

SPRINGFIELD SCHOOL POLICY



POLICY NAME: COMPLAINTS POLICY
NEXT REVIEW DATE: 01/09/2026

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE 2025–2026

Reviewed: September 2025

Next Review: September 2026

1. Introduction

1.1 All maintained schools are required to establish a complaints procedure and to publicise that procedure. This policy sets out how Springfield School will handle concerns and complaints from members of the public, including parents and carers.

1.2 A copy of this procedure is available on the school website and on request from the school office.

1.3 Springfield School aims to address all complaints fairly, openly and promptly, and to resolve concerns at the earliest possible stage.

1.4 All references to *working days* in this policy refer to days when the school is open to pupils.

1.5 This policy reflects the latest Department for Education (DfE) guidance (*Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures 2023*) and the model procedure agreed by Cheshire East Council.

1.1a Accessibility

Springfield School is committed to ensuring this policy is accessible to all. Copies are available in alternative formats (for example, large print or translated versions) on request from the school office.

2. Scope of the Procedure

2.1 This procedure covers all complaints against the school by external persons or parties which do not have an alternative statutory route of appeal or complaint (e.g. admissions, exclusions, safeguarding, or staff grievances).

2.2 Employees or former employees wishing to raise concerns about employment should do so under the relevant staffing or whistleblowing procedures.

2.3 Anonymous Complaints

The school will exercise discretion in deciding whether to pursue anonymous complaints. In determining whether to investigate, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will consider the seriousness of the issue, the credibility of the concern, and the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

2.4 Threshold for Complaints

The school operates a threshold for determining whether a concern meets the definition of a formal complaint. On receipt, the issue will be reviewed to decide whether it meets this threshold. Examples of matters that would not normally proceed as a formal complaint include: disagreement with school policy or decisions that have been properly made; requests for information or clarification; concerns that have not yet been raised with the relevant member of staff; or issues that are being, or have

been, dealt with through other statutory processes (for example, safeguarding, or SEND Tribunal matters). Where a concern does not meet the threshold for a formal complaint, the complainant will be informed and advised of the most appropriate route for resolution.

3. General Principles

3.1 Complaints should be handled transparently, fairly and promptly. Every effort should be made to resolve matters informally in the first instance.

3.2 Complainants should be kept informed of progress and outcome, except where this would breach confidentiality.

3.3 All timescales within this policy should be adhered to wherever possible. Where delays are unavoidable, the complainant will be informed of the reason and given a revised timescale.

3.4 The Governing Body will monitor the number, type and outcomes of complaints annually to ensure effectiveness of the procedure and to identify any trends.

3.5 Advice on the operation of this procedure may be sought from the Cheshire East Governance and Liaison Service.

3.6 Confidentiality and Record Keeping

All complaints will be handled confidentially, except where disclosure is required by law. Records will be securely retained in accordance with the school's Data Protection and Record Retention policies.

4. Resolving Complaints

4.1 At each stage, the school will seek to resolve complaints in a positive and constructive way.

Possible outcomes may include:

- An apology.
- An explanation.
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently.
- An assurance that the matter will not recur.
- An undertaking to review school policies or procedures.

4.2 Complainants will be asked what actions they feel might resolve the issue. An admission that the school could have handled something better is not an admission of negligence.

5. Frivolous or Vexatious Complaints

5.1 Complaints may be deemed frivolous or vexatious if they are obsessive, persistent, harassing, repetitious, or designed to cause disruption.

5.2 Where the Headteacher or Chair of Governors considers a complaint to be frivolous or vexatious, they may decide to reject it and/or restrict contact with the complainant.

5.3 The decision and reasons will be communicated in writing to the complainant.

6. Stages of the Procedure

Stage 1 – Informal Discussion

6.1 Most concerns can be resolved quickly through discussion with a class teacher or other appropriate member of staff.

6.2 If not resolved, the complainant should contact the Headteacher in writing (email or letter). The Headteacher or nominee will make contact within **10 working days** to discuss the issue and where appropriate will follow up in writing within **10 working days**.

6.3 If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response, the complaint moves to Stage 2.

6.4 Complaints against the Headteacher, Chair of Governors or Governing Body as a whole will move directly to Stage 2.

Stage 2 – Formal Consideration by the Chair or Nominated Governor

6.5 The complaint should be submitted in writing to the Chair of Governors (or Vice Chair/nominated governor).

6.6 The Chair (or nominee this could be the Executive Headteacher) will make contact within **10 working days** to discuss the issue and where appropriate will follow up in writing within **10 working days**.

6.7 If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may request that the matter proceed to the Appeal Stage.

Stage 3 – Appeal Stage

6.8 The complainant must request an appeal in writing within **10 working days** of receiving the Stage 2 outcome.

6.9 A governors' complaints panel will be convened, consisting of **three impartial governors** with no prior involvement.

6.10 The panel meeting will normally be held within **20 working days** of receipt of the appeal.

6.11 The panel will consider written evidence and verbal statements following the process outlined in *Appendix A*.

6.12 The panel's decision will be sent in writing within **five working days** of the meeting. The decision of the panel is final within the school's process.

7. Escalation of Complaints

7.1 Secretary of State for Education

If a complainant believes the Governing Body has acted unreasonably or failed to carry out its duties properly, they may complain in writing to the Secretary of State for Education.

7.2 Ofsted

Ofsted may investigate certain complaints to determine whether to inspect a school, particularly where concerns relate to statutory requirements or pupil welfare.

7.3 Other Routes

Before approaching external bodies, complainants are expected to have exhausted all stages of this school procedure.

8. Support for Parents and Carers

8.1 The Cheshire East Information, Advice and Support (IAS) Service provides impartial help to parents whose children have special educational needs, disabilities, or medical needs.

8.2 The service can support parents in understanding options, preparing complaints, and attending meetings.

Contact:

03001235166

ias.service@cheshireeast.gov.uk

APPENDIX A – Conduct of Complaints Appeal Meetings

A.1 The appeal hearing should be conducted as informally as possible. The Chair of the panel should ensure that all participants feel comfortable and understand the process.

A.2 Separate waiting areas should be provided for the two parties. All relevant documentation must be circulated at least **five working days** before the meeting.

A.3 The meeting may be attended by:

- The complainant (with one companion).
- The Headteacher and/or Chair of Governors.
- Three governors forming the panel.
- A minute taker and, if required, an adviser to the panel.

A.4 Witnesses may be called by either side to provide information but will attend only for the duration of their contribution.

A.5 The complainant will present their case first, followed by the school. Both sides may ask questions through the Chair.

A.6 Both parties may make a brief closing statement, after which they will withdraw.

A.7 The panel will deliberate in private and reach a decision, which will be communicated in writing within **five working days**.

A.8 The written outcome will state whether the complaint is upheld in full, in part, or not upheld, and will outline any actions to be taken by the school.

APPENDIX B – Complaint Template

Please include the following information and send the Headteacher or Chair of Governors (as appropriate).

Name:

Relationship to pupil:

Phone Number / email:

Details of your complaint (include dates, people involved, and what happened):

What actions have you already taken to try to resolve the complaint?

What outcome or actions would resolve the issue for you?

Please return this form to the Headteacher or Chair of Governors via the school office, marked *Private and Confidential*.