Tachbrook Nursery School
Complaints Policy

‘Happy, healthy & high expectations’

REVIEWED: September 2024

COMPLAINTS POLICY

At Tachbrook we are committed to providing high-quality care and education for young children. We value feedback from parents, carers, and other stakeholders as it helps us continuously improve our services. This complaints policy outlines our approach to handling and resolving complaints in a fair and transparent manner.

Our aim is to resolve complaints quickly and effectively, ensuring the best possible outcomes for the child and their family, while also identifying areas for improvement in our services.

Responsibility: It is the responsibility of all staff members to take complaints seriously and handle them professionally and sensitively.

Confidentiality: All complaints will be treated with utmost confidentiality, sharing information only with those directly involved in the resolution process.

If you have any concerns please tell us. We will try our best to deal with your concerns promptly and fairly. All complaints will be treated seriously and our relationship with you and your child will not be affected if you tell us that you are concerned about something or make a complaint.

Purpose of a Complaints Procedure

This procedure aims to reassure parents and others that:

• Where possible, complaints will be dealt with informally and at the lowest possible level at each setting in order to reach a resolution promptly
• Any complaint against will be dealt with in a fair, open and responsive way, with the aim of achieving a speedy and satisfactory resolution; and
• We recognise that there is a willingness to listen to questions and criticism and to respond positively, which can lead to improvements in practices as well as provision

An effective Complaints Procedure will:

• encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible
• be easily accessible and publicised
• be simple to understand and use
• be impartial and non-adversarial
• allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress
• ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary

• respect people's desire for confidentiality wherever possible
• address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary

What to do first

Most concerns and complaints can be sorted out quickly by speaking with your child's key person or class teacher who will try to resolve issues informally. The members of staff will make sure that they understand what you feel went wrong, and will ask what you would like us to do to put things right. They will also explain their actions.

What to do next - investigating the complaint.

If you are not satisfied with the member of staff's response you can raise your concerns with the Head of school. You can do this either by making an appointment to meet or you may choose to first make your complaint in writing. The Head of school will then arrange a time to meet with you. If you need an interpreter we will arrange for this, but may need a little more time to organise this The Head of school will investigate the complaint and may interview any staff or talk with other people who may have been involved. They will then write to you, responding to your complaint. You may wish to meet again to discuss this with them.

It is suggested that at each stage, the person investigating the complaint makes sure that they:

- Establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved
- Clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved
- Meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or further information is necessary)
- Clarify what the complainant feels would put things right
- Interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- Conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- Keep notes of the interview

Resolving the complaint

At each stage in the procedure we will want to keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. It would be useful if complainants were encouraged to state what actions/outcome they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. An admission that the nursery school could have handled the situation better is not the

same as an admission of negligence. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

• An apology or an explanation
• An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
• An assurance that the event complained of will not recur
• An explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again
• An undertaking to review the nursery school policies in light of the complaint

An effective procedure will identify areas of agreement between the parties. It is also of equal importance to clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred as this can create a positive atmosphere in which to discuss any outstanding issues.

If the complaint is about the Head of school you may contact the Chair of Governors, c/o the setting. The Head of school, the chair, or another impartial governor, will try to resolve issues by looking at what has happened so far and evidence from the first decision or outcome. They may suggest another solution.

Recording Complaints

The school will record the progress of the complaint and the final outcome. A complaint may be made in person, by telephone, in writing (email). At the end of a meeting or telephone call, it would be helpful to ensure that the complainant and the school have the same understanding of what was discussed and agreed. A brief note of meetings and telephone calls can be kept and a copy of any written response added to the record.

The Governing Body should review their Complaints Policy regularly and monitor the number and range of complaints received, how these were dealt with and any action taken. The monitoring and review of complaints can be a useful tool in evaluating the school's performance.

Time Limits

Complaints need to be considered, and resolved, as quickly and efficiently as possible. An effective complaints procedure will have realistic time limits for each action within each stage. However, where further investigations are necessary, new time limits can be set and the complainant sent details of the new deadline and an explanation for the delay.

The time limits are set using the nursery school working days i.e. excluding school holidays. At each stage it is helpful to clarify exactly who will be involved, what will happen, and how long it will take. There may, on occasion, be the need for some flexibility, for example, the possibility of further meetings between the complainant and the person investigating the complaint.

Stages of the complaints policy

Stage 1 Informal Stage – Complaint heard by staff member

It is in everyone's best interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage and as quickly as possible. The experience of the first contact between the complainant and the school can be crucial in determining whether the complaint will escalate. Therefore, if staff and Governors are aware of the policy they will know what to do should they receive a complaint.

If the member of staff involved feels too compromised to deal with a complaint, the complaint could be referred to a member of the leadership team. The ability to consider the complaint objectively and impartially is crucial. Where the complaint concerns the Head of school the complainant is referred to the Chair of Governors. If the informal process has been exhausted and no satisfactory solution has been found the complainant should be advised that the complaint could progress to Stage 2 of the policy.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response they should request that their concerns be referred to the Head of school (if they have not already dealt with the issue). The complainant should be invited to put the complaint in writing to the Head of school (or Chair of Governors if the complaint is against the Headteacher). This should be sent to the Head of school or Chair of Governors, as appropriate, as soon as possible. The Head of school will seek any necessary clarification of the concerns including interviewing the complainant where this would be helpful. The Head of school will advise the complainant of the outcome of their consideration. Other than in exceptional circumstances the Head of school should provide a response to the complainant within 15 school days of them requesting the involvement of the Head of school.

Stage 2 – Complaint heard by the Head of School

Where the Head of school has addressed the complaint at Stage 1 and the matter has been satisfactorily addressed, the matter will then be considered closed. Progress to Stage 3 will be heard by a Committee of the Governing Body only if the matter requires this escalation or if the mater hasn't been satisfactorily resolved at stage 1.

The Head of school should acknowledge the written complaint upon receipt and provide an opportunity to meet the complainant to discuss the complaint. At this point the Head of school may still seek to resolve the complaint informally. The Head of school will investigate the complaint and a written response will normally be made within 15 school days of receipt of the complaint. If this is not possible, an extension can be agreed.

The written response will include reasons for the conclusions reached by the Head of school, what action, if any, the school proposes to take to resolve the matter and

advise the complainant of the right to request a meeting with Governors if they remain dissatisfied with the outcome.

The complainant will have 10 school days from receipt of the outcome in which to ask for an appeal.

Stage 3 – Appeal Heard by a Committee of the Governing Body

Where a complainant has made an approach to the school through the formal stage and is not satisfied with the outcome, they should write to the Clerk to the Governing Body within 10 school days giving details of their concerns and asking for an appeal against the decision or action taken by the Head of school. The Clerk will seek to arrange a meeting of the appropriate Committee of the school's Governing Body within 20 school days.

The Governing Body of the school will only hear appeals that have already progressed through Stages 1 and 2 of this procedure. As the Chair of Governors may be involved at an earlier stage in the procedure (particularly where the complaint is about the Head of school) it may be wise not to include the Chair as a member of the Committee to avoid any possible challenge that the Chair was not sufficiently impartial.

This is the last stage of the complaints policy.

The Complaints Committee

The Committee should consist of no less than three Governors who will appoint their own Chair. The Head of school would be expected to attend the appeal hearing to give evidence and explain the conclusions. The Committee can:

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- Recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

Notification of the Committee's Decision

The Chair of the Committee needs to ensure that the complainant is notified of the Committee's decision, in writing. The Clerk to the Governing Body will notify in writing the outcome of the appeal to the complainant and Head of school within five school days of the hearing.

Further action

We hope that all concerns and complaints can be satisfactorily settled, but if you wish to you may also contact outside organisations who will investigate your complaint providing it is not a school related management issue.

• Ofsted can be contacted on 0845 601 4772

• You could contact the Local Authority c/o the Director of Education at Westminster City Council. The LEA has no power to re-investigate general school complaints or impose solutions, but will try to help resolve disputes: Director of Education, Westminster City hall, 64 Victoria Street, London SW1E 6QP

• The ombudsman can look at maladministration of Council functions but will not investigate internal school issues: The Local Government Ombudsman 21 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9BU

Review Date: September 2025