

Date Reviewed	June 2025
Review Date	June 2028

Agreed by: Steering Committee	Date: July 2025
Name: Natalie Sadler	Signature: Signed electronically on Gov Hub

Complaints Policy and Procedure June 2025

Statement of intent

Our setting believes that children and parents are entitled to expect courtesy and prompt, careful attention to the needs and wishes. We welcome suggestions on how to improve our setting and will give prompt serious attention to any concerns about the running of the setting. However we recognise any person, including members of the public may make a complaint to Highfield Nursery School and Children Centre about any provision of facilities or services that we may provide. 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 be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaints. We will give careful consideration to all complaints, and deal with them as swiftly as possible. In all cases we will put the interest of the child above all else. We will provide sufficient opportunity for any complaints to be fully discussed with the appropriate member of the team and then brought to a satisfactory conclusion. Some complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures. Please see our Whistleblowing Policy, Grievance Policy, and Admissions Policy.

Methods

A concern may be defined as *'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'*.

A complaint may be defined as *'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'*.

We understand that at times parents/carers may have concerns about the service provided. Most of these can be resolved by talking to parents/carers and taking appropriate and prompt action. However, there may be times when parents/carers make a formal complaint in writing or by email. If the complaint relates to one or more of the National Standards, it is mandatory to investigate the complaint, take any necessary action and inform the complainant of the outcome. We will keep a record of such complaints. We follow the School Complaints Guidance issued by DfE in 2020

Making a complaint

Stage 1

- Any parent who has a concern about an aspect of the setting's provision talks over, first of all, their worries and anxieties with the key person, class teacher or Headteacher. If the complaint or concern is towards the

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Headteacher please contact the Chair of governors via the admin email address (admin@highfield.suffolk.sch.uk)

- 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 Stage 2 of the procedure by putting the concerns or complaints in writing to the key person or Headteacher.
- For parents who are not comfortable with making written complaints, we will use the Complaints Record form for recording complaints; the form may be completed with the person in charge and signed by the parent.
- Written complaints are confidential and kept securely.
- When the investigation into the complaint is completed, the key worker or Headteacher meets with the parent to discuss the outcome.
- When the complaint is resolved at this stage, the summative points are logged on the relevant Complaints Record form.

Stage 3

- If the parent is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, they request a meeting with the Headteacher or key person. The parent should have a representative present (this could be a friend or partner)
- An agreed written record of the discussion is made as well as any decision or action to take as a result. All parties present at the meeting sign the record and receive a copy.
- This signed record signifies that the procedure has concluded. When the complaint is resolved at this stage, the summative points are logged on the relevant Complaints Record form.

Stage 4

- If at the Stage 3 meeting the parent and setting 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. They can hold separate meeting with the Headteacher, key person or parent, if necessary. 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 parents, and Headteacher is held. The purpose of this meeting is to reach a decision on the action to be taken to deal with the complaint. The mediators' advice is used to reach this conclusion. The mediator is present at the meeting.
- A record of this meeting, including the decisions 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. Summative points are logged on the Complaints Record form.

The role of the Office of Standards in Education, Early Years Directorate (Ofsted) and the Area Safeguarding Children Committee

- Parents may approach Ofsted directly at any stage of this complaints procedure. In addition, where there seems to be a possible breach of the setting's 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.

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- The Ofsted 'Parents' poster will be displayed in the main corridor at all times.
- If a child appears to be at risk, our setting follows the procedures of our Safeguarding Policy
- In these cases, both the parent and setting are informed and the Headteacher works with Ofsted or the Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership for an investigation of the complaints, followed by agreed action.

Records

- A record of complaints against our setting and/or the children and/or the adults working in our setting is kept, including the date, the circumstances of the complaint and how the complaint was managed.
- The outcome of all complaints is recorded on the Complaints Record form, which is available for parents and Ofsted inspectors on request.
- It is important to maintain appropriate confidentiality when following the Complaints procedure and recording complaints.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

Time scales

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

Complaints received outside of term time

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period

Roles and Responsibilities

Complainant

The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- co-operate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint
- respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint
- ask for assistance as needed
- treat all those involved in the complaint with respect
- refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media (Please refer to acceptable use of Social Media) and respect confidentiality

The School will establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

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- providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
- sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
- interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint
- consideration of records and other relevant information
- analysing information
- conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting
- ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal
- be mindful of the timescales to respond

Next Steps

If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education after they have completed Stage 2.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Highfield Nursery School and Children Centre. They will consider whether Highfield Nursery School and Children Centre adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education online at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD.

Appendix A: Complaints Form

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Complaint Form (Appendix A)

Please complete and return to the Headteacher or key person 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:
Contact Number:
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.
Signature:
Date:
Official use
Date acknowledgement sent:
By who:
Complaint referred to:
Date: