



Complaints Procedure

The Pony Paddocks strives for the highest standards in everything we do but sometimes things can go wrong, and our expectations are not met. In the spirit of true partnership between The Pony Paddocks, home, local authorities, and the community, we encourage feedback on our activities in order that we can resolve any issues and continuously improve our offerings.

The Complaints Procedure describes how complaints are recorded, handled, and progressed to a satisfactory resolution.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet which may be about an event that has happened, failed to happen, or the way in which something was handled. Most concerns can be resolved informally. It is in everyone's best interests that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage.

This can usually be achieved through discussion and good communication. However, a formal procedure (as outlined in this policy) will need to be followed when informal attempts to resolve an issue are unsuccessful.

The procedure described here is specific to services provided by The Pony Paddocks and does not include complaints covered by a separate statutory procedure, for example, complaints about the Offer; provision admission decisions; statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN); provision re-organisation procedures; matters likely to require a Child Protection investigation; pupil exclusions decisions; whistleblowing; staff grievances and procedures.

Stage 1: Informal

Any expression of concern should be made to The Pony Paddocks at the earliest opportunity. Initially, concerns should be raised with the staff most closely concerned to clarify the facts and hopefully resolve them through discussion. A request for discussion with a Head of Centre or senior staff member may also be desirable and help to achieve a resolution before making a formal complaint.

Stage 2: Formal Complaint

If a satisfactory outcome is not achieved by informal discussion a formal complaint may need to be raised. This should be done in writing to the Director/Head of Centre (Roisin Whyte), whereby the following process will be initiated.

1. Receipt of a complaint will be acknowledged within three working days.
2. The complaint will be recorded in The Pony Paddock's Complaints Register.
3. Conversations and correspondence will be handled with discretion, but some information may have to be shared with others involved in the complaint procedure.
4. The Director may delegate the task of collating information to another member of staff but not the decision on the action to be taken.
5. When investigating a complaint, the investigator will complete a fact-finding activity that may include; if appropriate, talk to the child, witnesses, staff, and others involved quickly, reviews documents and formally document findings.

6. The investigator will make every effort to ensure the investigation does not affect the relationship between The Pony Paddocks, staff, parents, or any child involved.
7. The Director has a duty to act properly and investigate complaints impartially.
8. The Director will review the findings and determine the action plan necessary to resolve the complaint.
9. The Director will communicate their findings, decisions, outcome, and actions to the person making the complaint within 20 working days and file correspondence in The Pony Paddocks's Complaints Register.
10. The Director will follow up on the communication to confirm that the complaint is resolved and if agreed, the Complaint Record will be closed.
11. If not agreed, the complainant will be advised to write within 10 days explaining their dissatisfaction and their desired outcomes. On receipt, the Director will initiate Stage 3 of The Pony Paddock's Complaints Procedure.

Stage 3: Complaints Panel.

Complaints should very rarely reach this final stage. The purpose of this stage is for the complaint and proposed resolution to be reviewed by persons not previously involved. The following process will be followed.

1. The Complaints Record will be re-assigned to a different Pony Paddocks member of staff/centre manager not previously involved.
2. Stage 3 should be completed within 20 days of initiation.
3. They will assemble a Complaints Panel of three reviewers (including the Director) which may include a staff member, parent, council official, carer, or any appropriate independent professional person with suitable relevant experience to the nature of the complaint.
4. The Complaints Panel will consider the written complaint and proposed resolution to investigate as appropriate and may meet with the complainant and other involved parties if necessary.
5. Parents (either as a complainant or as the parent/carer of a complainant) can attend the Complaints Panel and be accompanied if they wish.
6. The Complaints Panel will make their decision in private and communicate the findings and recommendations in writing to the complainant.
7. Correspondence will be recorded in the Complaints Register.

Stage 4: Final Complaint Stage

If all attempts to resolve the complaint have been unsuccessful, serious complaints may be referred to the Secretary of State for Education at the Department for Education (DfE). For more information, please visit: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education> The Secretary of State is unlikely to investigate individual issues but can inspect the provision's policies and procedures and make sure these have been followed