



APPLE BLOSSOM KINDERGARTEN

Complaints Procedure

Apple Blossom Kindergarten/Manchester Steiner Ltd.

Introduction

Apple Blossom Kindergarten aims to provide quality teaching and pastoral care to its students/ children. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be taken seriously by the school and dealt with in accordance with the following procedure.

There is an underlying principle that concerns ought to be resolved, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. However, formal procedures will need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve an issue are unsuccessful and the complainant remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

The Director responsible for HR will be responsible for keeping records and will hold them centrally. All correspondence, statements and records of complaints will be held confidentially.

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

We will endeavour to resolve concerns and complaints quickly and informally.

If parents have a concern or complaint they should normally contact their child's Kindergarten teacher. In most cases the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means. If the complainant does not wish to raise the issue through the class teacher they should contact the Director responsible for HR.

If the teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, or feel they need the support of another colleague, they will consult the Director responsible for HR.

The Director responsible for HR should be made aware of any meeting before it takes place including

- Nature of the grievance
- Date and time of any relevant incident or event
- Names of any witnesses
- Any action already taken
- Resolution sought

If the complaint concerns a member of staff other than the Teacher, the complainant should contact the Director responsible for HR, who in most cases would be able to resolve the situation informally, together with the teacher concerned.

In some instances it may be good practice to call an informal meeting between the complainant and the teacher concerned, The Director responsible for HR will facilitate the meeting and act as an objective listening ear. The meeting would only take place after the Director responsible for HR has consulted all parties independently and feels that a meeting is appropriate and constructive.

Complaints made directly to the Directors of Apple Blossom Kindergarten will usually be referred to the Director responsible for HR, unless the complaint is about the Director responsible for HR or the parents / teacher concerned have valid reasons why the Director responsible for HR should not deal with this complaint, in which case either the another director or the Nursery Manager will deal with stage 1 of this procedure. In such cases the other director or the Nursery Manager may agree to facilitate a meeting between all parties.

The staff member dealing with the complaint will make a written record of all concerns/complaints and the date on which they were received. This written record will be shown to all those involved who will be asked to confirm that it is an accurate record of what has taken place. Should the matter not be resolved within 7 days, or in the event that the parties concerned fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then the complainant will be advised of the option to make a formal complaint in accordance with stage 2 of this procedure.

Stage 2 - Formal Resolution

Put it in Writing

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the complainant should put their complaint in writing to the school with a title 'OFFICIAL COMPLAINT'. The directors of the school will be informed of the official complaint within 3 working days. An Investigation Team will be created (usually made of up of the director responsible for HR and one other director or the Nursery manager). The person making the complaint will be informed of the Investigation Team within 2 days of its creation.

Meet and discuss

Investigation

The Investigation Team will decide, after considering the complaint the appropriate course of action to take.

In most cases the Investigation Team will meet with the complainant concerned, normally within 7 days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

It is strongly recommended that the complainant brings with them a friend for support (solicitors should not attend). The school will in most instances postpone the first meeting if the complainant is not accompanied.

Where appropriate the Investigation Team will gather witness statements, records of maintenance and training, photo evidence and refer to the schools Policies and Procedures.

At all meetings written notes will be made including the main points and changes required. The complainant will sign these minutes to confirm agreement. An official note taker may be assigned to ensure a complete and accurate record is kept.

At any meeting it is an opportunity for 2 way conversation so that the School can hear first hand the view point of the parent. **No immediate decision will be made; time to reflect and consider what has been said will be needed.**

Decision

After considering all the evidence the Investigation Team will make a decision. The Directors will be informed of this decision prior to the complainant.

Where possible the decision will be made within 14 days of meeting with the complainant. This time may be required to gather additional information and meet with the respective management bodies.

The complainant will be informed of this decision and any actions in writing. He/she will also give reasons for the decision reached.

If the complainants are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3 - Mediation Group Hearing

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the Formal Resolution they will be informed of the option to invoke Stage 3.

If a complainant wishes to appeal against the findings and invoke Stage 3 they must do so in writing within 3 working days of the complainant receiving the decision. The letter or email subject title must state in capitals: 'OFFICIAL COMPLAINT - APPEAL AGAINST FORMAL RESOLUTION'

A Mediation Group will be formed and consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. Each of the Mediation Group members will be appointed by the Directors and is likely to consist of – A member director, a member of staff who is not related to the complaint and a person who is independent of the management and running of the school.

The Mediation Group will:

1. Invite the complainant to a meeting within 10 working days of receiving the appeal or without necessary delay where for good reason it is not possible to hold the meeting within 10 days.

Notes of this meeting will be taken.

The right to be accompanied applies once again and the meeting may be adjourned if the companion is unavailable.

2. Review all the evidence gathered by the Investigation Team. If deemed necessary the Mediation Group may re-interview.
3. Meet with the Investigation Team to understand their reasoning behind the decision they came to.

The Mediation Group will make a decision within 14 days of receiving the appeal or if this is not possible without undue delay.

The decision of the Mediation Group will be communicated to the Directors and the Nursery Manager prior to the complainant being informed.

The Mediation Group will inform the complainant in writing of their decision.

The Mediation Group's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents and the Kindergarten's directors and where relevant, the person at whom the complaint was directed. When necessary the Mediation Group will refer to the Kindergarten's disciplinary procedure. **The Mediation Groups decision is final.**

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the school by paragraph 6 (2) (j) of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2003; where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

After having followed the complaints procedure if an Early Years parent or carer feels dissatisfied with the schools response, they may contact Ofsted with the details of their complaint via 0300 1234 234 or enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Basic Principles underlying each stage:

Investigating Complaints

At each stage the person investigating the complaint will make sure that they:

- Establish the facts and who has been involved
- Clarify the nature of the complaint and any unresolved issues
- Meet the complainant or contact them
- Clarify what the complainant feels would put things right
- Interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- Conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- Keep notes of the interview

Resolving Complaints

At each stage the kindergarten will keep in mind ways in which the complaint can be resolved. It may be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid, either in total or in part. In addition it may be appropriate to offer one of the following:

- An apology, either verbal or in writing
- An explanation
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- An assurance that the event complained of will not recur
- An explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again
- An undertaking to review kindergarten policies in light of the complaint

It is helpful if complainants are encouraged to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. An admission that the kindergarten could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence.

Policy by: Kate Gray and Tom Pope Date: February 2016
Designated director responsible for approving this policy: Kate Gray Signature: _____ Date : _____
Reviewed: January 2019
Next Review Date: January 2020