



Complaints Policy

Review date: September 2023

Next review: September 2024

Aim

Hirst Wood Nursery School aims to provide high quality education with care for all children at all times. The school aims to offer a welcome to each individual child and family and to provide a warm and caring environment within which all children can learn and develop as they play and explore. The school believes that children and parents/carers are entitled to expect courtesy and prompt careful attention to their needs and wishes. The school staff aim to work in partnership with parents (see parental partnership policy) and the community and welcome suggestions on how to improve the school provision at any time. We encourage regular exchanges of information between staff and users of our services. The staff team welcome suggestions that may improve the service we are able to provide to our families and the wider community.

Do you want to make a complaint?

We recognise that with the best will in the world, sometimes things go wrong. If you are not satisfied with the service you have received, we need to hear from you. This will help us to fix something that has gone wrong, and it will help us to improve what we do. We recognise that different types of complaint have to be dealt with in different ways and that while some may be of a serious nature; others are minor matters which are easily rectified quickly and informally. Usually, your best starting point is to speak to a member of staff (e.g. your child's key person or teacher, or member of the team). We hope to be able to resolve most problems quickly, by talking them through like this. You are welcome to speak directly to a member of our management team (Jayne Taylor, Headteacher or Sam Renwick, Assistant Headteacher) about any issue that is concerning you – just ask at reception. You can also email us or phone us about your complaint – our contact details are office@hirstwoodnsc.co.uk.

Any parent/carer who wishes to express their dissatisfaction about any aspect of the school provision should bring it to the attention of member of staff / Headteacher. If this does not have a satisfactory outcome within a reasonable period of time (3 months of time), or if the problem reoccurs, the parent/carer should put their concerns or complaint in writing (see complaints form) and request a meeting with the Headteacher and/or the Chair of the Governing Body.

Both parents and the Headteacher can have a friend, partner or colleague present if required and an agreed written record of the discussion should be made and signed by both parties. This policy is formulated in conjunction with the DfE School Complaints Toolkit 2014 and the Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures 2020.

Introduction

Since the 1st September 2003 governing bodies (GBs) of all maintained schools and maintained nursery schools in England have been required, under Section 29 of the Education Act 2002, summarised in Annex A, to have in place a procedure to deal with all complaints relating to their school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides. This does not limit complainants to parents or carers of children registered at a school. A complainant could be a member of the wider community or representing an ex-pupil. The law also requires the procedure to be publicised. The majority of issues raised by parents, the community or pupils, are concerns rather than complaints.

Who can make a complaint?

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to Hirst Wood Nursery School about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints procedure.

The difference between a concern and a complaint

A concern may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'.

A complaint may be defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'. It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. Hirst Wood Nursery School takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible. If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, the Headteacher will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the Headteacher will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important. We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, Hirst Wood Nursery School will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so. Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher or Headteacher. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint. Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 2 of the procedure.

Complaints against school staff (except the Headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to the Headteacher via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the Headteacher should be addressed to Ruth Trattles, the (Chair of Governors), via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to Celine Moriarty (the Clerk to the Governing Body) via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential. For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help you.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

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.

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.

Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services run by Hirst Wood Nursery School other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Admissions to schools• Statutory assessments of special educational needs• School re-organisation proposals	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or School reorganisation proposals should be raised with Bradford Local Authority
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about Child Protection matters are handled under our Child Protection & Safeguarding policy, in accordance with the statutory guidance. If you have serious concerns you may wish to contact the Designated Officer who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exclusion of children from School*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions *complaints about the application of the Behaviour Policy can be made through the School's Complaints Policy. We also have an Exclusion Policy in place
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whistleblowing	We have an internal Whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistle-blowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at www.education.gov.uk/contactus Volunteer staff who have concerns about our School should complain through the School's Complaints procedure. You may also complain direct to the Local Authority or the Department for Education, depending on the substance of your complaint.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the School's internal grievance procedures.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the School's internal disciplinary process if appropriate. Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use School premises or facilities 	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about their service. Please contact them directly.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EYFS (2021) content 	Please contact the Department for Education at www.education.gov.uk/contactus

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations. If a complainant commences legal action against Hirst Wood Nursery School in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Hirst Wood Nursery School wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology.

We are committed to taking concerns seriously, at the earliest stage, in the hope of keeping the number of formal complaints to a minimum and without needing formal procedures. However, depending on the nature of the complaint, you may wish or be asked to follow the school's formal complaints procedure. The prime aim of Hirst Wood Nursery School is to resolve the complaint as fairly and speedily as possible. Formal complaints will be dealt with in a sensitive, impartial and confidential manner. The following details outline the stages that can be used to resolve complaints.

Hirst Wood Nursery School has four main stages. In summary they are as follows: -

- Stage 1 (informal): concern heard by an appropriate staff member
- Stage 2 (formal): complaint heard by Headteacher
- Stage 3 (formal): complaint heard by Chair of Governors
- Stage 4 (formal): complaint heard by GB's complaints appeal panel.

Stage 1 – concern heard by staff member

Concerns can be raised with the school and family at any time and will often generate an immediate response, which will resolve the concern. The school requests that parents/carers make their first contact with their child's class teacher or in the children's the staff member running the group session. On some occasions the concern raised may require investigation, or discussion with others, in which case you will receive an informal but informed response within a day or two. The vast majority of concerns will be satisfactorily dealt with in this way.

However, if you are not satisfied with the result at stage 1, please write to or call the school within 10 school working days. The school will then look at your complaint at the next stage.

Stage 2 – complaint heard by Headteacher.

The Headteacher may delegate the task of collating the information to another staff member but not the decision on the action to be taken. The Headteacher will arrange for the complaint to be acknowledged within 5 school working days of receiving it and a meeting may be convened to discuss the matter further.

Following the investigation, the Headteacher will aim to provide a written response within 10 school working days of sending the acknowledgement. However, if a complaint is more complex to review this can be extended to a maximum of 20 school working days. The school will provide you details of the new deadline and an explanation on the delay. If you are not satisfied with the result at stage 2 please write to or call the school within 10 school working days of getting our response. The school will then look at your complaint at the next stage.

Stage 3 – complaint heard by Chair of Governors

If the matter has not been resolved at Stage 2 or the complaint is about the Headteacher, then you will need to write to the Chair of Governors c/o the school. The Chair of Governors will arrange for the complaint to be acknowledged within 5 school working days of receiving it and a meeting may be convened to discuss the matter further. Following an investigation, the Chair of Governors will aim to provide a written response within 10 school working days of sending out the acknowledgement. However, if a complaint is more complex to review this can be extended to 20 school working days. The school will provide you details of the new deadline and an explanation on the delay. If you are dissatisfied with the result at stage 3, you will need to let the school know within 10 school working days of getting the response. The school will then look at your complaint at the next stage.

Stage 4 – complaint heard by Governing Bodies Complaints Appeal Panel.

If the matter has still not been resolved at Stage 3, then you will need to write to the Clerk of Governors giving details of the complaint and asking that it is put before the appeal panel. Should the Chair have been involved at any previous stage in the process a nominated Governor, impartial to the complaint, will convene a complaints panel. The complaint will be acknowledged within 5 school working days of receiving it. The hearing will normally take place within 20 school working days of sending the acknowledgment. The aim of the Appeal panel hearing is to impartially resolve the complaint and to achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. All parties will be notified of the Panel's decision in writing within 5 school working days after the date of the hearing. The letter will also contain what you need to do if you wish to take the matter further. The Governors appeal hearing is the last school based stage of the complaints process. If the matter is still unresolved to the parents/carers satisfaction then they should bring the matter to the attention of the local authority officers responsible for the School the following address:

Children's Services,

City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council, Britannia House, Hall Ings, Bradford BD1 1HX

If the matter is still unresolved to the parents/carers satisfaction then they should bring the matter to the attention of the School Complaints unit. The address is as follows:

The School Complaints unit (SCU),

Department of Education,
2nd Floor, Piccadilly Gate,
Manchester, M1 2WD.

Withdrawal of a complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint they can do so at any time and at any stage, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.