

Dealing with an internally investigated complaint

If a written complaint is made against you a number of things might happen...

- Ofsted might visit after phoning you to let you know they are coming
- Ofsted might turn up on the doorstep unannounced – this is the most likely scenario if there is a safeguarding complaint
- Ofsted might write to you and ask you to investigate it internally.

If you are asked to investigate internally they will give you the following 5 criterion to answer when you report back to them –

- Background information
- Nature of the concern
- What did you find?
- Conclusion
- Intended actions

Here are some ideas for completing the form...

Background information about the complaint

You need to talk about the events leading up to the complaint being made. For example, if a child had an accident or a parent spoke to you verbally and then decided to report their concern to Ofsted you will need to give this information.

As part of your reply you should note details of any witnesses and where they were / what was observed leading up to the time about which the complaint has been made.

If there is a history to the complaint such as if a parent has long standing issues with you personally or you are locked in a bitter planning dispute with a neighbour and they want to make trouble for you, then you have to decide how much information you want to share with Ofsted. If you only write about things directly related to the complaint they might not get the full story... however if you could go on for pages then you will need to cut it down as it might not be fully read.

Nature of the concern

To which of the EYFS welfare requirements does the complaint relate? For example is it a complaint about...

- Safeguarding and promoting children's welfare – it is unlikely a safeguarding complaint will be dealt with internally. Ofsted will usually visit, often unannounced.

- Suitable people – for example, a complaint that one of your staff does not have a valid CRB or there is a problem with alcohol or drugs
- Suitable premises, environment and equipment – for example, a complaint that you have failed to protect a child from faulty equipment or that your premises are in disrepair
- Organisation – for example, a complaint about the learning and development requirements
- Documentation – for example, a complaint about your record keeping procedures.

What did you find when you investigated?

As part of your internal investigation procedure you will have considered all the requirements to which the complaint relates and decided whether or not you have breached them. You need to inform Ofsted how you have investigated the complaint and share your findings about the incident with them.

For example, you might have investigated by looking in your files and finding that you did not go on the outing about which the complaint was made on the day detailed in the complaint. You would photocopy a page from your personal daily diary as evidence and attach it to the complaint document to send to Ofsted.

You might be asked to investigate a complaint about failing to manage a child's behaviour effectively. As part of your investigation procedure you would photocopy details of meetings with parents set up to discuss the behaviour, reflective notes about training you have attended to support the child, advice given by other professionals to help the child, strategies you and the parents put in place etc. You would share these with Ofsted as part of your evidence of your findings.

Your conclusions

Try not to be judgemental – the complaint might be completely unfounded / the complainant might be slightly unhinged / the situation might be absolutely laughable... however Ofsted want to see you dealing with the situation so do try and show you are professional.

What action has been taken / do you intend to take?

If you have reflected on the complaint and find that your current procedures or actions have not supported the child or the child's family then you should say this here. Outline your priorities for improvement and talk about how you will make sure the situation does not happen again.

If you find that there is no action to take – maybe the complaint is related to financial issues and there is nothing to investigate because it didn't happen – then you should say so.