd Floor, Piccadilly Gate  
Manchester M1 2WD

The SCU will examine if the school complaints policy and any other relevant processes were followed. The SCU will also examine policies to determine if they adhere to education legislation. However, the SCU will not re-investigate the substance of the complaint.

## Appendix 1: model form to use when making a complaint

Please complete and return to the school office who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Child's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the child (if relevant)
Address:  Postcode:  Daytime telephone number:  Evening telephone number:
Please give details of your complaint:
What actions, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint (who did you speak to and what was the response)?
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?
Are you attaching paperwork? If so, please give details.
Signature: Date:
<b>Official use</b>
Date acknowledgement sent:
By whom:
Complaint referred to:
Date: