



Sprowston Infant School

Complaints Policy

Background

Section 29 of the Education Act (2002) requires all local authority maintained schools to produce and make available a procedure to deal with complaints related to the school, or any community facilities or services provided by the school.

The 2002 Act does not apply to academies; these are bound by 'The Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014'. This includes free schools, studio schools and university technical colleges.

A further set of regulations defines the requirements for non-maintained special schools: 'The Education (Non-Maintained Special Schools) (England) Regulations 2011'. Regulation 35 covers complaints.

In January 2016, the Department for Education (DfE) published a non-statutory guidance document entitled '[Best practice advice for school complaints procedures 2016](#)'. This document, along with the NAHT model policy, is the basis for our policy and procedures.

Does a school's complaints procedure cover all provision?

The DfE's advice identifies areas lying outside the scope of school procedures.

Exceptions	Whom to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admissions to school • Statutory assessments of special educational needs • School re-organisation proposals • Matters likely to require a child protection investigation 	Local authority
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion from school 	Parents and carers may use procedures to challenge permanent exclusions and fixed-term exclusions of more than five days in a given term. Concerns about the process followed can be raised via the complaints procedure.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whistleblowing 	<p>Schools should have an internal procedure for employees and volunteers. Ofsted may be contacted by email (whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk), telephone (0300 123 3155) or in writing (WBHL, Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures 	<p>Schools must have staff grievances, discipline and conduct procedures in place. Complainants are not informed of the outcomes of actions under this procedure.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints about services provided by external bodies using a school's premises or facilities 	<p>Providers should be contacted directly and have their procedures for such eventualities.</p>

Complaints procedure

General principles:

- This procedure is intended to allow you to raise a concern or complaint relating to the school or the services that it provides
- An anonymous concern or complaint will not be investigated under this procedure unless there are exceptional circumstances
- To enable a proper investigation, concerns or complaints should be brought to the attention of the school as soon as possible. In general, any matter raised more than three months after the event, being complained of, will not be considered.

Raising a concern or complaint

Informal stage

It is normally appropriate to communicate directly with the member of staff concerned. This may be by letter, telephone or in person by appointment, requested via the school office. Many concerns can be resolved by simple clarification or the provision of information, and it is anticipated that most complaints will be resolved at the informal stage.

In the case of serious concerns, it may be appropriate to address them directly to the head teacher (or to the chair of the governing body if the complaint is about the head teacher).

If you are uncertain about who to contact, seek advice from the school office or the clerk to the governing body.

Formal stage

If your concern or complaint is not resolved at the informal stage, you may choose to put the complaint in writing and pass it to the head teacher, who will be responsible for ensuring it is investigated appropriately. If the complaint is about the head teacher, your complaint should be passed to the clerk to the governing body, for the attention of the chair of the governing body.

A complaint form is provided to assist you.

You should include details that might assist the investigation, such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events, and copies of relevant documents.

It is very important that you include a clear statement of the actions you would like the school to take to resolve your concern. Without this, it is much more difficult to proceed.

Pass the completed form, in a sealed envelope, to the school office. The envelope should be addressed to the head teacher or clerk to the governing body, as appropriate.

The head teacher (or chair) may invite you to a meeting to clarify your concerns and explore the possibility of an informal resolution. If you accept that invitation, you may be accompanied by a friend, if you wish, to assist you in explaining the nature of your concerns.

It is possible that your complaint will be resolved through a meeting with the head teacher (or chair). If not, arrangements will be made for the matter to be fully investigated, using the appropriate procedure. In any case, you should learn in writing, usually within five days of the school receiving your formal complaint, of how the school intends to proceed. This notification should include an indication of the anticipated timescale.

Any investigation will begin as soon as possible, and when it has been concluded, you will be informed, in writing, of its conclusion.

If you are not satisfied with the manner in which the process has been followed, you may request that the governing body reviews the process followed by the school, in handling the complaint. Any such request must be made in writing to the clerk to the governing body, within 10 school days of receiving notice of the outcome, and include a statement specifying any perceived failures to follow the procedure. The procedure described below will be followed. A review request form is provided for your convenience.

Review process

Any review of the process followed by the school will be conducted by a panel of three members of the governing body. This will usually take place within 10 school days of receipt of your request.

The review will normally be conducted through a consideration of written submissions, but reasonable requests to make oral representations should be considered sympathetically.

Appendix 1: Forms

Sprowston Infant School: Meeting request form

Please complete this form, and return it to the school office.

I wish to meet _____ to discuss the following matter:

Brief details of topic to be discussed:

Dates/times when it would be most convenient for a meeting:

Your name:

Relationship with school (eg parent of a pupil on the school roll):

Pupil's name (if relevant to the matter to be discussed):

Your address:

Telephone numbers: Daytime:

Evening:

Email address:

Signed

Date

School use

Date form received:

Date response sent:

Received by:

Response sent by:

Sprowston Infant School: Formal complaint form

Please complete this form and return it to the school office or to the head teacher who will acknowledge its receipt and inform you of the next stage of the procedure.

Your name:

Relationship with school (eg parent of a pupil on the school roll):

Pupil's name (if relevant to your complaint):

Your address:

Telephone numbers: Daytime:

Evening:

Email address:

Please give concise details of your complaint (including dates, names of witnesses, etc) to allow the matter to be fully investigated:

You may continue on separate paper, or attach additional documents if you wish.

Number of additional pages attached =

What action, if any, have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint? (ie who have you spoken with or written to, and what was the outcome?)

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Signature:

Date:

School use

Date form received:

Date acknowledgement sent:

Received by:

Acknowledgement sent by:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Sprowston Infant School: Complaint review request form

Please complete this form and return it to the head teacher (or clerk to the governing body) who will acknowledge its receipt and inform you of the next stage of the procedure.

Your name:

Your address:

Telephone numbers: Daytime:

Evening:

Email address:

Dear Sir/Madam

I submitted a formal complaint to the school on and I am dissatisfied by the procedure that has been followed.

My complaint was submitted to and I received a response from on

I have attached copies of my formal complaint and the response(s) from the school. I am dissatisfied with the way in which the procedure was carried out, because

You may continue on separate paper, or attach additional documents if you wish.

Number of Additional pages attached =

Signature:

Date:

School use

Date form received:

Received by:

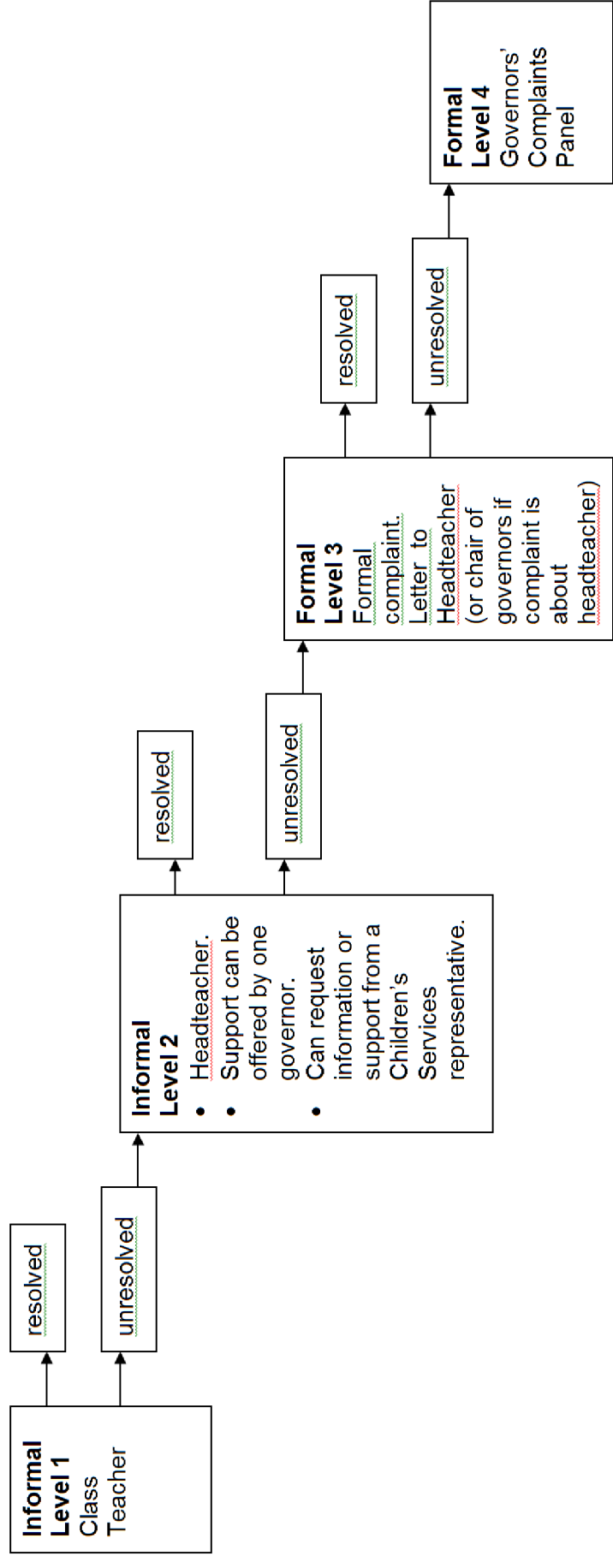
Date acknowledgement sent:

Acknowledgement sent by:

Request referred to:			
Date:			

**Appendix 2: Flowchart of procedure for
handling concerns and complaints**

Flowchart of procedure for handling concerns and complaints:



Appendix 3: Policy for unreasonable complaints

Policy for unreasonable complaints

Sprowston Infant School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

Sprowston Infant School defines unreasonable complainants as 'those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints'.

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance;
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved;
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure;
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice;
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales;
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced;
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds;
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed);
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education;
- seeks an unrealistic outcome;
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically:

- maliciously;
- aggressively;
- using threats, intimidation or violence;
- using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language;
- knowing it to be false;
- using falsified information;
- publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers.

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with a school while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text) as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

If the behaviour continues the headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after 6 months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. This may include banning an individual from Sprowston Infant School.

Barring from the School Premises

Although fulfilling a public function, schools are private places. The public has no automatic right of entry. Schools will therefore act to ensure they remain a safe place for pupils, staff and other members of their community.

If a parent's behaviour is a cause for concern, a school can ask him/her to leave school premises. In serious cases, the headteacher or the local authority can notify them in writing that their implied licence to be on school premises has been temporarily revoked subject to any representations that the parent may wish to make. Schools should always give the parent the opportunity to formally express their views on the decision to bar in writing.

The decision to bar should then be reviewed, taking into account any

representations made by the parent, and either confirmed or lifted. If the decision is confirmed the parent should be notified in writing, explaining how long the bar will be in place.

Anyone wishing to complain about being barred can do so, by letter or email, to the headteacher or Chair of Governors. However, complaints about barring cannot be escalated to the Department for Education. Once the school's own complaints procedure has been completed, the only remaining avenue of appeal is through the Courts; independent legal advice must therefore be sought.

The school refers to ['Best practice advice for school complaints procedures'](#) (DfE 2016) for further guidance in this area.