



Complaints Procedure

Introduction

All academies (schools) must have a complaints procedure; this must meet the standards set out in the [Education \(Independent School Standards \(England\) Regulations 2014](#) Schedule 1, Part 7.

Springfield School is committed to providing an excellent service to its stakeholders and would want any concerns to be addressed promptly and effectively. There is a difference between a concern and a formal complaint; in the vast majority of circumstances it is in everyone's best interest that the concern is addressed informally. Complainants should follow the stages outlined below.

Stages of the Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 (informal): concern heard by an appropriate staff member

If you have a concern, please contact the school reception and ask to discuss your concern with an appropriate member of staff; this might be the Tutor, Head of Achievement or Head of Department, for example. If you are unsure who the appropriate member of staff is, please outline your concern with the school's Receptionist who will forward your concern to the correct person.

Stage 2 (formal): complaint heard by the Headteacher

If you do not believe that your concern has been resolved, then the next step would be to make a complaint in writing to the Headteacher. It is advised that in your letter/email you clarify:

- the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
- what has happened so far and who has been involved;
- and what you believe would put things right.

Stage 3 (formal): complaint heard by the Chair of Governors

If you are not satisfied by the response of the Headteacher (of if the complaint is about the Headteacher), then please write to the Chair of Governors to request that the complaint is considered further.

Stage 4 (formal): complaint heard by the Governing Body's Complaints Appeal Panel

This is the last school based stage of the complaints process. If the complainant remains dissatisfied by the Chair's response, then s/he can write to the Clerk to the Governors giving details of the complaint and request that it is heard by an appeal panel. The appeal panel will comprise two local governors and an independent member. It is a matter for the school to invite suitable individuals who can fulfil the role of being the independent member; The De Curci Trust considers suitable individuals for the independent role to be trustees, senior leaders or local governors from alternative schools in the Trust.

The decision of the appeal panel is final. If the complainant contacts the school again regarding the same issue, then the Chair of Governors is able to inform them that the procedure has been exhausted and the matter is now closed. Further correspondence regarding the same issue may be recognised as vexatious *and/or* serial and there will be no further obligation on the part of the school to respond.

Resolving Complaints

Further to a fair and thorough investigation (at any stage of the procedure), it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following in order to achieve resolution:

- an acknowledgement that the complaint is valid in whole or in part;
- an apology;
- an explanation;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently;
- an explanation of the steps that have/may be taken to ensure that the issue will not happen again;
- an undertaking to review school procedures.

The procedure will endeavour to identify areas of agreement between the parties. However, there may be circumstances where the evidence does not uphold the complaint.

Time Limits

The school will endeavour to consider and resolve complaints as quickly and as efficiently as possible. The school should:

- acknowledge receipt of complaints within five working days;
- and respond fully within 10 working days for a stage 2 complaint, 15 working days for a stage 3 complaint and 20 working days for stage 4 complaint.
(Note that working days are considered to be school term time only.)

In most circumstances the time limits cited above are realistic. However, where further and/or complex investigations are necessary, new time limits can be set.

Complaints to The De Curci Trust

If a complainant does not believe that the school has handled a complaint in accordance with the guidance above, s/he should write to the Chair of Trustees at The De Curci Trust specifying evidence for this.

The Trust will only consider complaints about schools that fall into any of the following areas:

- where there is undue delay and/or the school did not comply with its own complaints procedure when considering a complaint
- where the school did not follow a complaints procedure consisting of three stages, including a final panel hearing
- where the school is in breach of its funding agreement with the Secretary of State/Trust

The Trust will not overturn a school's decision about a complaint. However, if the Trust finds that a school did not deal with a complaint properly, it will request the complaint is looked at again by the school and that procedures meet the requirements set out in the Trust's policy and in Regulations.

If a complainant remains unsatisfied with the handling of a complaint, subsequent to it being considered by the Trust, then s/he can contact the Education Funding Agency (ESFA):

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/557407/Complain_about_an_academy.pdf

Note that complaints regarding Portsmouth City Council services including school admissions and children's social care should be directed to the Council's Corporate Complaints Service. For advice, go to www.portsmouth.gov.uk or contact cityhelpdesk@portsmouthcc.gov.uk .

This procedure should be read in conjunction with:

- complaints not in the scope of the school's procedures (appendix 1);
- and the remit of the complaints appeal panel (appendix 2).

Review Date: January 2021

Appendix 1

Complaints not in scope of the school's (or Trust's) procedures

A complaints procedure should cover all complaints about any provision of facilities or services that a school provides with the **exceptions** listed below, for which there are separate (statutory) procedures.

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admissions to schools • Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN) • School re-organisation proposals • Matters likely to require a Child Protection/safeguarding Investigation 	<p>Concerns should be raised direct with local authorities (LA).</p> <p>For school admissions, it will depend on who is the admission authority (either the school or the LA). Complaints about admission appeals for maintained schools are dealt with by the Local Government Ombudsman.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion of children from school 	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at:</p> <p>www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whistleblowing 	<p>Schools/Trusts have an internal whistleblowing procedure for their employees and voluntary staff. Other concerns can be raised direct with Ofsted by telephone on: 0300 123 3155, via email at: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk or by writing to:</p> <p>WBHL, Ofsted Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester M1 2WD.</p> <p>The Department for Education is also a prescribed body for whistleblowing in education.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures 	<p>These matters will invoke the school's/Trust's internal grievance procedures. Complainants will not be informed of the outcome of any investigation.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities. 	<p>Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. They should be contacted direct.</p>