

Complaint Policy and Procedures



Policy statement

We believe that children and their parents or carers 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. 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 of the parties involved.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is defined by Little Fishes as any expression of dissatisfaction received from a parent, carer, member of the public or member of Little Fishes staff about the setting, including a complaint made by a parent or carer to an inspector during an Ofsted inspection.

Procedures

Little Fishes keeps a written record of any complaints that reach stage two and above, and their outcome. This is made available to parents and Ofsted inspectors, on request. A full procedure is set out in the Early Years Alliance publication Complaint Investigation Record (2012) which acts as the 'summary log' for this purpose.

Complaints from parent or carer

Stage 1

- Any parent or carer who has a concern about an aspect of our setting's provision ("the complainant") should first discuss their concerns with the duty manager or Operations Manager. If another member of staff receives a complaint from parent or carer, they should inform the Operations Manager who will arrange to discuss with the complainant.
- Most complaints should be resolved amicably and informally at this stage.
- We record the issue and how it was resolved (if it was), in the child's file.

Stage 2

- If Stage 1 does not have an outcome that is satisfactory to the complainant, or if the problem recurs, the parent moves to this stage of the procedure by putting the concerns or complaint in writing.
- The parent can make their complaint by email or letter using the template form for recording complaints in the Complaint Investigation Record.
- If the complainant does not use the template form, the Operations Manager should complete the form and the parent or carer should sign their agreement that it is an appropriate representation of the complaint.
- Our setting stores all information relating to written complaints from parents in the child's personal file. However, if the complaint involves a detailed investigation, our manager may store all information relating to the investigation in a separate file designated for this complaint, with the child's personal file containing a note referring to that file.
- An Investigator is appointed. This will normally be the Operations Manager, unless the complaint is about the Operations Manager or they have another potential conflict of interest, in which case it should be referred to the Chair of the Little Fishes Management Group ("LFMG"), to appoint an alternative investigator.
- When the initial investigation into the complaint is completed, the Investigator discusses the investigation and conclusion with the Chair of LFMG, who may suggest additional enquiries or sign off the written report.
- The Investigator informs the complainant of the outcome within 28 days of the complaint being received, ideally meeting with the parent or carer to discuss the outcome.
- If the complainant is satisfied with the investigation and outcome, the complaint is deemed resolved at this stage. The Investigator logs the summative points in our Complaint Investigation Record.

Stage 3

- If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, he or she requests a meeting with the Investigator and the Chair of LFMG. The complainant may have a friend or partner present if they wish.
- An agreed written record 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.
- This signed record signifies that the procedure has concluded. When the complaint is resolved at this stage, we log the summative points in our Complaint Investigation Record.

Stage 4

- If at the stage three meeting the parent cannot reach agreement with us, we invite an external mediator 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 us 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 Learning Alliance are appropriate persons to be invited to act as mediators.

- The mediator keeps all discussions confidential. S/he can hold separate meetings with our staff 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

- When the mediator has concluded her/his investigations, a final meeting between the parent and our manager and chair of the Little Fishes Management Group 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.

Complaints from staff

- Staff are encouraged to raise any concerns informally with their line manager or, if their complaint is about their line manager, with the Chair of LFMG.
- If informal attempts to resolve an issue have been unsuccessful then the church's Grievance Procedure should be followed, a copy of which is available from the Chair of LFMG or the Church Manager.

Complaints from others

- Other complaints should follow the same general procedure as complaints from parents and carers, with records kept centrally rather than on a child's file (unless the complaint involves a specific child).

The role of the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted), the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the Information Commissioner's Office


- Parents may approach Ofsted directly at any stage of this complaints procedure if there is a possible breach of the setting's registration requirements, although Ofsted may not accept the complaint until the full Little Fishes complaints procedure has been carried out. Ofsted is the registering and inspection body with a duty to ensure the Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage are adhered to.
- Parents can complain to Ofsted via: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk or 0300 123 4666.
- These details are displayed on our setting's notice board.
- If a child appears to be at risk, we follow the procedures of the Local Safeguarding Children Board.
- In these cases, both the parent and our setting are informed and our manager work with Ofsted or the Local Safeguarding Children Board to ensure a proper investigation of the complaint, followed by appropriate action.
- The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) can be contacted if you have made a complaint about the way your data is being handled and remain dissatisfied after raising your concern with us. For further information about how we handle your data, please refer to the Privacy Notice given to you when you registered your child at our setting. The ICO can be contacted on 0303 123 1113 or via ico.org.uk

Records

- A record of complaints in relation to our setting, or the children or the adults working in our setting, is kept for at least three years, including the date, the circumstances of the complaint and how the complaint was managed.
- The outcome of all complaints is recorded in our Complaint Investigation Record, which is available for parents and Ofsted inspectors to view on request.

Regulatory requirement

- From [Early Years Foundation Stage](#): Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Information and Records: *Providers must put in place a written procedure for dealing with concerns and complaints from parents and/or carers, and must keep a written record of any complaints, and their outcome.*

<i>This policy was adopted by:</i>	Little Fishes Pre-school on 7 September 2024
<i>next review date:</i>	July 2025
<i>Signed on behalf of the provider by</i>	 Alison Carr, Chair of Little Fishes Management Group