SMARTKIDZ Play and Learn Ltd. — Complaints Policy

Updated October 2026 | New or amended wording is shown in blue.

This policy applies to Smartkidz Play and Learn Breakfast and After School Club and Smartkidz Forest School Alternative Provision (AP), including outdoor and off-site activities. References to the Club also include AP where relevant. Children, parents/carers, commissioning schools, local authorities and others may raise concerns.

At Smartkidz Play and Learn Ltd we aim to work in partnership with parents/carers to deliver a high-quality childcare service for everyone. If for any reason we fall short of this goal, we would like to be informed in order to amend our practices for the future. Our complaints policy is displayed on the parent boards within the premises at all times. Records of all complaints are kept for at least three years. A summary of written complaints is available for parents on request.

The manager is usually responsible for dealing with complaints. If the complaint is about the manager/registered person, it should be raised with the Headteacher of Girton Glebe Primary School as an external party. Any complaints received about staff members will be recorded on an Incident log and a Complaints log will be completed. Any complaints made will be dealt with in the following manner:

The person handling a complaint must not be the subject of it. Safeguarding concerns must follow the immediate safeguarding procedure below, not wait for the complaints stages. Parents are never required to confront the person complained about.

Raising a concern and getting support

Speak to the playleader/AP lead or manager, telephone 07756 014320, email admin@smartkidzplayandlearn.co.uk, or hand a letter to the setting marked for the manager. If you have a concern or complaint about the manager/registered person, speak to the Headteacher of Girton Glebe Primary School as an external party. Concerns may also be taken directly to the commissioner or relevant external authority.

Complaints can be made verbally, in writing or with help from a trusted adult or advocate. Staff will help record a verbal complaint, read it back or share it for confirmation, and make reasonable adjustments for disability, special educational needs, language or communication needs. No particular form is required. Children will be listened to in a way suited to their age and understanding. Anonymous concerns will be recorded and considered as far as the information allows, although a personal response may not be possible.

No child or family will be treated less favourably because they raise a concern. Information will be shared only where necessary and lawful; confidentiality cannot be promised where information is needed to protect a child.

Stage one

Complaints about aspects of Club activity:

- The playleader will discuss the matter informally with the parent or carer concerned and aim to reach a satisfactory resolution.
- This will be passed on to the manager and if any further issues occur then the manager will investigate.

Complaints about an individual staff member:

- If appropriate the parent will be encouraged to discuss the matter with staff concerned.
- If the parent feels that this is not appropriate, the matter will be discussed with the play leader and/or manager, who will then discuss the complaint with the staff member and try to reach a satisfactory resolution.

For AP, the AP lead fulfils the playleader role. Informal resolution is optional: a complainant may go directly to stage two. All complaints, including those resolved informally, will be recorded promptly.

Stage two

If it is impossible to reach a satisfactory resolution to the complaint through informal discussion, the parent or carer should put their complaint in writing to the manager. For complaints about the manager/registered person, use the Headteacher route above instead. The person handling the complaint will:

Written complaints include emails and complaints recorded by staff with the complainant's agreement. A verbal complaint must not be rejected or left uninvestigated because it has not been put in writing.

- Acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 7 calendar days.
- Investigate the matter and how it relates to our fulfilment of our statutory duties under EYFS, applicable Childcare Register requirements or agreed AP responsibilities, and notify the complainant of the outcome as soon as reasonably possible and within 28 calendar days of first receipt of the complaint.
- Send a full response in writing to the complainant, including details of any recommended changes to be made to the Club's practices or policies as a result of the complaint, if applicable. Share relevant information with other parties only where necessary and lawful.
- Meet relevant parties to discuss the Club's response to the complaint, either together or on an individual basis.

The response will explain the issues considered, findings, reasons, actions and timescales, and how to request a review or raise the matter externally. Records and relevant accounts will be considered fairly; another person's confidential employment or safeguarding information will not be disclosed unnecessarily.

The EYFS requires an outcome within 28 days for written complaints about EYFS requirements. The compulsory Childcare Register requires a response within 28 days of a complaint being made. Smartkidz applies the 7-day acknowledgement and 28-day outcome timescales above to all complaints, including AP, as its own service standard. Informal discussions, school holidays, putting a verbal complaint in writing or moving between stages do not restart the initial deadline.

Where an external safeguarding or police investigation continues, Smartkidz will provide the findings and actions it can lawfully communicate within the required 28 days, explain any limits on disclosure and keep the complainant updated. An acknowledgement or progress update alone does not replace the required outcome response.

Stage three – review

A complainant who remains dissatisfied may ask the registered person, or the Headteacher if the complaint concerns the manager/registered person, for a review, explaining the points they believe remain unresolved. The review will be undertaken by a person not previously involved; an appropriate independent person will be arranged where internal independence cannot be achieved. The request will be acknowledged within 7 calendar days and a written review outcome provided within 28 calendar days of the review request. This additional review does not extend the original response deadline or prevent external escalation.

Safeguarding concerns and allegations

If child protection issues are raised, the manager will refer the situation immediately to the Club's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), who will contact children's social care where a child may be at risk and follow the procedures of the Safeguarding Policy.

If a criminal act may have been committed, the manager will contact the police.

Anyone may make a safeguarding referral directly. Call 999 if a child is in immediate danger. Do not wait for a manager, a written complaint, parental agreement or the completion of any complaints stage before taking necessary protective action.

Allegations that a member of staff, volunteer or other adult working with children may have harmed a child, committed a relevant offence or pose a risk of harm must be reported to the registered person and the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) within one working day, before further investigation. Where the registered person is implicated, contact the LADO directly. Follow LADO/police advice about contacting the adult or others so that evidence and enquiries are not compromised. Other concerns about adult conduct must still be recorded and considered under the Safeguarding Policy.

For Ofsted-registered provision, allegations of harm or abuse by anyone living, working or looking after children at the premises, whether alleged to have occurred there or elsewhere, and the action taken must be notified to Ofsted as soon as reasonably practicable and within 14 days. Other notifiable incidents must also be reported within the applicable statutory timescales. This does not replace immediate safeguarding referrals.

Cambridgeshire children's social care: 0345 045 5203; out of hours: 01733 234724. Cambridgeshire LADO: 01223 727967; LADO@cambridgeshire.gov.uk. Police: 999 in an emergency; 101 for non-emergency reporting.

Alternative Provision complaints and commissioning responsibility

AP complaints may concern support, learning, inclusion, behaviour responses, safety, communication, attendance or transport handovers. Smartkidz will listen to the child's experience and consider the agreed placement plan, relevant Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) provision and the commissioning agreement. Complaints must not interrupt necessary support or immediate protective action.

At the start of a placement, the family will be given the named contact and complaints route for the commissioning school or local authority. Where the placement operates under a school or trust's governance, the applicable school/trust complaints procedure will also be explained. Smartkidz will coordinate the response with these bodies, clarify who is investigating each issue and share relevant complaints, actions and outcomes promptly and lawfully. Safeguarding concerns must be shared immediately with the home/commissioning school's DSL or the local authority safeguarding lead, without delaying a direct referral.

Parents/carers and children may raise concerns directly with the commissioning school or local authority and use that body's complaints procedure if dissatisfied. Concerns about school decisions should be directed to the school; concerns about local authority placement, EHCP, funding or commissioned transport decisions should be directed to the responsible local authority service. Smartkidz will assist with the appropriate contact and deal with the part for which it is responsible. This procedure does not replace statutory review, appeal or tribunal rights or extend their deadlines.

AP commissioners retain their own responsibilities for the suitability and oversight of placements. The DfE's non-school AP national standards are voluntary guidance, not a separate statutory complaints scheme. Childcare registration does not, by itself, mean that all AP education is inspected or regulated by Ofsted through that registration.

Making a complaint to Ofsted

Any parent or carer can submit a complaint to Ofsted about Smartkidz Play and Learn Ltd at any time if they believe we are not meeting the requirements of our registration.

Ofsted will review the information and decide whether regulatory action is needed. It may inspect, require action or work with other agencies; it does not investigate every complaint individually, resolve personal disputes about fees or contracts, or normally tell the complainant the outcome. Complaints about AP education or commissioning must also use the relevant school or local authority route described above.

Ofsted's Contact Details

Telephone: 0300 123 1231 (general enquiries); 0300 123 4666 (complaints)

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Online: Ofsted contact service

Postal correspondence: telephone Ofsted to confirm its current postal address before sending a complaint.

Records, confidentiality and learning from complaints

The Complaints log must record the service, date first received, nature of the concern, person handling it, investigation, findings, action taken, response date, referrals, review and closure. Supporting records will be stored securely, with access restricted to those who need them. Records will be kept for at least three years, or longer where safeguarding, legal or other applicable retention requirements require this. Safeguarding detail will be recorded in the separate safeguarding record and cross-referenced securely.

The record of complaints will be available to Ofsted on request. Where Childcare Register requirements apply, Smartkidz will also supply any requested 12-month summary of complaints and action taken, or a list of complaints from the previous three years, within the timeframe Ofsted specifies. Parents receive an anonymised summary, not access to confidential records about others.

The manager will check that agreed actions are completed, review their effectiveness at the half-term evaluation point in the existing Complaint Log and identify any changes needed to practice, training or policies. Urgent improvements will not wait until that review. The record must show any continuing disagreement; sign-off must not imply the complainant is satisfied when they are not.

Written in accordance with the EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers (effective 1 September 2026), particularly safeguarding and welfare requirements 3.101–3.102 (Complaints), and applicable Childcare Register requirements.

Read alongside the Smartkidz Safeguarding and Whistleblowing Policies, relevant placement agreements, DfE Arranging Alternative Provision (February 2025), the non-school AP voluntary national standards (August 2025), local safeguarding procedures and Ofsted's complaints guidance. Guidance checked 13 October 2026.

This policy was adopted by:	Smartkidz Play and Learn
Date:	August 2025
Reviewed/updated:	October 2026
Next review:	October 2027 (or sooner if guidance changes).

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Complaint Log

Record the reference, service and date first received in the first column; include response dates, actions and referrals in the third column. Keep securely and do not include unnecessary confidential safeguarding detail.

Complaint	Who was this dealt with by	How was it dealt with	Evaluation (after half a term)	Signed off after satisfactory completion