

Innsworth Preschool Complaints Policy

Last Updated: 1st January 2026

1. Purpose and Scope

1.1 Overview: This policy outlines Innsworth Preschool's fair, transparent, and legally compliant approach to managing complaints.

1.2 Objective: It is designed to ensure that genuine concerns are addressed promptly and effectively, while protecting the preschool, its staff, and its children from unreasonable, hostile, or vexatious actions.

2. Definitions and Scope

2.1 Complaint: A formal expression of dissatisfaction regarding an aspect of the preschool's provision, policies, or the conduct of a staff member, which requires a formal response.

- **Exclusions:** This policy does not cover safeguarding allegations (managed under the Safeguarding Policy), admissions appeals, or staff grievances.
- **Billing vs. Service:** Specific administrative errors in billing (e.g. "I was charged for a day I didn't attend") should be raised as a financial query with the Manager for prompt correction. However, service-related concerns (e.g. whether the service was delivered with reasonable care and skill) may be raised under this policy.
- **Statutory Rights:** Nothing in this policy limits your statutory rights.

2.2 Vexatious Complaint: A complaint that is obsessive, harassing, or repetitive, and which is designed to cause disruption or annoyance rather than to genuinely resolve an issue. Triggers for this classification include:

- Persistence in pursuing a complaint after the procedure has been fully exhausted.
- Changing the substance of a complaint or raising new, trivial issues to prolong the process.
- Refusal to accept documented evidence or independent outcomes.
- Excessive volume of correspondence or demands that are disproportionate to the issue.

2.3 Malicious Complaint: A complaint that is known by the complainant to be false and is made with the intention of causing harm or reputational damage to an individual or the preschool.

3. Legal and Statutory Framework

3.1 Compliance: This policy is underpinned by and ensures compliance with:

- The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS): Sections 3.98–3.99 (Complaints).
- The Ofsted Early Years Compliance Handbook.
- The Children Act 2004.
- The Equality Act 2010.
- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.
- UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

4. Requirement to Act in Good Faith

4.1 Good Faith Principle: We expect all complaints to be made in good faith and with the genuine intention of resolving an issue. This is a core requirement of our parent partnership. Raising a complaint in good faith will never, by itself, put a child's place at risk.

4.2 Processing Malicious or Vexatious Complaints: All complaints are logged and initially assessed. However, where a complaint is identified as potentially malicious or vexatious:

- **Review:** The decision to classify a complaint as vexatious or malicious must be approved by the Manager and a second senior person (or external HR/committee member).
- **Action:** If confirmed, the complainant will be informed in writing that the matter is closed and that no further investigation will be undertaken.
- **Safeguard:** We will **not** treat a complaint as vexatious where it raises a credible concern about EYFS compliance, safeguarding, or discrimination.

4.3 Consequences of Misconduct: While complaining is a right, misconduct is not. If a parent engages in threats, harassment, discrimination, or knowingly false statements, we reserve the right to review the parent partnership and the child's place to protect staff wellbeing.

5. Social Media and Group Communication

5.1 Conduct: We recognise that parents often communicate via social media or instant messaging groups. However, these platforms must not be used to harass staff or damage reputation.

- **Prohibited Conduct:** Targeting individual staff members, making defamatory comments, or "doxxing" (sharing personal info) on public platforms is prohibited.
- **Focus:** We focus on the conduct, not the complaint. Where such behaviour causes harassment of staff or safeguarding concerns, it will be treated as a serious breach of the Parent Code of Conduct.

6. Our Principles

6.1 Standards:

- **Constructive Engagement:** We expect all parties to engage in this process respectfully.
- **Reasonable Adjustments:** We will make reasonable adjustments for complainants with disabilities or access needs (e.g. accepting complaints verbally and confirming them in writing, or providing translation support where practical).
- **Fair Investigation:** This policy ensures all formal complaints are investigated fairly and impartially.

7. Stage 1: Informal Resolution

7.1 Procedure: We encourage parents to raise minor concerns promptly and informally with their child's key person or the Preschool Manager.

- **Timescale:** Informal concerns will normally be acknowledged within **2 working days**, even if the resolution requires flexibility.

8. Stage 2: Formal Complaints Procedure

8.1 Procedure: If a concern cannot be resolved informally, a formal complaint must be submitted in writing to the Preschool Manager.

- **Acknowledgement:** We will provide a written acknowledgement within **two working days**.
- **Conflict of Interest:** If the complaint concerns the Manager or Owner, it will be handled by the business manager to ensure independence.
- **Investigation:** The Manager (or designated lead) will conduct a full and fair investigation. This will be concluded within **28 days**, and a written report detailing the findings, action taken, and outcome will be provided to the complainant.
- **Appeal:** If the complainant is not satisfied, they may submit a written appeal within **seven working days**.
- **Independent Review:** The appeal will be reviewed by a senior member of staff (or external partner) **not involved in the initial investigation**.
- **Outcome:** A final written decision will be issued within **14 working days**. This exhausts the internal procedure.

9. Managing Unreasonable, Vexatious, or Campaign Complaints

9.1 Duty of Care: We have a duty to protect the well-being of our staff and the efficiency of our administration.

9.2 Unreasonable Behaviour: If a complainant's behaviour becomes unreasonable (e.g. abusive language, excessive volume), we reserve the right to restrict communication to writing only or appoint a single point of contact.

9.3 Duplicate or "Campaign" Complaints: If the preschool receives a high volume of identical complaints regarding the same issue (a "campaign"), we will not respond to each individually. Instead, we reserve the right to:

- Issue one standard response by email/letter to all complainants raising the same point.
- Issue a general policy clarification to all families where appropriate, without referencing any specific complaint.

10. Contacting Ofsted

10.1 Right to Contact: If a complainant believes the preschool has breached the statutory requirements of the EYFS, they have the right to raise their concern with Ofsted.

- **Ofsted Contact:** 0300 123 4666
- **General Email:** enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
- **Placement Security:** Contacting Ofsted regarding a genuine regulatory concern will never prejudice a child's placement.

11. Monitoring and Review

11.1 Record Keeping: A written record of all formal complaints is maintained securely for a minimum of **three years**. Records include the complaint, investigation steps, outcome, and action taken, and are available to Ofsted on request.

11.2 Review: This policy is reviewed annually to ensure it remains effective and compliant.

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