



Complaints Policy

September 2024

To be reviewed: June 2025

## Introduction

Tunstall Nursery School strives to provide an excellent education for all our children. The Headteacher and staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents. However, the school is obliged to have procedures in place in case there are complaints by parents or guardians. The following policy sets out the procedures that the school follows in such cases. The decision at each stage of the process is made by someone who has not been involved at an earlier stage.

If any parents/guardians are unhappy with the education that their child is receiving, or have any concerns relating to the school, we encourage them to talk to the child's keyworker immediately. We stress that there is a clear difference between a concern and a complaint. We take informal concerns seriously and find that the majority of situations can be resolved by an open and honest discussion. Therefore, few develop into more formal complaints.

Parents should be assured that making a complaint will not adversely affect their child.

This policy is available from the school office, is on the school's website and is also referred to in our prospectus. It covers any clear expression of dissatisfaction with the school, its personnel, or its services. Anyone may make a complaint including children, parents/carers, volunteers, paid workers, or anyone outside the school.

## Aims

Tunstall Nursery School aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint. In the interests of fairness, the decision at each stage of the process is made by someone who has not been involved in making the decision at the end of an earlier stage.

We treat complaints seriously and give careful consideration to each one. We provide sufficient opportunity for complaints to be fully discussed in a confidential and sensitive manner.

We aim to resolve any complaint at the earliest possible Stage of our procedures.

Our complaints procedure is accessible and simple to use and understand. We ensure the complainant is given:

- a copy of the Complaints Policy
- information about which Stage the complaint is being dealt with
- clear information on the outcome of each Stage together with details of how to move on to the next Stage within the stated time limits if they are not satisfied.

In all cases we put the interests of the child above all else.

## The complaints process

<b>Stage 1</b> <b>Informal expression of concern made to the school.</b>	All staff work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school, and is making good progress from their own individual starting points. They naturally want to know if there is a problem, so that they can take action before it seriously affects the child's progress, and most issues can be resolved on the spot through discussion.
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<p>All Stage 1 complaints will be dealt with by the keyworker. A senior member of staff may be informed at this stage.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If a parent is concerned, they should, in the first instance, talk to the child’s <b>keyworker</b> with the aim of resolving concerns through discussion.</li> <li>• If a parent is still not satisfied after meeting with the class teacher, they can make a further meeting with the <b>teacher / Head of School (if the teacher is the keyworker)</b>.</li> <li>• If a parent is still not satisfied after meeting with the year group leader, then they should arrange a further meeting with one of our <b>Head of Schools</b></li> <li>• If parents are still not satisfied after a meeting with member of the headship team, then they should arrange a further meeting with the <b>Executive Headteacher</b>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Stage 2 (i)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents should meet with the <b>Executive Headteacher</b> to explain their concerns with the aim of resolving the situation through discussion</li> </ul>
<p><b>Stage 2 (ii)</b></p> <p>Formal complaint received by the Head teacher</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the parents feel that the situation is still not resolved, they should put their complaint in writing to the Executive Headteacher, stating which issues they are unhappy about, and what they would like to see happen.</li> <li>• The Executive Headteacher acknowledges the written complaint within 3 school days and carries out an investigation of unresolved issues OR delegates this to a senior member of staff.</li> <li>• The timeframe for Stage 2 is no longer than 20 school days during which an investigation is completed and the Executive Headteacher communicates the decision/outcome in writing to the parent. This will give a full explanation of the reasons for the decision, together with the information that if they are not satisfied they can write to the Chair of Governors within 10 school days, (Stage 3). The letter should be marked ‘private and confidential’ and addressed to the Chair of Governors at the school office.</li> </ul> <p><b>If the complaint is about the Executive Headteacher</b>, the matter is referred directly to the school’s Chair of Governors who will personally investigate the situation, provided they have had no prior involvement, or may delegate it to another governor or exceptionally to the Complaints Panel. The Chair of Governors</p>

	<p>will inform the complainant of the decision / outcome at the end of the Stage 2 investigation. This will give a full explanation of the reasons for the decision, together with information that if they are not satisfied, they can write to the Governors Complaints Panel within 10 school days, requesting to take the matter to Stage 3, and stating which issues they are unhappy about, and what they would like to see happen. The letter should be marked 'private and confidential' and addressed to the school office.</p> <p>If more than 20 days is needed to complete Stage 2, the Executive Headteacher, (or the Chair of Governors if the complaint is about the Executive Headteacher), will notify the complainant of the reason and give a new date by which they can expect the Stage 2 decision.</p>
<p><b>Stage 3</b></p> <p>Formal written appeal to the Chair of Governors (or Governors Complaints Panel) received within 10 school days of the Stage 2 decision letter</p>	<p>Within 5 school days of receipt:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the Chair of Governors will acknowledge receipt of letter, stating it is receiving attention.</li> <li>• the school will provide the letter and all background papers and policies to the Chair of Governors.</li> </ul> <p>Within a further 5 school days the Chair of Governors will normally delegate the Stage 3 work to the governors' Complaints Panel if appropriate, and notify the parent in writing of their decision.</p> <p>If the complaint is referred to the Governors Complaints Panel, the Panel Chair will convene a meeting within 5 school days to consider the paperwork and decide the way forward, and will write to the complainant giving details of the outcome of that meeting.</p> <p>If a meeting with the parent and others involved is considered necessary, the parent will be given adequate notice to prepare. After the meeting, the Chair of the Panel will notify the parent of decisions made by the Panel within 7 school days.</p> <p>The Panel Chair's written notification of the school's final decision will include information that if the parent remains dissatisfied they may approach the Department for Education, (Stage 4).</p>
<p><b>Stage 4</b></p> <p>Representation to The Secretary of State for Education</p>	<p>If all previous stages have been explored and the parent is not satisfied the complainant may make further representations to the Department for Education at <a href="https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school">https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school</a>, who may look at the matter or refer on to Ofsted or the Education Funding Agency. This would normally only be appropriate if it is believed that the school and the Governing Body have acted illegally or arbitrarily.</p> <p>The Secretary of State is unlikely to investigate individual issues</p>

	but can inspect the school's policies and procedures and make sure these have been followed.
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In the case of a vexatious complaint where despite all the school Stages of the Complaints Policy being followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied, they are not entitled to reopen the same issue. In such cases the Chair of Governors is able to inform them in writing that the process has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

An anonymous complaint will not be investigated under this procedure unless there are exceptional circumstances. These would include serious concerns such as child protection issues or bullying allegations, where the school might consider it appropriate to contact outside agencies.

### **Investigating complaints**

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
- Tell the parent at what Stage of the complaints procedure the complaint is currently being dealt with
- Clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved
- Meet with the complainant or contact them if further information is required
- Listen carefully to the complainant and clarify what the complainant feels would put things right
- Conduct any interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- Complete all necessary notes
- Ensure that the parent is aware of their right to take the matter to the next Stage of the complaint's procedure within the specified time limit if they remain dissatisfied.

### **Resolving complaints**

At each stage in the complaint process, schools and complainant 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. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- An apology;
- An explanation;
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- An assurance that the event that was the basis of the complaint will not recur;
- An explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure it does not happen again. (Details of any disciplinary procedures that have taken place as a result of the complaint are not released);
- An undertaking to review school policy or procedure in light of the complaint;
- An explanation that there is insufficient evidence and thus the complaint cannot be upheld;
- An explanation that, following investigation, the concern is not substantiated by the evidence.

**An admission that the school could have handled things better is not the same as an admission of negligence.**

## **Monitoring and Review**

The Governing Body monitors the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Headteacher will log all stage 2 complaints received by the school, and record how they were resolved. These logs are presented to the Governing Body as part of the Headteacher's report.

Governors take into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process, and make any modifications necessary to this policy. This policy is made available to all parents, so that they can be properly informed about the complaints process.

This policy is reviewed at least annually by the full Governing Body.