DEAN CLOSE
LITTLE TREES
NURSERIES

DEAN CLOSE NURSERIES LIMITED

Independent Day Nursery

Complaints Policy
(NL029)

Little Trees, Dean Close Nurseries Ltd is wholly owned by The Dean Close Foundation, registered Charity No: 1086829

Date of Issue: July 2025
Review Date: March 2026
Owner: Group Operations Manager

LITTLE TREES DAY NURSERY

COMPLAINTS POLICY

➢ This policy has been authorised by the Directors of Dean Close Nurseries Ltd, on behalf of The Dean Close Foundation (the **"Charity"**) for all of its nurseries, (the "Nursery" or the "Setting").

➢ This policy will be reviewed periodically by the Foundation Bursar on behalf of the Board of Directors for Dean Close Nurseries Ltd for approval.

Introduction

1. Our nursery setting believes that children and parents/ carers are entitled to expect courtesy and prompt, careful attention to their needs and wishes. We welcome suggestions on how to improve our Setting and will give prompt and serious attention to any concerns about the running of the Setting. We anticipate that most concerns will be resolved quickly by an informal approach. If this does not achieve the desired result, we have a set of procedures for dealing with concerns. We aim to bring all concerns about the running of our Setting to a satisfactory conclusion for all of the parties involved.

2. All complaints raised by parents/ carers will be treated as expressions of genuine dissatisfaction. Complainants can expect to be treated fairly and in accordance with this policy, which follows the principle that the welfare of the child is safeguarded and promoted, and that account must be taken of the ascertainable wishes and feelings of the child.

3. The Nursery will endeavour to deal with all complaints as quickly as possible, having regard for thorough investigation and appropriate consideration. Every endeavour will be made to ensure that at each stage complaints are resolved within 14 days.

4. These procedures apply equally to all our nurseries in Wales and England, except where specific guidelines apply.

5. This document is available on the website of each Nursery and printed copies will be made available to staff and parents/ carers on request.

Informal Complaints

- It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally by face to face communication at the Nursery.
- In many cases, the matter will be resolved amicably and informally at this stage to the carer's satisfaction
- The Nursery Manager keeps a record of all informal complaints, which are retained for one year
- Informal complaints made directly to a Nursery Manager or a Deputy Manager will usually be referred to the relevant Team Leader as part of the investigation, were appropriate.

- For parents/ carers who are not comfortable with making written complaints, a template form is available from the Manager's office. The form may be completed with the support of the Nursery Manager and signed by the parent/ carer.

- If the complaint is against the Nursery Manager, the Regional Manager will call for a full report from the Nursery Manager, relevant staff and for all the appropriate documents. The Regional Manager will talk to the complainants to hear their concerns and discuss the matter further. Once the Regional Manager is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents/ carers will be informed of the decision in writing. The Regional Manager will give reasons for their decision.

- The same process is followed by the Group Operations Manager if the complaint is against the Regional Manager.

How to Raise a Concern

Stage 1 – Formal (Local) Resolution

- Any parent/ carer who has a concern about any aspect of the provision can raise this directly with the Nursery Manager in writing. Every effort should be made to be as clear as possible about the issue.

- The nursery will acknowledge a written complaint via telephone, email, or letter within two working days of receipt. Parents/carers will be invited to a meeting to discuss the concern in detail, ensuring a clear understanding of the issue raised within 5 working days.

- It is paramount that a face-to-face meeting takes place whenever possible, as this often provides the best opportunity to address concerns early and find a resolution quickly. Direct discussions allow for clearer communication, immediate clarification, and a more collaborative approach to resolving any issues.

- Some concerns may require further investigation to establish the facts, understand what has happened, and identify any necessary improvements. This process ensures a fair and thorough approach, allowing us to address issues effectively and enhance our practices moving forward.

- A Stage 1 final response will be provided, outlining the steps taken to address the concern and aiming to resolve the issue promptly and effectively.

- in the event that a satisfactory resolution cannot be reached within a reasonable period (not exceeding 14 days, or a further extension of 14 days with the agreement of the complainant), complainants should proceed in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure. within 28 days of receipt of the written outcome.

- If the complaint is against the Nursery Manager, parents/ carers should make their complaint directly to the Regional Manager.

- If the complaint is against the Regional Manager, parents/ carers should make their complaint directly to the Group Operations Manager.

- When a complaint is resolved at stage 1, the Nursery Manager will ensure that all related records and correspondence (including copies of all e-mails) are retained for three years from the date of the matter being resolved within the Complaints App.

- **The complaint cannot progress to Stage 2 unless this formal stage 1 meeting has been scheduled, held and minuted.**

<u>Stage 2</u> – Formal Resolution

- If the concern remains unresolved following the stage 1 process locally with the Nursery Manager, following receipt of the Stage 1 Formal Response letter, the parent/ carer can escalate their concern to Stage 2 by submitting a written response to the Regional Manager, clearly detailing the reasons for escalation

- The Regional Manager will review and investigate all of Stage 1 information and arrange a meeting within 5 working days.

- The Group Operations Manager will be notified of the complaint at this stage for tracking purposes.

- Every effort must be made to have a face-to-face meeting. Where circumstances prevent a face to face meeting, discussions will take place by telephone or, if necessary, by e-mail. A written record will be taken.

- The Regional Manager will produce written records of **all** meetings, discussions and interviews or may arrange for another member of staff to attend to make such records.

- The Regional Manager may also arrange for other members of staff to attend the meeting if he/she believes that their presence can assist in the resolution of the complaint; parents/ carers should be informed in advance if others are to attend the meeting.

- It may be necessary for the Regional Manager to carry out further investigations before arriving at a decision.

- Once the Regional Manager is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made, and parents/ carers will be informed of the outcome in writing within 10 working days following the meeting.

- The Regional Manager will give reasons for their findings and, if appropriate, outline any remedies that are to be put in place. If the parents/ carers are not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure within 28 days of receipt of the written outcome.

- When a complaint is resolved at stage 2, the Regional Manager will ensure that all related records and correspondence (including copies of all e-mails) are retained for three years from the date of the matter being resolved within the Complaints App.

- A Stage 2 Final Response of the decision will be sent to the complainant and an acknowledgement of receipt should be obtained, where possible in order to establish that the complaint has been resolved to the complainant's satisfaction.

- in the event that a satisfactory resolution cannot be reached within a reasonable period (not exceeding 14 days, or a further extension of 14 days with the agreement of the complainant), complainants should proceed in accordance with Stage 3 of this Procedure. within 28 days of receipt of the written outcome.

- **The complaint cannot progress to Stage 3 unless this formal stage 2 meeting has been scheduled, held and minuted.**

<u>Stage 3</u> – Panel Hearing

- If parents/ carers wish to take their complaint to Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they should write to the Group Operations Manager and Bursar who have been appointed by the Board of Directors to convene hearings of the Complaints Panel.

- Complainants should explain the grounds for their complaint in writing and what remedy they are seeking.

- This letter needs to be within 28 days of the date of the letter issued at the end of Stage 2 or the complaint lapses and the procedure ends.

- The Bursar or Group Operations Manager will then refer the matter to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of three individuals who have had no direct involvement in the matters raised in the complaint. These may include Directors, the Warden, Group Operations Manager, the Bursar, Regional Manager or a different Nursery Manager. From time to time, we may employ an independent panel chair to assist in the handling of a stage 3 complaint.

- The Complaints Panel will include one external panel member who is independent of the governance or management of the Nursery. The Bursar or Group Operations Manager, on behalf of the Panel, will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing which will normally be within 14 days.

- If the Panel deems it necessary, they may require that further information concerning the complaint, or any related matter, be provided copies of such information to all parties no later than five working days prior to the Hearing.

- If possible, the Panel will resolve the complaint immediately without the need for further investigation; however, if further investigation is required, they will decide how it should be carried out.

- The hearing will be held at a Dean Close Foundation property at the discretion of the Chairman of the Panel.

- Recording of the panel hearing will not be allowed or valid unless agreed by the Panel Chairman.

- Parents/ carers may be accompanied to the Hearing by one other person. The Hearing is not a legal proceeding and the Panel shall be under no obligation to hear oral evidence from witnesses. Legal representation at this stage is not normally appropriate.

- After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant following any further investigation, the Panel will reach a decision; within 14 days, but no more than 28 days of the Hearing. The decision of the Panel will be final.

- The Panel's findings and recommendations will be sent in writing and by email to the parents/ carers with reasons for the decision and, if appropriate, an outline of any remedies that are to be put in place.

- Copies will also be sent to the Nursery Manager, Regional Manager, Group Operations Manager and Bursar. In addition, a copy will be available at the nursery, for inspection by the relevant inspectorate.

- If the complaint was against a member of staff then the Panel's findings and recommendations will be sent in writing to the staff member with reasons for the decision and, if appropriate, an outline of any remedies that are to be put in place.

- When a complaint has been resolved at Stage 3, the Bursary will ensure that all related records and correspondence (including copies of all e-mails) are retained for three years from the date of the matter being resolved. However, it should be noted that the DfE advises, in the case of child protection records or contentious disputes records can be held indefinitely.

Contact Details

At Dean Close House

Nursery Group Operations Manager – Charlene Burgess
cburgess@deanclosenurseries.co.uk, 07884 666191

For Cheltenham/ Gloucester Nurseries – Regional Manager – Karen Green
kjgreen@deanclosenurseries.co.uk, 07867 382556

For Stroud/ Chepstow/ Newport Nurseries – Regional Manager – Marisa Blundell
mcblundell@deanclosenurseries.co.uk 07586 640215

Foundation Bursar/ Responsible Individual – Adrian Bowcher
apbowcher@deanclose.org.uk, 01242 258000

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Relevant Inspectorates

The relevant inspectorates are contactable and you may discuss your concerns at any time during the complaint's procedure. The relevant inspectorate will listen to any concerns raised and take appropriate action if it is deemed that we were not meeting the requirements and conditions of our registration.

Concerning Little Trees in England

OFSTED
National Business Centre
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street

Manchester
M1 2WD

Telephone: **0300 123 1231**
Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Concerning Little Trees in Wales

CIW
Care Inspectorate Wales
Welsh Government Office
Sarn Mynach

Llandudno Junction
LL31 9RZ

Telephone**: 0300 7900 126**
Email: ciw@gov.wales

Confidentiality, Reporting and Record Keeping

Concerns and complaints raised by parents/ carers, including correspondence, statements and records will be treated sensitively and confidentially. However, details may be provided to CIW or Ofsted on their request.

The Summary Complaints Log for each setting, and held by the Group Operations Manager for any Stage 3 complaints, will contain the following information:

- name of complainant;
- nature of complaint;
- date and time of complaint;
- action taken in response to the complaint;
- result of complaint investigation;
- information given to the complainant, including the date of response.

This procedure will also be followed, by the Regional Manager should a complaint be made about the Nursery Manager, and by the Responsible Individual should a complaint arise about the Group Operations Manager, and by the Chair of Directors should a complaint arise about the Responsible Individual.

Complaints subject to concurrent consideration

The consideration of complaints subject to concurrent consideration may be discontinued if at any time it appears to the Nursery that to continue would compromise or prejudice the other consideration. Where a complaint relates to any matter:

- about which the complainant has stated in writing that he or she intends to take proceedings in any court or tribunal, or
- about which the Nursery is taking or is proposing to take disciplinary proceedings, or
- about which the Nursery has been notified that an investigation is being conducted by any person or body in contemplation of criminal proceedings, or
- about which a meeting involving other bodies including the police has been convened to discuss issues relating to the protection of children or vulnerable adults, or
- about which the Nursery has been notified that there are current investigations in contemplation of proceedings
- about which the Nursery has been notified that a local authority has or is instigating child protection enquiries,

The Nursery will consider, in consultation with the complainant and any other person or body which they consider appropriate to consult, how the complaint should be handled. Where the Nursery decides to discontinue the consideration of a complaint, notice of that decision will be made to the complainant. Consideration can be resumed at any time and will ascertain the progress of the concurrent consideration. The Nursery will resume consideration of any complaint where the concurrent consideration is discontinued or completed and the complainant requests that the complaint be re-considered.