Chelwood Nursery School
Chelwood Walk
St Norbert Road, London, SE4 2QQ

Complaints Policy

Policy Schedule	
Reviewed and edited	March 2026
Agreed by Governors	April 2026
Head of Governors signature	
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1. Introduction

At Chelwood Nursery School we strive to offer the best possible service to you and your family at all times. However, there may be times when you are not happy with something that has happened or you are not sure about something and this policy is here to support you to take the next step.

Who Can Make a Complaint?

This complaint policy is for anyone who feels that they would like to make a complaint about the school or community services that are run on these premises. This includes members of the public as well as service users and families who attend Chelwood.

The Difference Between a Concern and a Complaint

A concern can be defined as "an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important, where reassurance is sought".

A complaint however is more formal in that is an "expression of dissatisfaction about actions taken, or a lack of action".

It is in everyone's interests that concerns and complaints are resolved as early as possible, and we encourage everyone to speak to us as soon as they are not sure about something.
If it is possible, then the first step is to speak to your child's key person or the class teacher, or leader of the course that you are attending. If you are here to attend a course or children's activity session then you should speak to the course leader or play worker running the session in the first instance.

If this is not possible, then please come and see Angelika Alleman, the Headteacher, or Alexandra Bourne, the Assistant Headteacher to see if issues can be resolved or clarified.
If you wish you can put your concern in writing or simply speak with either of them.

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or over the phone. They can also be raised by a third party if you have given your consent for this to happen.
If it has not been possible to address the issue with your child's key person or Headteacher and the matter is still unresolved, then you can make a formal complaint. This will be shared with the Chair of Governors and the governing body of Chelwood.
Formal complaints are usually made in writing.

Who would deal with your complaint?

All complaints are shared with the governing body. It is their responsibility to oversee the running of the school and this includes complaints from families and service users.

The Chair of Governors is:

Martha Mitchell, who can be contacted via the office at Chelwood Nursery School

or via Richard Cory, Clerk to the Governing Body of Chelwood Nursery School

If your complaint is about a member of staff, it would typically be investigated by the Headteacher and the Chair of Governors.
If your complaint is about the Headteacher, it would be addressed by the Chair of Governors.
If your complaint concerns the Chair or another governor, the Clerk to the governing body would assume that role. The Clerk is an independent person who does not work for the governing body.

You will be kept informed about what has happened to your complaint and what action has been taken as a result of you raising an issue. All complaints are treated in confidence and taken very seriously, so you can be assured that your letter would reach them and be dealt with.

You can contact the governing body via the school office. Any written correspondence needs to be marked Private and Confidential and the front office team will be able to support you with this if needed.

If your complaint involves a member of staff, depending on the nature of the complaint, the Headteacher may need to follow the school's disciplinary procedures and/or the safeguarding policy in relation to allegations made about a member of staff.
Further information is available in those policies. This may mean that your complaint is addressed in a different way by following those procedures rather than the ones in *this* policy.

Anonymous complaints

We will not automatically investigate anonymous complaints although they will be shared with the Chair of Governors who will make a decision whether the issues raised need to be looked into further.

Resolving complaints

Chelwood Nursery School is committed to resolving complaints and addressing concerns. In response we may offer you one of the following,

- An explanation about what happened
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently
- An assurance that we will try to ensure that the issue/incident will not recur

- An explanation of the steps that have been put in place to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales involved in those changes
- An undertaking to review whole school policies and procedures
- An apology.

Withdrawal of a complaint

If you decide to withdraw a complaint, we would ask that you do this in writing.

Stage One

Formal complaints must be made to the Headteacher (or Chair of Governors if it is about the Headteacher) via the school office.

The Headteacher will record the date that the complaint has been received and acknowledge receipt within three school days.

The Headteacher will need to clarify that they have understood your concerns correctly and may ask to meet with you to do this.

Please note, the Headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the Senior Leadership team if it is felt to be more appropriate, but they **will** be kept informed at all times and will take the responsibility for making final decisions.

During the investigation, the Headteacher will meet with those involved and ascertain all points of view/sides of the story. Notes of those meetings will be made and used to make decisions and decide on the next course of action.

The Headteacher would then write to you with a formal response to your complaint and this should happen within 15 school days of your initial complaint being made. If the Headteacher is unable to keep to this deadline, they will keep you informed of progress so far and provide you with an explanation as to why there has been a delay.

The response will include details of any actions taken and provide you with a reason as to why. The response will also include how to escalate the complaint if you remain unhappy with the findings.

If your complaint is about the Headteacher or a member of the governing body, either another governor or the Clerk to the governors will oversee Stage One. **In** some circumstances, an independent investigator will be asked to investigate and the local authority would be informed.

Stage Two

Stage Two is the final part of the school's complaint procedure.

If you are unhappy with the outcome of Stage One, you may wish to take the matter further. You would need to put this in writing within 10 school days of receiving the response from Stage One. Your letter should be addressed to the Clerk to the governing body and sent via the school office. The Clerk will acknowledge receipt of your letter within 10 school days and will then correspond with you about what is happening.

Please note that the Clerk is not based at Chelwood and so it is not always possible to get letters to them quickly.

The Clerk will write to inform you of the date of when the Complaints Panel will meet. They will aim to convene a meeting as soon as possible and you may be asked if you would like to attend. However, in some circumstances it may be possible that the panel will meet to discuss your issue using written information from you and the person/people the complaint is about.
The person/people that the complaint is about may also be asked to meet with the panel.
If you are invited to meet with the panel, you may wish to bring someone with you such as a relative or a friend. Generally, legal representation is not needed in this meeting and the panel may stop the meeting should you or the person being complained about bring a lawyer or solicitor to the meeting.
Representatives from the media are not allowed to attend.

Before the meeting, copies of paperwork will be given to you, each member of the panel and the person/people your complaint is about. Recordings made without consent of all parties will not be used as part of the panel investigation.

The panel will not address any new complaints made since your initial one. The meeting will be held in private and electronic recordings will not be allowed unless all parties provide written consent.
The panel can:

- Uphold the complaint if full or in part
- Dismiss the complaint in full or in part

If the complaint is upheld, the panel will then decide on a course of appropriate action to resolve the complaint and recommend changes to policies and procedures to prevent a re-occurrence.

If your complaint is about the governing body then Stage Two will be undertaken by a group of independent governors from other schools.

Next Steps

If at the end of Stage Two you still feel that your concerns are still unresolved then you may wish to take this further and you can contact the Department for Education or the London Borough of Lewisham for further advice.

You can contact Lewisham directly on 0208 314 6000.

You can also contact the Department of Education on www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on 0370 000 2288 or in writing

Departmentfor Education
Piccadilly Gate,
Store Street,
Manchester.
M12WD

Serial or unreasonable complaints

We acknowledge that if you have felt it necessary to make a complaint that you would like the matter to be dealt with quickly. However, for some people, they feel that their complaint is not being addressed and will contact the school numerous times and may become unreasonable in their expectations. We will not normally limit the contact you have with our school in relation to your complaint.

However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

Chelwood Nursery School defines unreasonable behaviour as that which may get in the way of our consideration of your complaint because of the frequency or nature of the way you have 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 complaint's investigation process
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaint's procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaint's 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 and completed including referral to the Department for Education
- seeks an unrealistic outcome
- 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.

We are aware that you will be keen to see the matter resolved. However, it can be unhelpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the Headteacher will write to you explaining that your behaviour has become unreasonable and ask you to change it or offer further support if you would like it.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include (in extreme circumstances) barring an individual from Chelwood Nursery School.

Appendix A

Roles and Responsibilities

Complainant

The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- co-operate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint
- respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint
- ask for assistance as needed
- treat all those involved in the complaint with respect
- refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

Investigator

The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:

- sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
- interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint
- consideration of records and other relevant information
- analysing information
- liaising with the complainant and the complaints co-ordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels will put things right.

The investigator should:

- conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting
- ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal
- be mindful of the timescales to respond
- prepare a comprehensive report for the headteacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

The headteacher or complaints committee will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

Complaints Co-ordinator *(this could be the headteacher/ designated complaints governor or other staff member providing administrative support)*

The complaints co-ordinator should:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- liaise with staff members, headteacher, Chair of Governors, Clerk and LAs (if appropriate) to ensure the smooth running of the complaint's procedure
- be aware of issues regarding:
  - sharing third party information
  - additional support. This may be needed by complainants when making a complaint including interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person
- keep records.

Clerk to the Governing Body

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the committee and should:

- ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their legal

rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

- set the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example; stage 1 paperwork, *school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale*
- record the proceedings
- circulate the minutes of the meeting
- notify all parties of the committee's decision.

Committee Chair

The committee's chair, who is nominated in advance of the complaint meeting, should ensure that:

- both parties are asked (via the Clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting
- the meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy
- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person
- the remit of the committee is explained to the complainant
- written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR.

  If a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting
- both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself

- the issues are addressed
- key findings of fact are made
- the committee is open-minded and acts independently
- no member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- the meeting is minuted
- they liaise with the Clerk (and complaints co-ordinator, if the school has one).

Committee Member

Committee members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so no governor may sit on the committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it
- the aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant

  We recognise that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations.
- many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting

  Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their

  child.
- extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and present *during all or part of the meeting*

  Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated.

  The committee should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults.

  If the child/young person is the complainant, the committee should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the committee should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend.

However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the committee considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.

- the welfare of the child/young person is paramount.

Appendix B School Complaint Form (for Stage 1 complaints}

If you have tried unsuccessfully to resolve your complaint and wish to take the matter further, please complete this form and send it to the Headteacher. {If your complaint is against the Headteacher you will need to send the form to the Chair of the Governing Body}

Your Name: Address: Postcode:

Telephone Number (Home):

Telephone Number (Day):

Telephone Number (Mobile):

What is your complaint about and what would you like the Headteacher to do? Continue on a separate sheet as necessary

Name of Child: *Date of Birth of Child:*

When did you discuss your concern/complaint with the appropriate member of staff? Continue on a separate sheet as necessary

Signed: *Date:*

What the result of the discussion

An example of a letter that the Chair of the Governing Body may wish to send to the complainant upon receipt of a **complaint at Stage 2 for consideration by the Governing Body**

Dear

Complaint re

Thank you for your letter dated ..... setting out the reasons why you are not satisfied with the Headteacher's response to your complaint about .....

I write to let you know that I will be arranging for a Complaints Appeal Panel (CAP) to consider your complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of the attached complaints procedure.

As explained in the procedure, the Clerk/Chair of the CAP will let you know in writing how the CAP intends to consider your complaint.

{or in the case of complaints against the Headteacher

I have received your complaint against the Headteacher of .....School.

I write to let you know that I have forwarded a copy of your complaint to the Headteacher with a request that they respond within ten school days to the issues raised in the complaint.

A copy of the Headteacher's response will be sent to you as soon as possible.

If you are not satisfied with the Headteacher's response, I will arrange for a Complaints Appeal Panel (CAP} to consider your complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of the attached complaints procedure.

As explained in the procedure, the Clerk/Chair of the Complaints Appeal Panel will let you know in writing how the complaint will proceed.

Yours sincerely

Chair of the Governing Body

Cc The Headteacher
The Clerk to the Governing Body

Enc. Complaints Procedure

Appendix C

Complaints not in scope of the procedure (extract from DfE Guidance)

*A complaints procedure should cover all complaints about any provision of facilities or services that a school provides with the **exceptions** listed below, for which there are separate (statutory) procedures.*

Exceptions	Who to contact
- Admissions to schools - Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN) - School re organisation proposals - Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Concerns should be raised directly with local authorities (LA). For school admissions, it will depend on who is the admission authority (either the school or the LA). Complaints about admission appeals for maintained schools are dealt with by the Local Government Ombudsman.
• Exclusion of children from school	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions.
• Whistleblowing	Schools have an internal whistleblowing procedure for their employees and voluntary staff. Other concerns can be raised directly with Ofsted by telephone on: 0300 123 3155, via email at: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk or by writing to: WBHL, Ofsted Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester M1 2WD. The Department for Education is also a prescribed body for whistleblowing in education.

• Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures	These matters will invoke the school's internal grievance procedures. Complainants will not be informed of the outcome of any investigation.
• 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 service. They should be contacted direct.