

General Welfare Requirement: Safeguarding and Promoting Children's Welfare

Children's behaviour must be managed effectively and in a manner appropriate for their stage of development and particular individual needs.

Safeguarding children

1.10 Making a complaint

Policy statement for St Joseph's Pre-school

St Joseph's Pre-school 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 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 to the appropriate member of staff. 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.

To achieve this, we operate the following complaints procedure.

Under normal circumstances the Lead Practitioner will be responsible for managing any complaints made, unless the complaint is against the Lead Practitioner and then the Chair of the Management Committee or an appointed committee member will conduct an investigation. All complaints made to staff will be recorded in detail in the incident book.

Procedures

All settings are required to keep a 'summary log' of all complaints that reach stage two or beyond. This is to be made available to parents as well as to Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspectors.

St Joseph's Pre-school is committed to open and regular dialogue with parents/carers and the Pre-school welcomes all comments on its services, regardless of whether they are positive or negative.

Making a complaint

Stage 1

- Any parent who has a concern about an aspect of the setting's provision talks over, first of all, his/her concerns with the relevant staff member. However, if deemed appropriate, the Lead Practitioner should be approached to resolve the problem.
- Most complaints should be resolved amicably and informally at this stage. If a satisfactory resolution cannot be found or if the problem recurs, then the parent moves the complaint to Stage 2.

Stage 2

- The parent must put their concerns or complaint in writing to the Lead Practitioner and the chair of the management committee. Details of relevant names, dates, evidence and any other important information on the nature of the complaint should be included.
- The Pre-school will acknowledge receipt of the complaint as soon as possible, within three working days at least, and fully investigate the matter. If there is any delay, the Pre-school

will advise the parents/carers of this and offer an explanation. The Lead Practitioner will be responsible for sending them a full and formal response to the complaint.

- If the Lead Practitioner has good reason to believe that the situation has child protection implications then action will be taken in line with our Safeguarding Children and Child Protection Policy¹. If any party involved in the complaint has good reason to believe that a criminal offence has been committed, then the police will be contacted.
- The St Joseph's Pre-school stores written complaints from parents/carers in the child's personal file. However, if the complaint involves a detailed investigation, the Lead Practitioner may wish to store all information relating to the investigation in a separate file designated for this complaint.
- When the investigation into the complaint is completed, the Lead Practitioner will offer to meet the parents/carers to discuss the outcome.
- Parents must be informed of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of making the complaint. This formal response will include details of any actions taken or to be taken, and any amendments to the Pre-school's policies and procedures as a result of the investigation. This response will be sent to the parents/carers concerned and all relevant and appropriate staff.
- When the complaint is resolved at this stage, the summative points are logged in the Complaints Summary Record.

Stage 3

- If the parent/carer is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, he/she may request a meeting with the Lead Practitioner and the chair of the management committee. The parent/carer may have a friend or partner present if required and the Lead Practitioner should have the support of the chair of the management committee, or an appointed committee member present.
- 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, the summative points are logged in the Complaints Summary Record.

Stage 4

- If at the stage three meeting the parent/carer and St Joseph's Pre-school 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.
- Staff or volunteers within the Pre-school and Toddler Association (PATA) are appropriate persons to be invited to act as mediators.
- The mediator keeps all discussions confidential. S/he can hold separate meetings with the Pre-school personnel (Lead Practitioner and chair of the management committee) and the parent/carer, 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.

¹ Policy 1.2 Safeguarding Children and Child Protection (including managing allegations of abuse against a member of staff).

Stage 5

- When the mediator has concluded her/his investigations, a final meeting between the parent/carer, the Lead Practitioner and the 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.
- 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.

The role of the Ofsted and the Local Safeguarding Children Board

- Parents may approach Ofsted directly at any stage of this complaints procedure. In addition, where there seems to be a possible breach of the Pre-school's registration requirements, it is essential to involve Ofsted as the registering and inspection body with a duty to ensure the Welfare Requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage are adhered to.
- The number to call Ofsted with regard to a complaint is: 0300 123 1231
- These details are displayed on St Joseph's Pre-school's notice board.
- If a child appears to be at risk, the Pre-school follows its Safeguarding Children and Child Protection policy, which is in line with the procedures of the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Board (GSCB) in our local authority.
- In these cases, both the parent/carer and the Pre-school are informed and the Pre-school's Lead Practitioner works with Ofsted or GSCB to ensure a proper investigation of the complaint, followed by appropriate action.
- If an allegation is made against a member of staff or committee, St Joseph's Pre-school follows the guidance of GSCB when investigating complaints. The relevant agencies will be informed, ie. Safeguarding in Education, Social Care, Child Protection and Sexual Crime Unit (police) and Ofsted.
- All suspicions and investigations are kept confidential and shared only with those who need to know any information under the guidance of GSCB.

Records

- A record of complaints against St Joseph's Pre-school and/or the children and/or the adults working in the Pre-school is kept, including the date, the circumstances of the complaint and how the complaint was managed.
- The outcome of all complaints is recorded in the Summary Complaints Record which is available for parents and Ofsted inspectors on request and kept for a minimum of three years.

Version Number	Author	Purpose of change	Date
1.0	K Coupe	Comprehensive review, page numbered & referenced	Sept 2014
2.0	Committee member	Reviewed and updated as necessary	Oct 2016
3.0	K Coupe	Reviewed, updated, version controlled	23 Jan 2019