Tunstall Nursery School

Complaints Policy

June 2026

To be reviewed: June 2027

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/carers have any concerns relating to the school, we encourage them to talk to the child's class teacher immediately. We stress that there is a clear difference between a concern and a complaint. We take all 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.

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.

Scope
Complaints which are not in scope of this policy include:
Admissions, statutory assessment of SEN, matters likely to require a child protection investigation, exclusions, whistleblowing, staff grievances and complaints about services from other suppliers.

The complaints process

Stage 1 **Informal expression of concern made to the school**. All Stage 1 complaints will be dealt with by the keyworker. A senior member of staff may be informed at this stage.	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. • If a parent is concerned, they should, in the first instance, talk to the child's **keyworker** with the aim of resolving concerns through discussion. • If a parent is still not satisfied after meeting with the keyworker, they can make a further meeting with the **teacher / Head of School (if the teacher is the keyworker)**. • If a parent is still not satisfied, then they should arrange a further meeting with one of our **Heads of School**
Stage 2 (i)	• Parents should meet with the **Head of School** to explain their concerns with the aim of resolving the situation through discussion
Stage 2 (ii) Formal complaint received by the Head of School	• If the parents feel that the situation is still not resolved, they should put their complaint in writing to the Head of School, stating which issues they are unhappy about, and what they would like to see happen. • The Head of School 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. • The timeframe for Stage 2 is no longer than 20 school days during which an investigation is completed and the Head of School 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. **If the complaint is about the Head of School**, the matter is referred to the school's Executive Headteacher who will follow

	the above procedure. If the complaint is regarding the Executive Headteacher 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 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. 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.
Stage 3 Formal written appeal to the Chair of Governors (or Governors Complaints Panel) received within 10 school days of the Stage 2 decision letter	Within 5 school days of receipt: • the Chair of Governors will acknowledge receipt of letter, stating it is receiving attention. • the school will provide the letter and all background papers and policies to the Chair of Governors. 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. 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. 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. 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).
Stage 4 Representation to	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 https//www.gov.uk/complain-

The Secretary of State for Education	about-school, 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. The Secretary of State is unlikely to investigate individual issues but can inspect the school's policies and procedures and make sure these have been followed.

In the case of a serial/ unreasonable (vexatious) complaint where the school stages of the Concerns and Complaints Policy have been followed and the matter is not resolved, please refer to the below section for managing serial and unreasonable complaints.

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.

Electronic recordings

At Tunstall Nursery School, the recording of staff members—whether audio, video, or photographic—is strictly prohibited without the explicit consent of the staff member(s) involved and after consultation with the Head of School. This applies in all circumstances without exception.

- No recordings of staff will be made or used as part of any complaint or investigation unless prior, informed consent has been obtained from the staff member(s) being recorded. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken;
- Any recording made by a visitor/ volunteer/ parent or carer without such consent will be considered unreasonable behaviour and a breach of the school's Visitor's Code of Conduct and may result in the school withdrawing permission for them to be on the school's premises.

By maintaining this standard, we uphold a professional and respectful environment for all members of our school community.

Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation, for example if it is a safeguarding matter.

Time scales

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

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.

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.

Managing serial and unreasonable complaints

Tunstall Nursery School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will act to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

Tunstall Nursery School defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, such as, if the complainant:

• refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance;

• refuses to co-operate with the concerns and complaints investigation process;

• refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the concerns and complaints procedure;

• insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the concerns and complaints procedure or with good practice;

• introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented; on;
• raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales;
• makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced;
• changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds;
• repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed);
• refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented;
• seeks an unrealistic outcome e.g. asking for details on any in-house staff disciplinaries that may have taken place;
• makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with;
• uses threats to intimidate;
• uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence;
• knowingly provides falsified information;
• publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Process for managing serial and unreasonable complaints

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.
Whenever possible, the Heads of School / Executive Headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking. 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.
If the behaviour continues, the Chair of Governors will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Tunstall Nursery School causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.
In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we reserve the right to inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from Tunstall Nursery School.

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.