**Complaints procedure**

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

**Methods**

To achieve this we operate the following complaints procedure. The preschool are required to keep a ‘summary log’ of all complaints that reach stage 2 or beyond.

**Making a complaint**

Stage 1

1. Any parent who has a concern about an aspect of the settings provision should in the first place discuss it with the manager or named deputy.
2. Most complaints should be resolved amicably and informally at this stage.

Stage 2

1. If there is no satisfactory outcome reached in stage one, or if the problem recurs, the parent should move on to stage 2 of the procedure by putting the concerns or complaint in writing to the manager and the chairperson.
2. For parents who are not comfortable with making written complaints, there is a template form available from the pre-school; the manager may complete the form alongside the parent/carer and parent/carer should sign to say agree with content.
3. The preschool will store written complaints from parents in the child’s personal file. However, if the complaint involves detailed investigation the manager may wish to store all information relating to the investigation in a separate file designated for this complaint.
4. When the investigation into the complaint is completed, the manager meets with the parent to discuss the outcome.
5. When the complaint is resolved at this stage, the summative points are logged in the Complaints Summary Record

Stage 3

1. If the parent is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, he or she requests a meeting with the manager/ chair of the management committee. The parent should have a friend or partner present if required and the manager should have the support of the chairperson of the management committee, or the proprietor / senior manager, present.
2. An agreed written record and/or audio recording 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.
3. 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

1. If at the stage 3 meeting the parent and manager 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.
2. Staff or volunteers within the Pre-School Learning Alliance are appropriate persons to be invited to act as mediators.
3. The mediator keeps all discussion confidential. S/he can hold separate meetings with the setting personnel (manager and chair of the management committee) 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

1. When the mediator has concluded her/his investigations, a final meeting between the parent, the manager / chair of the management committee 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.
2. 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. This signed record signifies that the procedure has concluded.

**The role of the Office for Standards in Education, Early Years Directorate (OFSTED) and the Area Safeguarding Children Committee.**

1. Parents may approach OFSTED directly at any stage of this complains procedure. In addition, where there seems to be a possible breach of the settings 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.
2. The address and telephone number of our OFSTED regional centre are:

Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD 0300 123 1231

1. These details are displayed on our notice board.
2. If a child appears to be at risk, our setting follows the procedures of the Area Safeguarding Children Committee in our local authority.
3. In these cases, both parent and preschool are informed and the manager works with OFSTED of the Area Safeguarding Children Committee to ensure a proper investigation of the complaint, followed by appropriate action.

**Records**

1. A record of complaints against our preschool and/or the children and/or the adults working in our preschool is kept, including the date, the circumstances of the complaint and how the complaint was managed.
2. The outcome of all complaints is record in the Complaints Summary Record which is available for parents and OFSTED inspectors on request.

**Confidentiality Policy**

It is our intention to respect the privacy of children and their parents and carers, while ensuring that they access high quality early years care and education in our setting.

**Aim**

We aim to ensure that all parents and carers can share their information in the confidence that it will only be used to enhance the welfare of their children.

**Methods**

We keep two kinds of records on children attending our preschool:

1. Developmental records

These include observations of children in the setting, samples of their work, summary developmental reports and records of achievement.

They are on display for parents and can be accessed, and contributed to, by staff, the child and the child's parents.

1. Personal records

* These include registration and admission forms, signed consents, and correspondence concerning the child or family, reports or minutes from meetings concerning the child from other agencies, an ongoing record of relevant contact with parents, and observations by staff on any confidential matter involving the child, such as developmental concerns or child safeguarding matters.
* These confidential records are stored in a lockable file or cabinet and are kept secure by the person in charge in an office or other suitably safe place.
* Parents have access, in accordance with the access to records procedure, to the files and records of their own children but do not have access to information about any other child.
* Staff will not discuss personal information given by parents with other members of staff, except where it affects planning for the child's needs.
* Staff induction includes an awareness of the importance of confidentiality in the role of the key person/buddy.

**Other records**

1. Issues to do with the employment of staff, whether paid or unpaid, remain confidential to the people directly involved with making personnel decisions.
2. Students on Pre-school Learning Alliance or other recognised qualifications and training, when they are observing in the setting, are advised of our confidentiality policy and required to respect it.

**Access to personal records**

1. Parents may request access to any records held on their child and family following the procedure below.
2. Any request to see the child's personal file by a parent or person with parental responsibility must be made in writing to the manager.
3. The manager informs the chairperson of the management committee and sends a written acknowledgement.
4. The preschool commits to providing access within 14 days - although this may be extended.
5. The manager and chairperson of the management committee prepare the file for viewing.
6. All third parties are written to, stating that a request for disclosure has been received and asking for their permission to disclose to the person requesting it. Copies of these letters are retained on the file.
   1. 'Third parties' include all family members who may be referred to in the records.
   2. It also includes workers from any other agency, including social services, the health authority, etc. It is usual for agencies to refuse consent to disclose, preferring the individual to go directly to them.
7. When all the consents/refusals to disclose have been received these are attached to the copy of the request letter.
8. A photocopy of the complete file is taken.
9. The manager and chairperson of the management committee go through the file and remove any information which a third party has refused consent to disclose. This is best done with a thick black marker, to score through every reference to the third party and information they have added to the file.
10. What remains is the information recorded by the preschool, detailing the work initiated and followed by them in relation to confidential matters. This is called the 'clean copy'.
11. The 'clean copy' is photocopied for the parents who are then invited in to discuss the contents.
12. The file should never be given straight over, but should be gone through by the manager, so that it can be explained.
13. Legal advice may be sought before sharing a file, especially where the parent has possible grounds for litigation against the preschool or another (third party) agency.
14. All the undertakings above are subject to the paramount commitment of the preschool, which is to the safety and well-being of the child. Please see also our policy on Safeguarding and promoting children’s welfare.