

# SPRINGFIELD SCHOOL POLICY



**POLICY NAME:** COMPLAINTS POLICY  
**NEXT REVIEW DATE:** 01/09/2027

## **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE 2026–2027**

**Reviewed:** September 2026

**Next Review:** September 2027

### **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.

### **1.6 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 an anonymous complaint. In making this decision, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will consider the seriousness and credibility of the concern, whether sufficient information is available to investigate it fairly, and the likelihood of confirming the matter from attributable sources.

### **2.4 Threshold for Complaints**

On receipt, the school will decide whether the matter falls within this Complaints Procedure. Matters that would not normally proceed as formal complaints include requests for information or clarification; concerns that have not first been raised with the appropriate member of staff; disagreement with a lawful school policy or a decision properly made under that policy; matters outside the school's control; and issues being considered, or already determined, through another statutory, legal or specialist

process, including safeguarding, admissions, exclusions, employment, whistleblowing or SEND Tribunal proceedings. The school will not use this threshold to prevent a new and legitimate complaint from being considered. Where a matter does not meet the threshold, the complainant will be told the reason in writing and, where possible, directed to the appropriate route.

### **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. Managing Persistent, Repetitious or Unreasonable Complaints and Contact**

5.1 The school is committed to considering legitimate complaints fairly. However, it may manage contact where the nature or frequency of correspondence is persistent, repetitious, abusive, harassing, disproportionate or significantly disrupts the school's work.

5.2 The school may set reasonable boundaries for contact, including a single point of contact, agreed methods or frequency of communication, or a decision not to provide further substantive responses on

matters already concluded. Restrictions will be proportionate, reviewed when appropriate and will not prevent a genuinely new complaint or significant new evidence from being considered.

5.3 Any decision to restrict contact will be made by the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, as appropriate, and the reasons and arrangements will be communicated in writing.

## **6. Stages of the Procedure**

6.1 The school may adapt, combine or move directly to a later stage where this is reasonable and proportionate. This may apply where the matter has already been fully considered, substantially repeats a previous complaint, has been determined through another appropriate process, or repeating a stage would serve no reasonable purpose. The complainant will be told in writing which stage will apply and why. This discretion will not be used to remove an available final appeal without good reason.

### **Stage 1 – Informal Discussion**

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

6.3 If the concern is not resolved, the complainant should write to the Headteacher by email or letter, setting out the complaint and the outcome sought. The Headteacher or an appropriate nominee will acknowledge or make contact within 10 working days and will normally provide a written response within a further 10 working days. If more time is required, the complainant will be told why and given a revised date.

6.4 If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may request Stage 2 consideration, explaining which aspects of the Stage 1 response remain unresolved and why.

6.5 Complaints about the Headteacher will be addressed to the Chair of Governors and will normally begin at Stage 2. Complaints about the Chair, an individual governor or the Governing Body as a whole will be addressed to the Clerk to Governors, who will arrange consideration by an appropriately impartial governor or other suitable person.

### **Stage 2 – Formal Consideration by the Chair or Nominated Governor or Executive Headteacher**

6.6 A Stage 2 request should be submitted in writing to the Chair of Governors, or to the Clerk where the Chair is involved, within 10 working days of the Stage 1 response. The request should identify the unresolved issues and the outcome sought.

6.7 The Chair, Vice Chair, nominated governor or other appropriately impartial person will acknowledge or make contact within 10 working days and will normally provide a written outcome within a further 10 working days. If more time is required, the complainant will be told why and given a revised date.

6.8 If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may request that the matter proceed to Stage 3. The request must explain why the Stage 2 response is considered inadequate and what outcome is sought.

### **Stage 3 – Appeal Stage**

6.9 The complainant must request an appeal in writing to the Clerk to Governors within 10 working days of receiving the Stage 2 outcome.

6.10 A complaints panel will be convened consisting of three impartial governors with no prior involvement in the complaint. Where necessary to secure impartiality, the Governing Body may appoint suitably independent governors from another school.

6.11 The panel meeting will normally be held within 20 working days of receipt of the appeal. If this is not possible, the complainant will be informed and given a revised date.

6.12 The panel will review whether the complaint was handled fairly and whether the conclusions reached were reasonable in light of the available evidence. It will consider written evidence and verbal statements in accordance with Appendix A.

6.13 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.

6.14 Once the appropriate stages have been completed, the complaint is closed. The school will not reopen or reinvestigate the same matter solely because the complainant disagrees with the outcome.

6.15 Further correspondence that raises no significant new information and substantially repeats matters already considered may be acknowledged without a further substantive response. The school may refer to its previous response and confirm that correspondence on the matter is closed.

6.16 A genuinely new complaint, or significant new evidence that could reasonably affect the previous outcome, will be considered on its merits.

## **7. External Review**

### **7.1 Secretary of State for Education**

After completing the school's procedure, a complainant may contact the Department for Education if they believe the school has acted unlawfully or unreasonably in exercising its functions, or has failed to follow its complaints procedure. The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of the complaint.

### **7.2 Ofsted**

Ofsted may consider qualifying complaints about issues affecting the school as a whole. It does not normally resolve individual disputes between a complainant and the school.

### **7.3 Other Routes**

Complainants are normally expected to have completed the appropriate stages of this procedure before approaching an external body. Any external route will depend on the nature of the concern.

## **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 will not normally attend the panel meeting. Exceptionally, the panel Chair may permit a witness where their evidence is directly relevant and cannot reasonably be provided in writing. Any request must include the witness's name, relevance and written statement at least five working days before the meeting. The Chair's decision will be final. 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 it to the Headteacher, Chair of Governors or Clerk to 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*.