



Grace Owen Nursery School

Concerns and complaints procedure

To be read in conjunction with the Young Children's Service
A Guide for Parents/Carers about Making a Complaint
Advice to families about raising a concern or making a complaint

At Grace Owen Nursery School, we strive to do the best for all the children in our care and their families. Your comments, both positive and negative, will help our ongoing strategic planning. If you have a comment, concern or complaint please contact us or come and talk to us as soon as possible. You can do this by telephone (01142722541), in person, in writing), by letter or by email (enquiries@graceowennurseryschool.org.)

We will ensure that: -

- Your complaint will be dealt with honestly, politely and in confidence.
- Your complaint will be investigated thoroughly and fairly.
- If your complaint is urgent we will prioritise.
- We will provide you with an update at each stage.
- We will accept responsibility and apologise if we have made a mistake.
- You will be informed what we are going to do to put things right.

1. Most concerns and complaints can be addressed by speaking with your child's key person. All staff will make every effort to resolve your problem. They will make sure that they understand what you feel went wrong and they will explain their own actions to you. They will ask what you would like us to do to put things right. Of course, this does not mean that in every case they will come round to your point of view but it will help both you and the staff to understand all perspectives. It may also help to prevent a similar problem arising again.

2. If the member of staff you speak to in the first instance is unable to resolve the matter you can then talk to the room lead and/or the head teacher informally.

3. If you are still not satisfied you can make a complaint to the head teacher. This will be Stage 1 of a more formal complaint. It could be made in writing or by making an appointment to discuss the problem. You can bring a friend or someone else with you to the appointment. Your complaint will be investigated and we aim to inform you of the outcome within 10 school days. You will receive a written response to your complaint, which you may wish to discuss with the head teacher. Please note that governors should not be made aware of a potential complaint as they may be

required to sit on a Panel in the event of a formal hearing (Stage 2) and should be impartial. If your complaint is about the head teacher, please write to the Chair of Governors.

4. Stage 2. If you are still not satisfied you may wish to contact the Chair of Governors who will then invite you to a meeting, which the head teacher may also attend. Please include a clear explanation of your complaint, identify the process you have followed so far, including who you have spoken to and why you are dissatisfied. Please also highlight what you would see as a successful outcome to your complaint. The Chair of Governors will arrange for your complaint to be considered and investigated under the arrangements approved by the Governing Body. This is likely to involve a Panel of Governors. If the Chair of Governors was involved at Stage 1, another member of the governing body will be appointed to oversee the investigation. Please ensure that the Governors' Complaint Panel is provided with any written information or evidence you intend to use in a formal hearing. You may bring a friend, representative or interpreter to any meeting if you wish. Following the investigation the Chair of the Panel will write to inform you of the outcome of your complaint and any agreed actions to be taken.

5. If you are still not satisfied you may refer your complaint to the Head of Early Years and Childcare Services at Sheffield City Council. Complaints are almost always settled within the School but in exceptional cases it may be required to refer the problem to an outside body such as the Advice and Conciliation Service or Ofsted which are independent of the nursery school.

Contact Numbers

Head teacher: Nancy Farrow 0114 2722541

headteacher@graceowennurseryschool.org

Chair of Governors: Nicky Goodwin 0114 2722541

governors@graceowennurseryschool.org

OFSTED (Complaints Helpline):0300 123 1231

Reviewed September 2022

School Complaints

A Brief Guide for Parents and Carers

People Services



School Complaints

Advice to Parents/Carers about making a complaint

If you have comments or concerns please let your school know. We welcome suggestions for improving our work in schools. We understand a common fear is that the school's relationship with you and your child/children will be affected if you express dissatisfaction. We wish to assure you that by having an effective complaints procedure, we would hope to be able to minimise problems, provide the school with helpful information and to treat complaints as constructive suggestions to improve standards and prevent cause for further complaint. For schools, the definition of a complaint within the terms of the procedures referred to here is an expression of dissatisfaction by parents or carers of children who attend a Sheffield school, or from neighbours of the school or school community affected by the services the school provides.

1. What to do first

Many concerns arise from misunderstandings and are best dealt with positively in discussion with the staff at the school. This is best done by speaking with your child's class or form teacher. All staff will make every effort to resolve your concern quickly and informally. They will make sure that they understand what you feel went wrong and they will explain their own actions to you. They will ask what you would like the school to do to put things right. Of course, this does not necessarily mean that in every instance they will agree with your point of view but the response should help both you and the school to understand both viewpoints. It may also prevent a similar problem arising in the future.

2. What to do next

Should you remain dissatisfied with the teacher's initial response, you can make a complaint to the Head Teacher. This is best done in writing or by making an appointment to discuss the problem. You may find it helpful at this stage to have a copy of the full School Complaints Procedure as this explains in detail what procedures should be followed. (This is available from the School Office). The Head Teacher will ask to meet with you for a discussion of the problem and you may take a friend or someone else with you if you wish.

The Head Teacher will conduct a full investigation of your complaint and may interview members of staff or pupils involved. You will then receive a written response to your complaint. This will hopefully resolve the matter. However, should you remain dissatisfied, the Head Teacher should give you detail and of ways to take matters further.

3. If you are still unhappy

If you are still not satisfied, you may wish to contact the Chair of Governors and request that they look again at your complaint and the Head Teacher's response. The Chair of Governors will seek to clarify your concerns and undertake their own independent investigation; this may well involve speaking with members of staff and others. Once their investigation has been concluded, you will then receive a written response to your complaint. This will hopefully resolve the matter.

Should you remain dissatisfied with the response from the Chair of Governors, you can ask for your complaint to be referred to a Governing Board Complaints Review Panel. This will comprise a group of three governors from the school who, as far as is possible, have no previous knowledge of the problem and who will therefore be able to give it fresh assessment. You will be invited to attend a meeting and speak to the Panel in person. The full School Complaints procedure explains how these meetings operate.

4. Further Action

The Department for Education

Complaints about school are almost always settled within school but complaints about maintained schools not resolved by the school can be referred to the Secretary of State for Education.

Should you believe that either the Local Authority or Governing Board has acted unreasonably you can take your complaint to the Secretary of State for Education. 'Unreasonably' for these purposes means that you believe the school has acted in such a way that no reasonable school would act. This is a high threshold to overcome.

If your complaint is about a local authority maintained school, that is. it is not an academy or Free School, and you feel your complaint has not been resolved satisfactorily by the school's governors, you can refer your complaint to the Secretary of State for Education. You must do this in writing, either by post to:

School Complaints Team
Department for Education
Castle View House
East Lane
Runcorn. WA7 2GJ

Or, by using the online School Complaints form. This can be accessed at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/b00212240/guidance-on-making-a-complaint-about-a-school/how-to-complain-to-the-department-about-a-school>

Before submitting your complaint, please read the guidance section on making a complaint about a school. This can be accessed at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/b00212240/guidance-on-making-a-complaint-about-a-school>

Is there a time limit for complaining?

You should complain to the school as soon as possible and certainly within three months. If you do not contact the school within that time, normally no further action will be taken in respect of your complaint. However, any exceptional reasons you may give for not meeting this time limit will always be taken into account and any decision to hear a complaint after this time will be at the discretion of the Chair of Governors.

Dealing with Unreasonably Persistent Complainants and Vexatious Complaints

The Headteacher and Governing Board are fully committed to the improvement of the school. Feedback from parents and carers is welcomed and schools will always do their utmost to resolve any that are brought to their attention as quickly as possible. The formal procedure for parents and carers should always be followed should you wish to make a complaint.

Occasionally, however, parents and carers in raising issues with staff or others do so in a way that is unacceptable. Whilst it is recognised that some complaints may well relate to what are considered serious and distressing incidents, threatening or harassing behaviour towards any members of the school community, be this staff, school governors, parents, pupils or others will not be tolerated.

The full School Complaints Procedure available from the school gives further details about how the school will always seek to work in a positive way with parents, carers and others to resolve complaints at the earliest opportunity. It also gives information about what action may be taken in respect of those complaints which appear unreasonably persistent and instances where the behaviour of the complainant gives cause for concern.

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.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by the school. They will consider whether the school has 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.

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.

Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Broomhall Nursery School other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Admissions to schools• Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs• School re-organisation proposals	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with Sheffield City Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions . <i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus . Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link

	above), depending on the substance of your complaint.
• Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
• Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.
• Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.
• National Curriculum - content	Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

If a complainant commences legal action against the school in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Broomhall Nursery school wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

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

Model School Complaints Form

Your name:

Pupil's name:

Your relationship to the pupil:

School:

Address:

Postcode:

Day time telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

Please give details of your complaint.

**What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint.
(Who did you speak to and what was the response)?**

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

For Official use by the school

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Guidance on Making a Complaint

Try to resolve issues with the school informally at first. If matters are not resolved to your satisfaction you can make a formal complaint, however, at all times, please remember that matters can often be dealt with more easily if you bear in mind the following:

- **Speak to the right person**

Try to speak with the member of staff best able to advise you and best able to deal with your concerns. This is often your child's class teacher in the first instance. If they are unable to deal with an issue immediately they may suggest making an appointment at a more convenient time for both parties to discuss matters more thoroughly.

- **Be courteous**

Conduct yourself in a professional manner and try to discuss your concerns in a calm but firm manner. Try to understand the other's point of view and do not present yourself in an aggressive manner.

- **Say who you are**

If you are unknown to the member of staff, introduce yourself.

- **Ask for the member of staff's name and use it**

If the member of staff your first approach is unable to deal with the matter ask for the name of the member of the school's staff who will be able to assist you.

- **Take your time to explain exactly what the issues are**

It is often easy to forget to give all the details of your concern, particularly if you are upset or annoyed. You may wish to write a list of the issues you need to discuss before you approach school.

- **Stay cool and calm**

Do not argue with the member of staff who receives your complaint. Be polite and respectful. Try to be clear about exactly what it is that you believe the issue to be.

- **Check you are being understood**

Make certain that the member of staff understands what you are saying and what the issue is that has given rise to your concerns.

- **Don't rush**

Take your time. Try to explain to school what your concern is and more importantly what you would like school to do to resolve this. Try to ensure the school understand your viewpoint before demanding a solution or suggesting the next step.

Flowchart
Summary of Stages of Complaints
Procedure

