Next Steps Pre-school, Elms Vale, Church Road, Dover, CT17 9LW
Tel: 01304 226234
Registered Charity No. 1156391

Making a Complaint

Policy statement

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 setting and will give prompt and serious attention to any concerns about the running of the setting. 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. We aim to bring all concerns about the running of our setting to a satisfactory conclusion for all the parties involved.

Procedures

All settings are required to keep a written record ('summary log') of any complaints that reach Stage 2 and above, and their outcome. This is made available to parents, and to Ofsted inspectors, on request. A full procedure is set out in the Early Years Alliance publication Complaint Investigation Record, which acts as the 'summary log' for this purpose.

Making a complaint

Stage 1

- Any parent who has a concern about an aspect of the setting's provision first talks over their concerns with the pre-school Manager.
- Most complaints should be resolved amicably and informally at this stage.

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 to the pre-school Manager and the Chair of Trustees.
- For parents who are not comfortable with making written complaints, there is a template form for recording complaints in the above-mentioned publication; the form may be completed with the Manager and signed by the parent.
- The pre-school stores written complaints from parents in the child's personal file. However, if the complaint involves a detailed investigation, the pre-school Manager may wish to store all information relating to the investigation in a separate file designated for this complaint.

- When the investigation into the complaint is completed, the pre-school Manager meets the parent to discuss the outcome.
- Parents must be informed of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of making the complaint.
- When the complaint is resolved at this stage, the summative points are logged in the Complaints Summary Record.

Stage 3

- If the parent is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, they may request a meeting with the pre-school Manager and the Chair of Trustees. The parent may have a friend or partner present if required, and the Manager should have the support of the Trustees present.
- An agreed written record of the discussion is made, as well as of any decision or action to be taken as a result. All 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, the summative points are logged in the Complaints Summary Record.

Stage 4

- If at the Stage 3 meeting the parent and pre-school cannot reach agreement, an external mediator is invited to help 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.
- Staff or volunteers within the Early Years Alliance are appropriate persons to be invited to act as mediators.
- The mediator keeps all discussions confidential. They can hold separate meetings with the setting personnel (pre-school Manager/Trustees) and the parent if this is felt to be helpful. The mediator keeps an agreed written record of any meetings that are held and of any advice they give.

Stage 5

- When the mediator has concluded their investigations, a final meeting between the parent, the pre-school Manager and the Chair of Trustees 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.

The role of Ofsted and the Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership (KSCMP)

- Parents may approach the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) directly at any stage of this complaints procedure. In addition, where there seems to be a possible breach of the pre-school's registration requirements, it is essential to involve Ofsted as the registering and inspection body with a duty to ensure the Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage are adhered to.
- The number to call Ofsted with regard to a complaint is 0300 123 1231.
- These details are displayed on our setting's notice board.
- If a child appears to be at risk, our setting follows the procedures of the Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership (KSCMP).
- In these cases, both the parent and the setting are informed, and the setting leader works with Ofsted or the KSCMP to ensure a proper investigation of the complaint, followed by appropriate action.

Records

- A record of complaints against the 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.
- The outcome of all complaints is recorded in the Complaint Investigation Record, which is available to parents and Ofsted inspectors on request.

This policy was updated in September 2026.

Next review: September 2027.

Name of signatory: Virginia McCarthy

Role of signatory: Manager