Complaints Procedure

Last reviewed: Monday 16th November 2026

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear, fair, and transparent process for handling complaints raised by children, learners, parents, guardians, or staff regarding Douce France services. The policy ensures that concerns are addressed promptly and effectively while maintaining organisational accountability.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- All children, learners and parents/guardians.
- Staff, teachers and tutors, volunteers, and contractors.
- Complaints relating to activity and tuition quality, behaviour, safeguarding, or administrative processes.

This policy is written with reference to:

Keeping Children Safe in Education
DfE Alternative Provision statutory guidance
Douce France Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
Douce France Whistleblowing Policy
Equality Act 2010

Aims

- Resolve complaints in a timely, consistent, and equitable manner.
- Maintain trust and confidence among children, learners, parents, and staff.
- Identify and implement improvements to prevent recurrence.
- Ensure compliance with safeguarding and statutory requirements.

Key Principles

- Complaints are taken seriously and handled professionally.
- Confidentiality is maintained throughout the process.
- Complainants are treated with respect, and retaliation is prohibited.
- Complaints are documented and monitored for quality assurance and improvement.
- Complaints can be made to Douce France, to the Local Authority, to Ofsted or to the Children's Commissioner.
- Children and families will be supported to raise concerns
- Any reasonable adjustments will be made to take account of language barriers or SEND
- Vulnerability will be taken into account during complaints and support put in place as needed.

Procedures

1. **Informal Resolution**
   - Complainants are encouraged to first raise concerns informally with the relevant staff member.
   - Staff should attempt to resolve the issue promptly and record the outcome.
   - Children and young people have a right to complain and this must be dealt with using the same process.

2. **Formal Complaint Submission**
   - If informal resolution is unsuccessful, the complainant may submit a formal complaint in writing to the Company Director.
   - The complaint should include the nature of the concern, relevant dates, and any supporting evidence.

3. **Acknowledgment**
   - Formal complaints will be acknowledged in writing within 5 working days, including an outline of the investigation process and anticipated timeframe.

4. **Investigation**
   - The appointed investigator will review the complaint, gather relevant information, and interview any involved parties.
   - Investigations will be conducted impartially, ensuring confidentiality and fairness.

5. **Outcome and Response**
   - A written response detailing the investigation findings, conclusions, and any remedial actions will be provided to the complainant within 20 working days.
   - If remedial action is required, the Company Director will implement it promptly and monitor its effectiveness.

6. **Appeals Process**
   - Complainants who are dissatisfied with the outcome may appeal in writing to the Company Director or designated appeals officer.
   - Appeals will be reviewed independently and a final decision communicated in writing within 15 working days.
   - Complaints may be escalated to the appropriate authorities if needed. These include Ofsted and the Children's Commissioner.

7. **Record Keeping**
   - All complaints, investigations, outcomes, and appeals are logged securely for monitoring, quality assurance, and statutory compliance.

Complaints where there is a safeguarding element

Safeguarding concerns are managed outside the standard complaints process. Complaints involving staff conduct are referred to Managing Allegations Against Staff procedures and referred to the LADO if the harm threshold is met. The DSL will always be involved in complaints where there is a safeguarding element to the complaint, however small.

Interim measures for a complaint against a member of staff

Members of staff who have a complaint raised against them will be risk assessed and a decision will be taken in consultation with the DSL, school and Local Authority as to whether that staff member should continue working in that role. If it is necessary to involve the LADO because the harm threshold has been met then the decision-making will be in consultation with them.

Monitoring and Review

- The Complaints Procedure is reviewed annually to ensure effectiveness, transparency, and alignment with statutory guidance.
- Patterns of complaints are analysed to inform improvements to policies, procedures, and service delivery.
- Complaints may be escalated at any time.