

Wild Arts Forest School: Complaints Policy

1. Policy Statement

At Wild Arts Forest School, we are committed to fostering strong relationships with both parents and children. We believe that a positive and open environment is essential for effective learning and the well-being of all children in our care. While we strive to provide the highest standard of care, we acknowledge that occasionally, concerns or complaints may arise. We take all complaints seriously and aim to resolve them promptly, fairly, and in accordance with relevant legislation and guidelines.

2. Aims of the Policy

- To provide a clear and transparent process for handling complaints.
- To ensure complaints are addressed in a timely, fair, and consistent manner.
- To maintain accurate records of all complaints and their outcomes.
- To comply with the statutory requirements set by the relevant authorities, including West Sussex Council.

3. Complaints Procedure

3.1 Informal Resolution

- We encourage open communication and aim to resolve issues informally whenever possible. Parents are invited to discuss any concerns with a member of staff as soon as they arise. We will ensure we find a quiet space for you to share your concerns so confidentiality can be maintained.
- If the issue cannot be resolved informally, the matter will be escalated to a formal complaint.

3.2 Formal Complaint

- A formal complaint should be made in writing, addressed to the manager Samantha Sheldrake (contact details available at the bottom of this document)
- Upon receipt of the complaint, the manager will acknowledge the complaint in writing and aim to respond within 7 working days.
- The complaint will be thoroughly investigated, and the findings will be documented.

4. Investigation and Record-Keeping

- All complaints will be investigated fully and impartially. The investigation will involve gathering relevant information, speaking to any involved parties, and reviewing any pertinent documentation.

- We will maintain a written record of all complaints, the steps taken during the investigation, the outcome, and any actions taken as a result.
- These records will be kept for a minimum of three years.

5. Response to Complaints

- We will respond in writing to the complainant, summarizing the findings of the investigation and any actions taken. This response will be provided as soon as reasonably possible but no later than 28 days from the date the complaint was made.
- If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome, they may request a review or appeal. This request should be made in writing within 10 working days of receiving our response.

6. Escalating a complaint above Wild Arts management

If someone wishes to escalate a complaint beyond our organisation's management, they can contact **Ofsted**, which regulates and inspects services that care for children and young people. Ofsted can be reached via their website or by calling 0300 123 4666. Alternatively, the complainant can also contact the **Local Authority's Children's Services** or **West Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership** for further advice or to raise concerns.

7. Concerns About Staff Working with Children

Any concerns regarding the conduct or behaviour of staff working with children must be treated as a safeguarding issue. If there is a concern that a member of staff may have harmed a child, or poses a risk of harm, this must be reported immediately to the **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** within the organisation. The DSL will then inform the **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)**, who is responsible for managing and overseeing allegations against adults working with children. All concerns must be thoroughly documented and addressed according to safeguarding protocols to ensure the safety and welfare of the children in our care. If the concern is with the **DSL** then complaints can be made directly to **LADO**.

8. Reporting and Review

- Upon request, we will provide a summary of complaints received within the last 12 months, including any actions taken, or a complete list of all complaints received in the last three years.

- This information will be provided within a reasonable timeframe specified by the requesting authority.
- Complaints and our handling of them will be reviewed periodically to identify any trends or areas for improvement in our service.

9. Confidentiality

- All complaints will be handled with the utmost confidentiality, respecting the privacy of all parties involved.
- Information about complaints will only be shared with those who need to know for the purposes of investigating or resolving the issue.

10. Communication of Policy

- This policy is available to all parents and carers upon request and is also available on our website.
- Staff will be trained on the implementation of this policy and will be expected to adhere to its procedures.

11. Monitoring and Review of Policy

- This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if required due to changes in legislation or guidance.
- The review will consider the effectiveness of the policy in practice and any feedback received from parents, carers, and staff.

Contact Details for Complaints:

Forest School Leader / Company Director

Samantha Sheldrake

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This policy is in accordance with the following UK legislation and statutory guidance:

- The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework
- The Children Act 1989 and 2004
- The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018
- Guidance from our local council