

PARENTS AS PARTNERS NURSERY POLICY

Table of Contents

Parents as Partners
Confidentiality
Image use procedure
Access and storage of information
Conflict Resolution with parents

Parents as partners

At EKC Group Nurseries we believe that parents and staff need to work together in a close partnership in order for children to receive a high quality of care and early learning in order to meet their individual needs. We welcome parents as partners and support a two-way sharing of information that helps establish trust and understanding. We are committed to supporting parents in an open and sensitive manner to be an integral part of the care and early learning team within each EKC Group nursery.

Our policy is to:

- Recognise and support parents as their child's first and most important educators and to welcome them into the life of each nursery.
- Generate confidence and encourage parents to trust their own instincts and judgement regarding their own child.
- Welcome all parents into each EKC Group nursery at any time
- Welcome nursing mothers. Each nursery will make available an area whenever needed to offer space to nursing mothers
- Ensure EKC Group nursery documentation and communications are provided in different formats to suit each parent's needs, e.g. Braille, multi-lingual, electronic communications as required.
- Ensure that all parents are aware of EKC Group nursery policy and procedure. A detailed parent prospectus will be provided and our full

Policy Owner: CEO EKC Group Schools Trust

Approving Body: Policy Committee

Stage of Approval: Approved

Date of approval: November 2019

Page 1 of 14

policy documents will be available to parents at all times in each EKC Group nursery reception area.

- Maintain regular contact with parents to help us build a secure and beneficial working relationship for their children.
- Support parents in their own continuing education and personal development including helping them to develop their parenting skills and inform them of relevant conferences, workshops and training.
- Create opportunities for parents to talk to other adults in a secure and supportive environment through such activities as open days, parents' evenings and a parents' forum.
- Inform parents about the range and type of activities and experiences provided for children, the daily routines of the setting, the types of food and drinks provided for children and events through regularly distributed newsletters and emails.
- Operate a key person system to enable parents to establish a close working relationship with a named practitioner and to support two-way information sharing about each child's individual needs both in nursery and at home. Parents are given the name of the key person of their child and their role when the child starts.
- Inform parents on a regular basis about their child's progress and involve them in shared record keeping. Parents' consultations will be held at least once every 12 weeks.
- Actively encourage parents to contribute to children's learning through sharing observations, interests and experiences from home. This may be verbally, sharing photographs or in written form.
- Agree the best communication method with parents e.g. email, face-to-face, telephone and share information about the child's day, e.g. food eaten, activities, sleep times etc.
- Consider and discuss all suggestions from parents concerning the care and early learning of their child and nursery operation.
- Provide opportunities and support for all parents to contribute their own skills, knowledge and interests to the activities of each nursery.
- Inform all parents of the systems for registering queries, compliments, complaints or suggestions, and to check that these systems are understood by parents.
- Make sure all parents have access to our written complaints procedure.

Policy Owner: CEO EKC Group Schools Trust

Approving Body: Policy Committee

Stage of Approval: Approved

Date of approval: November 2019

Page 2 of 14

- Share information about the Early Years Foundation Stage, young children's learning in each nursery, how parents can further support learning at home and where they can access further information.
- Provide a written contract between the parent(s) and each EKC Group nursery regarding conditions of acceptance and arrangements for payment.
- Respect the family's religious and cultural backgrounds and beliefs and accommodate any special requirements wherever possible and practical to do so.
- Inform parents how EKC Group supports children with special educational needs and disabilities
- Find out the needs and expectations of parents. We will do this through regular feedback via questionnaires, suggestion system and encouraging parents to review working practices. We will evaluate any responses and use these to promote nursery practice, policy and staff development.

Confidentiality

At EKC Group Nurseries we recognise that we hold sensitive/confidential information about children and their families and the staff we employ. This information is used to meet children's needs, for registers, invoices and emergency contacts. We store all records in locked cabinets in line with data protection registration and any information shared with the staff team is done on a 'need to know' basis and treated in confidence.

Legal requirements

- We follow the legal requirements set out in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2017) and accompanying regulations about the information we must hold about registered children and their families and the staff working at each nursery.
- We follow the requirements of the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) with regard to the storage of data and access to it in line with EKC Group Policy.

Policy Owner: CEO EKC Group Schools Trust

Approving Body: Policy Committee

Stage of Approval: Approved

Date of approval: November 2019

Page **3** of **14**

Procedures

It is our intention to respect the privacy of children and their families and we do so by:

- Storing confidential records in a locked filing cabinet
- Ensuring staff, student and volunteer inductions include an awareness of the importance of confidentiality and that information about the child and family is not shared outside of each nursery other than with relevant professionals who need to know that information. It is not shared with friends and family, discussions on the bus or at the local bar. If staff breach any confidentiality provisions, this may result in disciplinary action and, in serious cases, dismissal. Students on placement in each nursery are advised of our confidentiality policy and required to respect it
- Ensuring that all staff, volunteers and students are aware that this information is confidential and only for use within each nursery and to support the child's best interests with parental permission
- Ensuring that parents have access to files and records of their own children but not to those of any other child, other than where relevant professionals such as the police or local authority children's social care team decide this is not in the child's best interest
- Ensuring all staff are aware that this information is confidential and only for use within each nursery setting. If any of this information is requested for whatever reason, the parent's permission will always be sought other than in the circumstances above
- Ensuring staff do not discuss personal information given by parents with other members of staff, except where it affects planning for the child's needs
- Ensuring staff, students and volunteers are aware of and follow our social networking policy in relation to confidentiality
- Ensuring issues concerning the employment of staff remain confidential to the people directly involved with making personnel decisions
- Ensuring any concerns/evidence relating to a child's personal safety are kept in a secure, confidential file and are shared with as few people as possible on a 'need-to-know' basis. If, however, a child is considered

Policy Owner: CEO EKC Group Schools Trust

Approving Body: Policy Committee

Stage of Approval: Approved

Date of approval: November 2019

Page 4 of 14

at risk, our safeguarding/child protection policy will override confidentiality.

All the undertakings above are subject to the paramount commitment of each nursery, which is to the safety and well-being of the child.

Image Use Procedure

We ensure that any photographs or recordings (including CCTV) taken of your children in our nursery are only done with prior written permission from each child's parent. This is gained when each child is registered and is updated on a regular basis to ensure that this permission still stands.

We ask for individual permissions for photographs and video recordings for a range of purposes including: use in the child's learning journey, for display purposes, for promotion materials including our nursery website and brochure and to use in the local press and for security in relation to CCTV. We ensure that parents understand that their child may also be on another photograph, but not as the primary person, that may be used in another child's learning journey.

If a parent is not happy about one or more of these uses, then EKC Group Nurseries will respect their wishes and find alternative ways of recording their child's play or learning.

Staff are not permitted to take photographs or recordings of a child on their own cameras, mobiles or other devices and only use those provided by each nursery. Each nursery manager will monitor all photographs and recordings to ensure that the parent's wishes are adhered to.

Parents are not permitted to use any recording device or camera (including those on mobile phones) on each nursery premises without the prior consent of the manager.

During special events, e.g. Christmas or leaving parties, staff may produce group photographs to distribute to parents on request. In this case individual permission will be asked for each child before this event. This will ensure all photographs taken are in line with parental choice.

Policy Owner: CEO EKC Group Schools Trust

Approving Body: Policy Committee

Stage of Approval: Approved

Date of approval: November 2019

Page 5 of 14

Staff use tablets to record children's development and learning journeys. These tablets must be stored securely each night in a locked drawer. Additionally, tablets should not be left unlocked in classrooms or taken into the toilet areas by staff. All data, including photographs, is classed under the GDPR and data protection act and should be treated as such.

Access and storage of information

At EKC Group Nurseries we have an open access policy in relation to accessing information about each nursery and parents' own children. This policy is subject to the laws relating to data protection and document retention.

Parents are welcome to view the policies and procedures of each nursery which govern the way in which each EKC Group Nurseries operates. These may be viewed at any time when each nursery is open, simply by asking a manager or by accessing the file in reception. Each nursery manager or any other relevant staff member will also explain policies and procedures to parents or use any other methods to make sure that parents understand the policies in relation to their children.

Parents are also welcome to see and contribute to all the records that are kept on their child. However, we must adhere to data protection laws and, where relevant, any guidance from the relevant agencies for child protection.

As we hold personal information about staff and families, we are registered under data protection law with the Information Commissioner's Office. A copy of the certificate can be viewed at reception. All parent, child and staff information is stored securely according to the requirements of data protection registration including details, permissions, certificates and photographic images.

Each nurseries records and documentation are kept and stored in accordance with minimum legal archiving requirements. We currently archive records for at least 21 years and three months.

Policy Owner: CEO EKC Group Schools Trust

Approving Body: Policy Committee

Stage of Approval: Approved

Date of approval: November 2019

Page **6** of **14**

For more information please refer to the main GDPR and Data Protection EKC Group policy

Conflicts resolution with parents

At EKC Group Nurseries we believe that we have a strong partnership with our parents and an open-door policy to discuss any matters arising (if applicable).

Verbal and Physical Alterations

In the unlikely event that a parent starts to act in an aggressive or abusive way our policy is to:

- Direct the parent away from the children and into a private area such as the office (where appropriate)
- Ensure that a second member of staff is in attendance, where possible, whilst continuing to ensure the safe supervision of the children
- Act in a calm and professional way, ask the parent to calm down and make it clear that we do not tolerate aggressive or abusive language or behaviour
- Contact the police if the behaviour escalates
- Once the parent calms down, the member of staff will then listen to their concerns and respond appropriately
- An incident form will be completed detailing the time, reason and action taken
- Management will provide any support and reassurance that staff may need following the experience, and seek further support where necessary
- Management will also signpost parents to further support where applicable

Complaints

EKC Group's Complaints Procedure sets out a clear and transparent process on how complainants can submit a complaint or appeal, how the complaint or appeal will be managed and the timelines in which they will be dealt with.

Policy Owner: CEO EKC Group Schools Trust

Approving Body: Policy Committee

Stage of Approval: Approved

Date of approval: November 2019

Page **7** of **14**

The objective of this good practice guide is to provide Colleges and business unit leadership teams and staff with consistent practices for dealing effectively and fairly with complaints. It also outlines the role of the Office for Student Affairs (OfSA) and the part it plays in the Complaints Procedure.

1. Informal complaints

Informal complaints are concerns which are not necessarily articulated in a formal, documented way e.g. letter or email but tend to be given and received verbally. Informal complaints do not exclude the opportunity to move onto formal complaints, but are not appropriate for all types of allegation, such as sexual harassment, racial abuse, or assault.

Whilst informal complaints may be interpreted as 'less serious' than formal, documented complaints, they can be symptomatic of significant issues at business unit or Group level which unless dealt with in a timely and effective manner, could escalate and become serious and costly issues to resolve. General complaining in conversation is distinguished from an informal complaint by whether:-

- the complainant is simply looking for sympathy
- the complainant would like something to be done
- harm, hurt or significant inconvenience has been caused to the complainant
- the complainant would prefer their complaint not to be recognised

Informal complaints tend to focus on issues that may be resolved quickly and relatively simply and lodging an informal complaint in the first instance will be appropriate for most day to day matters. Most people who lodge an informal complaint will expect their concerns to be dealt with swiftly so that they don't experience any further trouble or inconvenience.

All too often however, informal complaints are not taken seriously: the associated risks are that the complainant becomes disillusioned and loses faith in the College or business unit's capacity to resolve their issues. This in

Policy Owner: CEO EKC Group Schools Trust

Approving Body: Policy Committee

Stage of Approval: Approved

Date of approval: November 2019

Page **8** of **14**

turn leads to a number of negative outcomes including poor publicity, loss of reputation, student attrition, poor morale etc.

1.1 Procedure for handling informal complaints

Taking informal complaints and concerns seriously is a vital step in avoiding potentially serious, formal complaints. Any member of staff could receive an informal complaint. In all cases, staff should take the following action:

- Listen to the concern
- Show respect for the person's views and don't use inflammatory or dismissive verbal or body language.
- Seek to understand their perspective and how the concern is affecting them.
- Obtain clarification if needed and tell the person what you believe their complaint to be.
- Tell the person that you will deal with their concern and tell them when they can expect a response from you.
- Thank the person for raising the concern.
- Deal with their concern and let them know what you've done.
- Follow up your actions in writing.

When dealing with informal complaints, it's important to consider whether the complaint is symptomatic of a larger issue at College or Group level e.g. have there been other informal complaints about the same or similar issue? If so, the issue needs to be escalated and resolved to prevent further complaints being received.

If you're unsure whether an issue constitutes a formal or an informal complaint, you can obtain guidance from:

- The Office for Student Affairs
- Your College leadership team
- HR

2. Formal complaints

Policy Owner: CEO EKC Group Schools Trust

Approving Body: Policy Committee

Stage of Approval: Approved

Date of approval: November 2019

Page 9 of 14

Formal complaints are submitted in writing and can be received via letter, email or via other communication channels. Formal complaints may be raised following an unsatisfactory response to an informal complaint. In all cases, the following process should be followed.

2.1 Formal complaint receipt and acknowledgement

The complainant should receive an acknowledgement within 5 days of the complaint's submission via letter or email.

Where the acknowledgement is sent by letter, a copy of the Complaints Procedure should be enclosed.

The complaint should then be:

- Logged on the relevant spreadsheet on the Complaints area of Teams.
- Forwarded to the respective College Principal or business unit lead with a request to commence an investigation and provide a response.

2.2 Formal complaint investigation

Appointing an Investigating Officer (IO)

When the College Principal or business unit lead receives the complaint they should:

- a) Assess the complaint and determine who they will appoint as the IO. The decision will usually be dependent on the level of seniority required (peers cannot investigate peers), the nature of the complaint and the anticipated time needed to investigate. It may be appropriate to ask a colleague from another College or business unit to be the IO if there is any conflict of interest.
- b) Establish whether the complaint necessitates intervention and support from HR, for example when the complaint is related to a potential breach of safeguarding or the staff code of conduct.
- c) Consider whether there could be negative reputational issues and alert the Head of External Affairs if necessary.

Policy Owner: CEO EKC Group Schools Trust

Approving Body: Policy Committee

Stage of Approval: Approved

Date of approval: November 2019

Page 10 of 14

d) Appoint an IO and have an initial discussion with them about the investigation process, timelines and lines of enquiry.

Conducting the investigation

The IO will:

- Determine who they need to speak to/interview to enable them to carry out a full and fair investigation.
- Make contact with the complainant to clarify their complaint and what their expectations are i.e. what would they like to see happen as a result of their complaint. A discussion should also be held about the timeframe for investigating and resolving the complaint. Complaints are normally investigated and responded to within 21 calendar days but may take longer if the matter is more complex or where key staff are not available. In such cases, communication must be maintained with the complainant to keep them updated.
- Interview other staff/students in connection with the complaint and collate any evidence to inform the complaint outcome.
- Document the progress of the investigation on an investigation report.
- Consult with the complainant to clarify any questions and to advise them if the complaint is going to take longer to investigate and resolve than was originally anticipated.
- Report progress to the College Principal or business unit lead and discuss any further lines of enquiry which may need to be investigated. Draw conclusions and make recommendations as to whether the complaint should be upheld, partially upheld or not upheld.
- Discuss the outcome and recommendations for resolution with the College Principal or business unit lead.

Conducting complaint interviews

- Anyone who is interviewed (other than the complainant) should be advised about the context of the complaint, but not who has made the complaint.
- Interviewees should be advised that they can have a buddy accompany them. They should also be asked whether they have any support needs which may need to be accommodated.

Policy Owner: CEO EKC Group Schools Trust

Approving Body: Policy Committee

Stage of Approval: Approved

Date of approval: November 2019

Page 11 of 14

- Interviews and discussions related to the complaint should be held in confidential areas where conversations cannot be overheard.
- Interviews should be planned and given sufficient time.
- Where necessary, interviewees will need to be advised that the discussion is confidential and that they should not discuss the case with anyone else. The IO should ask them to sign a confidentiality statement in such cases.
- If deemed appropriate and if the interviewee is in agreement, interviews may be recorded to help the IO recall relevant evidence.
- Interviewees should not be asked leading questions and should be given the opportunity to clarify anything that they are not sure about.
- At the end of the interview, the IO should recap on the main points and thank the interviewee.
- In all cases, the complainant and interviewees should be treated with dignity, respect and empathy.

Factors the IO needs to take into consideration

- Has there been a breach of policy, procedure, codes of conduct or legislation? If so, why did it happen?
- Has there been any actual or potentially discriminatory action? Remember that under the Equality Act 2010, we cannot discriminate on the basis of any of the 9 protected characteristics:
 - Age
 - Disability
 - Faith and belief
 - Gender
 - Gender identity
 - Marriage and civil partnership
 - Pregnancy and maternity
 - Race
 - Sexual orientation
- Has the complainant been treated fairly? If they have paid fees, have we complied with the requirements of the Consumer Rights Act?
- Are there any improvements which need to be made to procedures, process, facilities, customer service etc.?
- Has there been any missing or confusing communication?

Policy Owner: CEO EKC Group Schools Trust

Approving Body: Policy Committee

Stage of Approval: Approved

Date of approval: November 2019

Page 12 of 14

- Has there been a failure to inform staff and students of their rights and responsibilities?
- Has there been a failure in standards and expectations?
- Is the complaint much more significant and complex than initially thought? If so, the matter should be referred back to the College Principal business unit lead for discussion and agreement on next steps.
- Are there any immediate actions which have been identified during the course of the investigation that need to be taken now to prevent further complaints being made? If so, these should be referred to the College Principal or business unit lead to take forward.

2.3 Complaint outcome

The IO will:

- Complete their investigation report, attach any relevant evidence and send it to the College Principal or business unit lead.
- Meet with the College Principal or business unit lead to discuss the case. If the IO's recommendation is that the complaint is upheld, it may be appropriate to offer financial compensation. Where this is the case, authorisation must be sought from the Executive Director, Finance and Commercial before the complainant is made any offer. The request for authorisation should be accompanied with a summary of the case and a rationale for making a financial offer.
- Clarify any points arising from the investigation so that the College Principal or business unit lead can prepare a suitable response to the complainant. The IO may be asked by the College Principal or business unit lead to draft a response but the response itself should come from the College Principal or business unit lead.
- The College Principal or business unit lead will:
- Write to the complainant advising them about the outcome of the investigation and whether the complaint is upheld, partially upheld or not upheld. A suite of template letters is provided for this purpose. Where the complaint is upheld and financial compensation is offered, the complainant should sign and return a settlement/confidentiality agreement (which is sent with the complaint outcome letter/email).

Policy Owner: CEO EKC Group Schools Trust

Approving Body: Policy Committee

Stage of Approval: Approved

Date of approval: November 2019

Page 13 of 14

- Arrange for the outcome of the complaint and the resolution date to be input on Teams.
- Identify and progress any process improvements that need to be followed up on. Actions may be at local College/business unit level or there may be more fundamental, systemic issues at Group level which need to be resolved.

3. Complaint appeals

If a complainant is not satisfied with the response to their complaint, they may lodge an appeal within 14 calendar days of the complaint response. The IO will follow the same standards for conducting the appeal investigation as the procedure for dealing with formal complaints.

The complainant is free to contact OFSTED at any point during this process to report their concern.

This policy does not overrule any safeguarding requirements.

Where an allegation is made against a member of staff safeguarding procedure will be followed in the first instance. See EKC Group Nurseries Safeguarding Policy.