Complaints Policy

1. Purpose

Nightingale Cottage aims to provide a safe, positive and valuable learning experience for all children and their families. We welcome feedback, including complaints, as an opportunity to address concerns, improve our provision and maintain high standards.

This policy explains how complaints are received, investigated and resolved fairly, promptly and appropriately.

2. Scope

This policy applies to complaints raised by:

- Parents and carers
- Children attending Nightingale Cottage
- Staff, volunteers and visiting practitioners

It covers concerns about the provision, staff conduct, teaching, behaviour management, health and safety, facilities, discrimination, communication and other aspects of the setting.

Safeguarding concerns and allegations of abuse or harm will be dealt with in accordance with the relevant safeguarding and child protection procedures. They will not be delayed while the ordinary complaints process is followed.

3. Principles

Nightingale Cottage will:

- Take all complaints seriously and treat complainants fairly and respectfully.
- Aim to resolve concerns promptly and, where appropriate, informally.
- Acknowledge formal complaints within three working days.
- Aim to provide a written outcome within ten working days of acknowledging a formal complaint.
- Keep complainants informed if an investigation requires more time.
- Handle complaints sensitively and share information only with those who need it, subject to safeguarding and other legal obligations.
- Ensure that no one is disadvantaged for raising a genuine concern in good faith.
- Keep an appropriate written record of formal complaints, investigations, outcomes and any action taken.

4. Raising an informal concern

Where appropriate, concerns should initially be raised with Francesca Paul, the owner and lead teacher of Nightingale Cottage, by email, telephone or in person.

We will listen to the concern, clarify the issue and seek to resolve it informally wherever possible. A written record will be made where appropriate, particularly where the concern relates to safeguarding, safety or staff conduct.

If the concern cannot be resolved informally, or the complainant would prefer a formal investigation, they may use the formal complaints procedure below.

5. Formal complaints procedure

Step 1: Submit a complaint

Formal complaints should be submitted in writing by email to nightingaleckent@gmail.com or by post to:

Nightingale Cottage
Tonbridge Road
Shipbourne
TN11 9PA

Please include:

- Your name and contact details.
- A clear description of the concern.
- Relevant dates, events and people involved, where known.
- Any steps already taken to resolve the issue.
- The outcome or resolution you are seeking, if applicable.

We will make reasonable efforts to support anyone who needs assistance to submit a complaint in writing. Children may raise concerns in a way appropriate to their age and understanding.

Step 2: Acknowledgement

We will acknowledge receipt within three working days and explain the next steps.

Step 3: Investigation

Francesca Paul will normally investigate the complaint. This may involve reviewing relevant records and policies, speaking with the complainant and other people involved, and considering any relevant evidence.

The investigation will be proportionate to the nature and seriousness of the complaint. The person investigating will seek to establish the relevant facts and consider the matter fairly.

Where a complaint concerns Francesca Paul personally, or her conduct as owner or DSL, it will be reviewed by a person who has not been directly involved in the matter and who can investigate it impartially. This may be another member of the teaching team where appropriate, or an independent external person where the nature or seriousness of the complaint requires greater independence. Safeguarding allegations will be managed in accordance with the setting's safeguarding and child protection procedures and referred to the relevant external authorities where required.

Step 4: Outcome

We will aim to provide a written response within ten working days of acknowledging the complaint.

The response will explain:

- The issues considered.
- The outcome of the investigation.
- Any action to be taken, where appropriate.

If the investigation cannot be completed within this period, we will explain the reason for the delay, provide a revised timescale and keep the complainant informed.

6. Safeguarding concerns and allegations

Any concern that a child may be at risk of harm, or any allegation that an adult working with children has harmed a child or may pose a risk, must be acted on promptly in accordance with Nightingale Cottage's safeguarding and child protection procedures.

Where appropriate, concerns will be referred to the relevant local authority children's social care service, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or the police. Immediate danger or an emergency must be reported to the emergency services.

Safeguarding concerns must not be handled solely through the ordinary complaints procedure or delayed while an internal investigation takes place. Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where information needs to be shared to protect a child or meet legal obligations.

7. Further action and external advice

If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome, they may seek independent advice or use an appropriate external route, depending on the nature of the complaint.

Relevant contacts include:

- **Child safeguarding concerns:** Kent County Council Children's Social Services, on 03000 41 11 11, or 03000 41 91 91 outside normal office hours.
- **Allegations about an adult working with children:** Kent's LADO Education Safeguarding Advisory Service (LESAS), via the referral route on The Education People's safeguarding webpage.
- **Data protection concerns:** Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), at https://ico.org.uk.
- **Discrimination concerns:** Equality Advisory Support Service (EASS), at https://www.equalityadvisoryservice.com/.
- **Other concerns:** the relevant statutory authority or an independent professional adviser, depending on the issue.

Where a child may be at risk of harm, concerns must be reported promptly through the appropriate safeguarding procedures and must not be delayed while the complaints process is followed.

Nightingale Cottage operates as an out-of-school tuition setting. There is no single external regulator responsible for handling all complaints about this type of provision. The appropriate route will depend on the nature of the concern and the applicable legal and regulatory framework.

8. Record keeping and confidentiality

A written record will be maintained of formal complaints, the investigation, the outcome and any action taken. Records will be stored securely, with access restricted to those who need the information.

Complaint records will be retained in accordance with Nightingale Cottage's data retention arrangements, applicable legal requirements and the nature of the complaint. Information will be handled in accordance with the setting's data protection policy.

Policy updated: 19 October 2026

Next review date: 19 October 2027