

Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints Policy

Pickering Pre-school Playgroup is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our pre-school. However, we do not expect our staff and volunteers to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff and volunteers from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

Pickering Pre-school Playgroup defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the pre-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 investigation process.
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaint procedure.
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaint 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 pre-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 pre-school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff or volunteers 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, including on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the pre-school that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Manager or Chairperson will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking. If the behaviour continues, the Chairperson, on behalf of the committee, will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Pickering Pre-school Playgroup causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months. 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 barring an individual from the Pickering Pre-school Playgroup site.

We must not automatically assume that persistent complainants are being unreasonable or malicious, a complainant may have a genuine grievance that may not have been addressed in earlier instants. Each complaint must be dealt with properly in accordance with the Complaint Policy.

Where there is a strong belief that there is malicious intent from a serial complainant or complainants Pickering Pre-school Playgroup will seek legal advice as to whether there are grounds to take legal action to protect the integrity and reputation of Pickering Pre-school Playgroup.

This policy was adopted at a meeting of Pickering Pre-School Playgroup held on 31st August 2023.

Date to be reviewed – Before end of August 2024.

Signed on behalf of the management committee

Name of signatory – Richard Allenby (Chairperson).