



COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE – PARENTS

Policy Statement

We are committed to providing the highest standards of care, education, and service for every child and family. We believe that parents and carers have the right to be listened to, treated with dignity and respect, and have any concerns addressed promptly, fairly, and confidentially.

We actively welcome compliments, suggestions, feedback and complaints as valuable opportunities to strengthen partnerships with families and continuously improve the quality of our provision.

Wherever possible, concerns will be resolved quickly through open and respectful discussion. However, where an informal resolution cannot be achieved, the formal complaints procedure outlined in this policy will be followed.

In accordance with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), all complaints are investigated thoroughly, handled impartially and, wherever reasonably practicable, resolved within 28 days. If the investigation cannot be completed within 28 days, parents will receive a written explanation together with an updated timescale.

Staff concerns are managed under the Grievance and Whistleblowing procedures rather than this complaints policy.

A written record of every complaint, including the investigation, outcome and any actions taken, is maintained securely and made available to Ofsted upon request.

The welfare, safety and best interests of children remain paramount throughout every stage of the complaints process.

Guiding Principles

Our complaints procedure is built upon the following principles:

- Children's welfare is always our highest priority.
 - Parents and carers are valued partners whose views contribute to improving Aston.
 - Every complaint is treated professionally, respectfully and without discrimination.
 - Individuals raising concerns will never be disadvantaged for doing so.
 - Complaints are investigated fairly, objectively and based on evidence.
 - Confidentiality is maintained throughout the process, sharing information only where necessary.
 - Lessons learned are used to improve policies, procedures, staff training and the quality of care.
 - We seek to resolve concerns at the earliest possible stage while ensuring fairness for everyone involved.
-

Our Commitment to Parents

When a concern is raised, Aston will ensure that parents and carers:

- are listened to with empathy and professionalism;
- receive prompt acknowledgement of their complaint;
- are kept informed throughout the investigation;
- receive clear explanations of decisions made;
- understand any actions taken following the investigation;
- are treated fairly, regardless of culture, disability, language, religion, gender or family circumstances; and
- receive communication support or interpretation where reasonably required.

Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

Most concerns can be resolved quickly through discussion.

Parents or carers are encouraged to raise concerns initially with:

- their child's Key Person or Room Leader; or
- Nursery Principal – Emma

Staff will listen carefully, seek to understand the concern and work collaboratively with parents to reach a satisfactory resolution.

Where appropriate, informal concerns will be recorded to support effective follow-up and continuous improvement.

If the matter cannot be resolved informally, it will progress to Stage 2.

Stage 2 – Formal Written Complaint

If the concern remains unresolved or is of a more serious nature, parents should submit their complaint in writing to the Nursery Principal – Emma Ross or Legal Provider – Trish Singh.

Within **two working days**, Aston will:

- acknowledge receipt of the complaint;
- explain the investigation process;
- identify who will lead the investigation;
- provide an expected timescale for completion; and
- explain any immediate actions required.

The investigation may include:

- discussions with relevant staff;
- discussions with LADO, SPA or Ofsted before we commence any investigation (depending on the concern).
- advice sought from Achieving for Children (AFC)
- review of policies and procedures;
- examination of written records;
- review of safeguarding records where appropriate; and
- consideration of any evidence provided by parents.

Where a complaint includes an allegation against a member of staff or volunteer, no internal investigation relating to that allegation will begin until advice has been sought from the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), who will determine the appropriate next steps.

Stage 3 – Investigation Meeting

Where appropriate, a formal meeting will be arranged involving:

- the parent(s) or carer(s);
- relevant staff members;

- the Nursery Principal and/or Director/Provider.

The meeting aims to:

- clarify the concerns raised;
- review all available evidence;
- discuss possible solutions;
- agree appropriate actions; and
- establish realistic timescales.

A written record of the meeting will be prepared and shared with all attendees.

Where agreement is reached, all parties will sign the record confirming that the complaint has been resolved and the procedure concluded.

Stage 4 – Independent Mediation

Mediation is voluntary and will only proceed with the agreement of both parties if the complaint remains unresolved. Aston may invite an independent external mediator agreed by both parties.

The mediator will:

- meet with all parties involved;
- review the evidence gathered;
- clarify the issues in dispute;
- encourage constructive dialogue;
- recommend possible solutions.

The mediator has no legal authority to impose a decision but provides an impartial perspective to help achieve resolution.

Separate meetings may be held where appropriate.

All discussions remain confidential and a written summary of meetings and recommendations will be produced.

Stage 5 – Final Resolution Meeting

Following mediation, a final meeting will be held involving the parent(s), relevant staff and the Nursery Principal and/or Director/Provider.

During this meeting:

- the mediator's recommendations will be reviewed;
- final decisions will be agreed wherever possible;
- actions and implementation timescales will be confirmed; and
- responsibilities will be allocated.

A written record of the agreed outcome will be signed by all attendees, and copies provided to each party.

The signed document confirms that Aston's complaints procedure has concluded.

Recording and Monitoring Complaints

In accordance with statutory requirements, Aston maintains a confidential complaints register.

Each record will include:

- the date received;
- the nature of the complaint;
- the investigating officer;
- actions taken;
- evidence considered;
- agreed timescales;
- outcome of the investigation;
- actions implemented;
- review of effectiveness; and
- lessons learned.

Complaints Records, Confidentiality and Retention

Aston will maintain a written record of all formal complaints received, together with the details of the investigation, findings, outcome and any action taken as a result.

Records will be sufficiently detailed to demonstrate that the complaint has been considered fairly, appropriately and in accordance with Aston's complaints procedure. Records may include the original complaint, relevant correspondence, meeting notes, investigation records, evidence considered, Aston's response and details of any actions or improvements identified.

All complaints will be treated confidentially, and records will be stored securely, with access restricted to those who have a legitimate need to access the information. Information will only be shared where there is a lawful basis to do so, including where required for safeguarding purposes, regulatory requirements, legal obligations or where requested by Ofsted or another relevant authority.

In accordance with applicable EYFS requirements, Aston will retain written records of complaints, the outcome of investigations and any action taken for a minimum period of **three years from the date of the complaint**. Aston will be able to provide Ofsted, upon request, with a summary of complaints received and action taken within the required period, or a list of complaints and associated records as required.

Aston will comply with the UK GDPR and applicable data protection legislation when collecting, processing, storing and disposing of complaint records. Personal data will not be retained indefinitely and will be kept only for as long as is necessary for the purpose for which it was collected, taking into account any legal, regulatory, safeguarding or legitimate business requirements.

Where a complaint relates to a safeguarding concern, allegation, serious incident, legal claim or other matter requiring a longer retention period, the relevant records may be retained for longer than three years where this is necessary and lawful. This may include retaining records for the duration of any ongoing investigation, regulatory process, safeguarding matter or legal proceedings, and for an appropriate period thereafter.

At the end of the applicable retention period, records will be securely deleted, destroyed or anonymised, unless there is a lawful reason to retain them for longer.

The retention and handling of complaint records will be managed in accordance with Aston's Data Protection and Records Retention policies.

Management reviews complaints regularly to identify trends, monitor response times and improve practice.

Safeguarding and Serious Concerns

Where a complaint relates to:

- child protection;
- safeguarding;
- allegations against adults working with children;
- criminal activity; or
- significant welfare concerns,

Aston will immediately follow safeguarding procedures and refer the matter to the appropriate authority where required.

This may include:

- Achieving for Children Single Point of Access (SPA)
- the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO);
- Emergency Duty Team
- Children's Social Care;
- the Police;
- Ofsted; or
- other statutory agencies.

In these circumstances, elements of the complaint's procedure may be suspended while statutory investigations take place.

The safety and welfare of children will always take precedence over internal procedures.

Equality, Inclusion and Accessibility

Aston is committed to ensuring this procedure is accessible to everyone.

Reasonable adjustments may include:

- translated documents;
- interpreter services;
- accessible communication formats;
- additional meeting support;
- alternative communication methods.

No individual will be disadvantaged when making a complaint because of disability, language, literacy, religion, culture, age, gender or family circumstances.

Parents' Rights

Parents and carers have the right to:

- raise concerns verbally or in writing;
- receive a fair and impartial investigation;
- be kept informed throughout the investigation;
- receive a written outcome within 28 days wherever reasonably practicable;

- If the investigation cannot be completed within 28 days, parents will receive a written explanation together with an updated timescale
 - contact Ofsted independently if they remain dissatisfied; and
 - have their complaint treated confidentially and respectfully.
-

Persistent, Repeated or Unreasonable Complaints

Aston is committed to listening to and responding appropriately to all complaints and concerns. Every complaint will be considered fairly, respectfully and in accordance with Aston's complaints procedure and the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

In some circumstances, a complaint may become persistent, repetitive or unreasonable. This does not mean that Aston will disregard a complaint. However, where the matter has already been fully investigated and responded to, or where the frequency or nature of contact places an unreasonable burden on staff or prevents Aston from managing its safeguarding, operational or regulatory responsibilities effectively, Aston may take proportionate steps to manage further contact.

This may include where:

- The same complaint or substantially similar complaint is raised repeatedly after it has been fully investigated and a clear response has been provided.
- The complainant repeatedly raises new issues that have already been considered as part of the original investigation, without providing new information or evidence.
- The complainant repeatedly changes or expands the complaint after a response has been provided, making it difficult to establish what specific concern remains outstanding.
- The complainant makes frequent or excessive contact through multiple channels, including email, telephone, written correspondence or in-person discussions, where this is disproportionate to the nature of the concern.
- The complainant repeatedly requests information or action that Aston is not required or legally permitted to provide.
- The complaint is pursued in a manner that prevents staff from carrying out their normal duties or impacts the care, supervision and safeguarding of children.

Where a complaint has already been investigated and Aston's complaints procedure has been completed, Aston may explain that the matter has been concluded and that further correspondence will only be considered where **new and relevant information** is provided or where there is evidence that the original procedure was not followed appropriately.

Where appropriate, Aston may nominate a single point of contact, agree reasonable communication arrangements, or limit the frequency or method of further correspondence. Any such decision will be proportionate, clearly communicated and reviewed where circumstances change.

Abusive, Aggressive or Unacceptable Behaviour

Aston recognises that parents and carers may be upset, frustrated or concerned when raising a complaint. Staff will remain professional, respectful and calm and will seek to resolve concerns wherever possible.

However, Aston will not tolerate behaviour that is abusive, threatening, intimidating, discriminatory, harassing or personally offensive towards staff, children, parents, visitors or other members of our community.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- Shouting, swearing, verbal abuse or personal insults.
- Threatening or intimidating staff or making staff feel unsafe.
- Aggressive or confrontational behaviour, whether in person, by telephone, email or other forms of communication.

- Repeated unwanted contact or harassment.
- Making discriminatory, derogatory or offensive comments.
- Threatening to cause harm or damage to people or property.
- Behaviour that disrupts the safe and effective operation of Aston.

Where such behaviour occurs, we may:

- End a meeting, telephone call or conversation where behaviour becomes unacceptable.
- Require future meetings to take place with more than one member of staff present.
- Require communication to be made through a nominated member of the management team.
- Request that communication takes place in writing.
- Restrict access to the premises where there is a genuine concern about the safety or wellbeing of children, staff or others.
- Take further action where behaviour constitutes a safeguarding, health and safety, criminal or other regulatory concern.

Any restriction on communication or access to Aston will be considered on a **case-by-case basis**, taking into account the circumstances, the welfare of children and staff, and the need to maintain appropriate communication with parents and carers.

Repeated Complaints Already Investigated

If a complaint has been appropriately investigated and the complainant has received a clear response, Aston will not normally reopen the same investigation unless the complainant provides **new, relevant information** that was not previously available or identifies a substantive failure in the complaints process.

Where a complainant remains dissatisfied following the conclusion of Aston's complaints procedure, they will be informed of any appropriate external route available to them, where applicable.

Aston will maintain appropriate records of complaints, investigations, outcomes and any decisions to restrict or manage further contact. These records will be handled confidentially and in accordance with Aston's data protection requirements.

Complaints against the Principal

Where the complaint concerns the Principal, it should be submitted directly to the Director/Registered Provider - for the attention of **Trish Singh** via the normal nursery contact email address.

Learning from Complaints

Every complaint provides an opportunity for reflection and improvement.

Following each investigation, management will consider whether improvements are required in relation to:

- policies;
- procedures;
- staff supervision;
- professional development;
- safeguarding practice;
- communication with families;

- learning environments;
- risk assessments; and
- quality assurance systems.

Actions arising from complaints form part of Aston's continuous improvement plan and are monitored through leadership meetings, audits and self-evaluation.

Compliments and Feedback

Alongside complaints, we actively welcome compliments, suggestions and feedback.

We also review all complaints to continuously reflect and improve.

Positive feedback helps us recognise excellent practice and identify successful approaches that can be shared across Aston.

Feedback is gathered through:

- parent questionnaires;
- meetings;
- surveys;
- suggestion boxes;
- events;
- informal discussions.

This information contributes to our ongoing self-evaluation and quality improvement programme.

Quality Assurance

The Principal and Director/Provider review complaints as part of our quality assurance arrangements.

Monitoring includes:

- statutory compliance;
- response times;
- investigation quality;
- recurring themes;
- effectiveness of actions;
- parental satisfaction;
- staff practice;
- lessons learned.

Anonymous themes may be discussed during staff meetings and supervision sessions to promote reflective practice while maintaining confidentiality.

Management Responsibilities

The Director/Provider and Principal are responsible for ensuring:

- complaints are managed consistently and fairly;

- investigations remain impartial;
- statutory timescales are met;
- accurate records are maintained;
- corrective actions are implemented;
- staff receive appropriate guidance and training; and
- lessons learned improve outcomes for children and families.

The Senior Leadership Team reviews the effectiveness of this procedure annually as part of Aston's governance and quality assurance framework.

Complaints, escalation procedure and the Role of Ofsted

Ofsted is the regulatory body responsible for inspecting and regulating early years providers in England and may investigate concerns relating to a provider's compliance with the **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework**, registration requirements and other relevant regulatory requirements.

Parents and carers should normally raise complaints or concerns with Aston in the first instance, using Aston's complaints procedure. We will investigate complaints fairly, appropriately and within the timescales set out in this policy.

Ofsted does not generally investigate individual disputes between parents or carers and an early years provider, particularly where the matter relates solely to a disagreement, contractual issue, fee dispute, personal dissatisfaction or a difference of opinion between the parties. Ofsted's role is primarily to consider whether the provider is meeting the relevant legal and regulatory requirements.

However, where a concern indicates that Aston may not be meeting its statutory or registration requirements, including concerns relating to the safety and welfare of children, safeguarding, staff suitability, staffing arrangements, the quality of care or compliance with the EYFS, parents and carers may contact Ofsted directly to raise the concern.

We will cooperate fully with Ofsted and other relevant authorities where concerns are raised about its compliance with regulatory requirements. This may include providing relevant information or records, where lawfully requested, and taking appropriate action in response to any regulatory findings or requirements.

Parents and carers should be aware that contacting Ofsted does not replace or override our own complaints procedure where the concern is an individual complaint or dispute that we are responsible for investigating. Ofsted may decide whether a concern falls within its regulatory remit and what action, if any, is appropriate.

Nothing within this policy prevents a parent or carer from contacting Ofsted directly where they have a genuine concern about our compliance with statutory or regulatory requirements.

Ofsted Contact Information:

Parents may contact Ofsted directly if they believe their concerns have not been appropriately addressed.

Contact information for Ofsted as follows:

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Telephone: **0300 123 1231**

Website: www.gov.uk/ofsted

Related Policies

This procedure should be read alongside the following Aston policies:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
 - Whistleblowing Policy
 - Behaviour Management Policy
 - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
 - SEND Policy
 - Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy
 - Grievance Procedure
 - Health and Safety Policy
-

Legislative Framework

This policy has been developed in accordance with:

- Childcare Act 2006
 - Children and Families Act 2014
 - Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework
 - Equality Act 2010
 - Data Protection Act 2018
 - UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
 - Working Together to Safeguard Children
 - Keeping Children Safe in Education (where applicable)
 - Ofsted Early Years Inspection Handbook
-

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if legislation, statutory guidance or operational requirements change.

Management will review complaint records regularly to:

- monitor compliance;
 - identify recurring themes;
 - evaluate outcomes;
 - improve policies and procedures;
 - identify staff training needs;
 - strengthen partnerships with parents; and
 - enhance the quality of care and education provided.
-

Document Control

Version **3.0**

Date Implemented February 2026

Next Review Date February 2027

Approved on behalf of:

Aston Pierpoint: Ofsted Unique Registration Number: EY470345

Aston House: Ofsted Unique Registration Number: 2694445

Aston Club: Ofsted Unique Registration Number: 2809510

Trish Singh

Nursery Director / Registered Provider

Emma Ross

Nursery Principal