



## The Windmill Sure Start Children's Centre Responding to Parents' Concerns Policy

Review Period	Annual
Date Approved	Summer 2013
Next Review Date	Summer 2014

### **Our aims**

The Windmill Sure Start Children's Centre aims to:

- establish and promote a close relationship with all parents/carers, in the interests of their children;
- welcome the views of parents/carers about our Centre and act on them;
- take seriously and deal promptly with any expression of concern;
- inform parents/carers as soon as possible about any issues of concern to the Centre, so that we can work together to resolve them.

### **What we do to avoid concerns arising**

We ensure that all existing staff and new staff joining the Centre are made aware of this policy and the procedure for parents/carers to follow, should they wish to raise a concern. This is available from the Centre office.

### **How we respond to a concern raised by a parent**

At The Windmill Sure Start Children's Centre, we are committed to responding to parental concerns as quickly and sensitively as possible. Most concerns can be resolved through meeting with staff and the Centre Coordinator.

If dissatisfied with the outcome of such a meeting, then details of next steps and who to contact will be shared with the parent/carer concerned. If parents wish to discuss a concern with the head teacher, they should make a mutually convenient appointment in advance, so that sufficient time and attention can be given to the matter.

## **How we monitor and improve our practice**

We keep a record of all concerns raised by parents in the Centre concerns log. This helps us know more about:

- the nature of concerns received;
- the time taken to resolve each concern;
- the measures adopted to resolve each concern.

The Centre Coordinator reviews the concerns log on a termly basis and reports to the Governors. In addition, the governing body reviews concerns received, which are included in a report to the Governors, and how they have been resolved on a termly basis. They are only informed of general details; the particulars of all individuals involved remain anonymous. The governing body only reviews concerns that have been resolved to the satisfaction of all parties.

These measures ensure that appropriate consideration is given to any underlying issues, which may need to be addressed by the Centre and governing body.

**The Windmill Sure Start Children's Centre**  
**Responding to parents' concerns - procedure**

The following table summarises the procedure a parent should follow when wishing to raise a concern with the Centre. Please see appendix one for concerns that are not covered by this procedure.

<p><b>Stage one</b></p> <p>Approaching the Centre Coordinator</p>	<p>The parent/carer should be referred to the Centre Coordinator for a discussion about their concerns. Minutes of the discussion should be kept and signed by both parties if in agreement. A copy will be given to the parent/carer.</p> <p>Any action taken to address a staff disciplinary/capability matter will not be disclosed to parents/carers, other than to say that appropriate action has been taken.</p>
<p><b>Stage two (a)</b></p> <p>Approaching the Headteacher</p>	<p>If the problem is not resolved to the parent's/carer's satisfaction, an appointment should be made with the head teacher of Burstow Primary School to discuss the matter.</p> <p>After the meeting, the head teacher will provide you with a record of the meeting in writing within 5 working term-time days, which states briefly the steps that will be taken to resolve the concern and how long this is likely to take.</p> <p>The head teacher will investigate the concern. The head teacher will keep a record of all meetings and correspondence relating to the concern. Once all facts have been established, the head teacher may invite you to another meeting to explain the outcome of the investigations. After the meeting, the head teacher will provide you with written details of the decisions reached, the reasons for those decisions and, where appropriate, the action to be taken. No confidential details of any staff disciplinary/capability action to be taken will be given.</p>

<p><b>Stage two (b)</b></p> <p>Mediation meeting</p>	<p>If still dissatisfied, the parent/carer should request a meeting with a member of the governing body and the head teacher, with the expectation that the matter can still be resolved through mediation.</p> <p>An independent person, who has had no prior involvement with your concern, will keep a written record of this meeting and minutes will be circulated to all involved parties.</p>
<p><b>Stage three</b></p> <p>Approaching the School's Governing Body</p>	<p>If the problem is not resolved satisfactorily at stage two, the parent/carer should contact the chair of governors (using Appendix two) to ask for a further investigation to be carried out.</p> <p>If your concern is against the action of the Centre Coordinator and the head teacher has been unable to resolve the issue satisfactorily and the mediation meeting has not brought a resolution, you should fill in a stage three complaint form (see Appendix two) and send it to the chair of governors for review.</p> <p>The chair of governors, or a nominated governor, will acknowledge receipt of your complaint form within five working term-time days and will investigate the complaint in full. He/she will meet with the head teacher and the Centre Coordinator involved at stages one and two, as well as any other parties who may have some knowledge of the issue. The governor may also require additional information from you, so might need to meet with you or speak on the telephone to clarify details you have provided. The governor may call on the advice of the local education officer at any stage of the investigation.</p> <p>The chair of governors will write to you within 28 working term-time days of receiving your stage three complaint form to detail his/her findings and any resulting action to be taken. The chair must not disclose confidential details of any staff disciplinary/capability action to be taken. They may only say that appropriate action is being taken.</p>

<p><b>Stage four</b></p> <p>Making a formal complaint to the Governing Body</p>	<p>Parent/carer writes to the chair of governors complaints panel within 28 days, stating that they are still dissatisfied. A panel of three governors meet to discuss the case and make recommendations.</p> <p>The complaints panel should have had <b>no prior knowledge or involvement in</b> your case. This is to ensure the panel are able to give fair and completely unbiased consideration to the issue.</p> <p>If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint after stage three of the procedure, you should write to the governing body complaints panel within 28 working term-time days of receiving the chair of governor's stage three findings. The clerk of the governing body will acknowledge receipt of your formal complaint within five working term-time days and will ask you for any additional information you wish to submit regarding the complaint. The clerk will then arrange for a complaints panel hearing as soon as possible.</p> <p>All documentation relating to the complaint will be given to each panel member including all correspondence and the details from the Centre's and school's complaints log recording stages one, two and three of the complaint.</p> <p>If the complaint relates to a staff disciplinary/capability matter and the head teacher has already taken action that he/she considers appropriate, any further progression of a formal complaint must, from then on, focus on how the original complaint was managed.</p> <p>The complaints panel may decide to meet in advance of the official hearing in order to discuss the complaint and examine the documentation relating to the case.</p> <p>The clerk of the governing body will write to you suggesting three possible dates for the hearing to take place at least 10 working term-time days in advance. If you are unable to attend any of the three dates, the hearing will be conducted in private.</p>
---	---

#### Stage four (cont'd)

The letter of invitation will explain how the hearing is to be conducted. The letter will also inform you of your right to bring your partner, a friend, or if necessary, an interpreter.

If either party wishes to submit additional evidence relating to the original concern for consideration, it must be received at least seven working term-time days in advance of the hearing.

The aim of the hearing should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between you and the Centre. However, all parties should understand that it will only be possible for the panel to establish the facts, comment on how the procedure has been followed and make recommendations for improvement in the future.

The panel will ensure that the hearing is as informal and unthreatening as possible. The clerk of the governing body will keep the minutes of the meeting.

The panel hearing will allow for:

- you to explain your complaint;
- the head teacher and/or chair of governors to explain the Centre's response;
- you to ask the head teacher and/or chair of governors questions;
- the head teacher and/or chair of governors to ask you questions;
- the panel to ask both parties questions;
- final statements by all parties.

The chair of the complaints panel should explain at the end of the hearing that the panel will spend time considering its decision and recommendations and will inform both parties of the outcome in writing within seven working term-time days of the hearing.

<p><b>Stage four (cont'd)</b></p>	<p>All documentation relating to the complaint including the stage four hearing minutes and the written outcome letter will be kept on file in the school's records. These records will be kept separately from the school's other pupil and staff records and will be destroyed one year after the child leaves the Centre, unless the complaint concerns personal injury, for which a claim may later arise and records need to be kept for 25 years from the child's date of birth. You will be informed that this will be done.</p>
<p><b>Stage five</b></p> <p>Beyond the Governing Body's complaints procedure</p>	<p>If parents are dissatisfied with the outcome after the Centre's complaints procedure has been exhausted, they may write directly to the Secretary of State for Education.</p> <p>Parents may write to the Local Government Ombudsman if they are dissatisfied with the way the procedure has been managed by the school.</p> <p>Complaints can be taken to the Secretary of State for Education under section 496 of the Education Act 1996, on the grounds that a governing body or local education authority is acting or proposing to act unreasonably, or under section 497 of the same Act, on the grounds that either the governing body or the local education authority has failed to discharge its duties under the Act. The Secretary of State may contact the governing body or the local education authority for more information in order to consider the complaint.</p>

The school has a duty to ensure that the confidentiality of all concerns is respected at all times by any member of staff and the governing body who are involved in the case.

## Appendix one - complaints that are separate from this procedure

The following types of complaint are subject to other statutory procedures that are separate from this general complaints procedure.

<p>Section 39 SSFA Complaints:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provision of information;</li> <li>• delivery of, or withdrawal from, the national curriculum, religious education or collective worship;</li> <li>• non-approved external qualifications or syllabuses.</li> </ul>	<p>The governors' agreed complaints procedure applies, but the complainant has a further right of appeal to the local authority. For further information contact the local education officer team via Surrey County Council contact centre on 03456 009 009.</p>
<p>Complaint by a member of school staff</p>	<p>School grievance procedure - for further information contact the school.</p>
<p>Pupil exclusion</p>	<p>You have the right to make representations about fixed term exclusion to governors' pupil discipline committee. Right of appeal is made to an independent panel for permanent exclusion. For further information contact the exclusion and reintegration advisory teachers via Surrey County Council contact centre on 03456 009 009.</p>
<p>Admission to school</p>	<p>Local authority policy on school admissions applies with right of appeal to independent panel if the admission is refused. For further information contact the school admissions team via Surrey County Council contact centre on 03456 009 009.</p>
<p>Child protection/safeguarding</p>	<p>Surrey safeguarding children board procedures apply. For further information contact Surrey County Council contact centre on 03456 009 009.</p>
<p>Statements of special educational needs (SEN)</p>	<p>Local authority statutory assessment procedures apply if a parent requests a statement. There is a right of appeal to an independent SEN tribunal. For further information contact the SEN administration team via the Surrey County Council contact centre on 03456 009 009.</p>



## Appendix two - stage three complaint form

If your concern remains unresolved after following stages one and two of the Centre's concerns and complaints procedure, you should fill in a stage three complaint form and send it to the chair of governors for review. If you need help filling in the stage three complaint form, please contact the Centre or the local education office team via the Surrey County Council contact centre on 03456 009 009.

Please note that if the complaint refers to more than one incident, you should complete a separate form for each incident. This is to clarify individual responsibility and maintain confidentiality in case the complaint results in a formal hearing.

Your name			
Your address			
Your telephone numbers	Home	Work	Mobile
Child's name			
Child's date of birth			
Your relationship to the child			
Brief description of your complaint			
Date you reported the problem to the Centre			
Name of person, to whom you reported the problem			
What was the response?			

Have you complained to the Centre about this before?	Yes / No
If yes, when and to whom?	
What action do you think <b>should have been</b> taken by the Centre to resolve the matter?	
What action do you think <b>should be taken now</b> by the Centre to resolve the matter?	
Your signature	
Date	

<b>For Centre use only</b>	
Date form sent to complainant	
Date form received from complainant	
Date forwarded to chair of governors for action	