



SPAGHETTI BRIDGE

Complaints Policy

Policy Owner	Group Governance & Compliance Lead
Applies to	This policy applies to all services
Associated Documents	This complaints policy is linked to: Child protection and safeguarding policy Whistleblowing policy Admissions policy Equality policy Exclusion policy Grievance policy Disciplinary policy
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Approved by the Chair of the Board	<i>Stephen Bradshaw</i> Stephen Bradshaw (Nov 3, 2025, 3:04pm)

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1. Introduction

Aim

We recognise that everyone occasionally makes mistakes. What is important, however, is that when mistakes are made there is a clear, logical and fair approach to putting things right again. Our stance on complaints is vital to our ethos of openness, transparency and the importance of the voice of the student, parent / carers, stakeholders and staff.

We will listen and seek to understand your frustrations, hear what you are saying and work closely with you to resolve any issues. We will also apologise for it reaching this stage.

Any complainant is treated with respect and from that understanding we know, from the outset, what your *preferred outcome* is. Whilst we will not always be able to ensure this, it will always be considered and we will always endeavour to *explain* why we have made the decisions we have.

Before any written decision is made there will always be an opportunity to be heard. It is vital that any investigator understands how you *feel*, your perspective of the events that led to the complaint, and why you have felt unheard.

With any subsequent written decision there will always be an opportunity for a face to face or virtual (google meets, telephone) meeting to discuss the decision.

If we make mistakes we will acknowledge these at the *earliest* opportunity, apologise and have an action plan in place to rectify the situation.

Many concerns and complaints come from poor communication and often, text (such as an email) can be misunderstood. Each school is tasked with creating and then conforming to your preferred method of communication (these are often referred to as communication strategies).

Communications from our schools should be:

- Informative
- Frequent
- Timely
- Sensitive

If you have questions there should be a named point of contact within the school and your school's Headteacher and Regional Operational Lead (ROL) will frequently offer consultations on 'how things are going' - this may be through questionnaires, check-ins with the school, and / or direct contact.

This is to ensure that at all points *your* voice is heard, and considered.

The aim of this Complaints Policy is to ensure that every parent / carer, student, and stakeholder involved understands this policy and has access to a procedure that supports and enables them to raise concerns or complaints about any aspect of the school.

This policy introduces the stages of concern to complaints and when and where an independent overview is required.

All concerns and complaints will be triaged by the Operations Director and Group Governance and Compliance Lead and overseen by the Regional Operational Lead and Executive Chair.

Our policy is to:

- provide a fair procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint
- publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint
- make sure everyone at each school knows what to do if a concern / complaint is received
- make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely manner
- make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired
- respect confidentiality whilst upholding our safeguarding duty
- gather information which helps us to improve what we do
- comply with part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

Legal Framework

This policy has been developed after consulting:

- The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2015 Standard 7(a – I)
- DfE School Complaints Procedure Guidance;
- 'Running a Complaints System' (The Local Government Ombudsman)

2. Scope

This Policy is for Parents / Carers, Students, Staff and Stakeholders.

This policy covers 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
Admissions to schools	Concerns / complaints in relation to admissions should be raised directly with the local authorities (LA) This does not impact complaints while in placement
Statutory assessments of special educational needs	Concerns in relation to statutory assessments should be raised direct with local authorities (LA)
Matters likely to require a child protection investigation	In relation to child protection our school's safeguarding procedure will be followed
Whistleblowing	See our school's whistleblowing policy. The DfE is also a prescribed body for whistleblowing in education
Staff grievances, staff conduct and disciplinary procedures	These matters will invoke our school's grievance procedures.
Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. They should be contacted directly.

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations. If this happens, we will inform you of a proposed new timescale - although this will always be dependent on these external factors.

If a complainant commences legal action against any Spaghetti Bridge in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

3. Policy Statement

Spaghetti Bridge is committed to working in close partnership with all members of our community. We place great value on the role which parents and carers can play in supporting children's learning. Members of staff and the governance team actively encourage a positive

relationship between the group and the families of children who attend our schools. We also wish to have good relations with our neighbours and the wider community.

Where any concerns are raised, we aim to resolve these as quickly and as efficiently as possible.

Usually concerns that are raised can be resolved very quickly through each school's day to day communication between parents and staff. However, for those situations where this is not the case, we have a formal process to investigate and deal with complaints. Our procedure is detailed within this document.

We will try to resolve every concern, difficulty or complaint in an understanding way with the aim of putting right a matter which may have gone wrong and, where necessary, reviewing systems and procedures in the light of the matters raised.

This procedure will apply to most general complaints received. It is not intended to cover those matters for which there is a specific statutory process to object, complain or appeal. Therefore, this policy does not apply to:

- Admissions
- SEND statutory assessments.
- Matters that likely involve child protection
- Whistleblowing
- Grievances
- Matters that concern an external body

Should anyone wish to complain about a service from other providers who use a Spaghetti Bridge site, then complaints should be directed to the specific provider.

For further information on complaints on these matters, please see the section above.

Who can make a complaint?

This policy may be used by anyone (except staff whose concern or complaint is about their contract of employment or employee relationships) that has a concern or complaint about any aspect of the school. This includes but is not limited to:

- stakeholders,
- students or

- parents or carers of the school's students,
(but may include neighbours of the school, or any other members of the local community)

The difference between a concern and a complaint

A concern may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'.

A complaint may be defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. We will listen and seek to understand your frustrations, hear what you are saying and work closely with you to resolve any issues. We will also apologise for it reaching this stage.

Any complainant is treated with respect and from that understanding we know, from the outset, what your *preferred outcome* is. Whilst we will not always be able to ensure this, it will always be considered and we will always endeavour to *explain* why we have made the decisions we have.

Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. Spaghetti Bridge takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect and understand your views.

In these cases, the headteacher will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, then the headteacher will refer you to another staff member.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, the school will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing, by email or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Complaints against school staff (except the headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to the headteacher. Please mark it as 'private and confidential'.

Complaints that involve or are about the headteacher should be addressed to the Regional Operational Lead. Please mark it as 'private and confidential'.

Complaints about the Regional Operational Lead, Chair of board, the governance team or the group should be addressed to the Operations Director on: complaints@spbridge.co.uk

Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the headteacher or Operations Director, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

Complaint campaigns

If we receive a large volume of complaints on the same subject, the matter will be investigated in line with the complaints procedure. At the conclusion of the process, complainants will be informed of the outcome via a single response. The school will consider the most appropriate method for communicating the response.

Time scales

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will only consider complaints made outside of this timeframe if exceptional circumstances apply.

Complaints received outside of term time

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

Withdrawal of a complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, our schools *want* to resolve the concern / complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we *will* offer one or more of the following:

- a named contact
- an apology at the earliest opportunity if appropriate
- an explanation - although this will also be an *expectation* throughout any investigation

- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not reoccur
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint

Through the concern / complaint resolution there is an expectation that any steps are explained or further explanation of what steps will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made.

Upholding or not upholding complaints

At each stage of the complaints procedure, the conclusion will be either:

That the complaint is upheld (in part or in full) and, where appropriate, some form of action is taken.

Or

That the complaint is not upheld and reasons for this are *clearly* given.

However: with this;

Any complainant is treated with respect and from that understanding we know, from the outset, what your *preferred outcome* is. Whilst we will not always be able to ensure this, it will always be considered and we will always endeavour to *explain* why we have made the decisions we have.

Before any written decision is made there will always be an opportunity to be heard. It is vital that any investigator understands how you *feel*, your perspective of the events that led to the complaint, and why you have felt unheard.

With any subsequent written decision there will always be an opportunity for a face to face or virtual (google meets, telephone) meeting to discuss the decision.

Publicity and communication

It is a legal requirement to publicise our complaints procedures.

This policy will be included within the school's information in many ways:

- information will be given to new parents / carers when their child joins the school
- information will be given to students at the school visit prior to admission
- home school communication and / or newsletters will remind parents / carers about the policy
- information will be published on the school's website.

All staff at our school will be made aware of the complaints procedure and the various stages involved. At all stages of the complaints procedure, everybody involved will be clear about what is happening and what their responsibilities are.

Digital records will be kept as evidence of procedures followed. In addition, the complainant will be told how to proceed to the next stage of the procedure if their complaint is not upheld.

Stage 1 - Concerns

The Concern Lead is the Headteacher

Quality Assurance will be fulfilled by the Regional Operational Lead

If at any point a concern / complaint involves the Headteacher the concern / complaint lead will become the ROL and the Operations Director will assume the role of Quality Assurance

At the outset of any concern being raised, the difference between a concern and a complaint will be identified centrally. We believe that taking concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the numbers that develop into complaints.

We understand that concerns are often caused by simple mistakes or misunderstandings, or thoughts and feelings that have not been aired or acknowledged and we anticipate that these and other issues can be quickly and informally resolved through improved communication and immediate response, as detailed above. At other times, or if a concern is not resolved to the complainant's satisfaction, it may be necessary to use the formal complaints procedure. It is important that this choice is always available.

We ask that staff where possible are able to resolve issues on the spot, including apologising where appropriate. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- an assurance that the event of concern will not recur;
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again.

Individuals can raise concerns with a member of the school administrative staff, class teacher, senior leader or Headteacher depending on their wishes and the type of issues they want to discuss.

We recognise that it is essential to be open to criticism or complaint from any source and that only by being open to criticism or complaints can we hope to improve our service and the attainment of the students we teach. Therefore, we welcome concerns and complaints.

Stage 2 - Formal Complaint (schools led)

The Complaint Lead is the Headteacher

Quality Assurance will be fulfilled by the Regional Operational Lead

If at any point a concern / complaint involves the Headteacher the concern / complaint lead will become the ROL and the Operations Director will assume the role of Quality Assurance

Formal complaints must be made to the head teacher (unless they are about the headteacher, in this instance, the complaint will be dealt with by the Regional Operational Lead, contactable on complaints@spbridge.co.uk).

This may be done by letter or email.

The headteacher will use a complaints system and this will record the date the complaint is received. They will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within two school days.

Within this response, the head teacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what preferred outcome the complainant would like to see. The head teacher can consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this (making note of your preferred communication style).

Please note that the head teacher may delegate any investigation to another senior member, but **not** the decision to be taken.

During the investigation, the headteacher (or investigator) will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and / or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- keep a digital record of any meetings / interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the headteacher will provide a formal written response within **ten school days** of the date of receipt of the complaint. It is important to us that the headteacher treats:

Any complainant with respect and from that understanding we know, from the outset, what your *preferred outcome* is.

Whilst we will not always be able to ensure this, it will always be considered and we will always endeavour to *explain* why we have made the decisions we have.

Before any written decision is made there will always be an opportunity to be heard. It is vital that any investigator understands how you *feel*, your perspective of the events that led to the complaint, and why you have felt unheard.

With any subsequent written decision there will always be an opportunity for a face to face or virtual (google meets, telephone) meeting to discuss the decision.

If the headteacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail (and explain) any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions the school will take to resolve the complaint.

The headteacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2.

Stage 3 - Formal Complaint (Governance Led) **Complaint Lead - as directed by the Operations Director**

The complaint lead will be drawn from the Regional Operational Lead, Senior Group Support Team or an Independent Voice

Quality Assurance will be fulfilled by the Operations Director

If the complainant is still dissatisfied with the stage 2 response, then the complaint can make a formal complaint to the Operations Director of Spaghetti Bridge Ltd, contactable on:
complaints@spbridge.co.uk

The complaint should be made in writing, within 10 school days of the date of the headteacher's response. Please provide a copy of the written complaint, a copy of the headteacher's letter concluding Stage 2 and give details in writing of why you are not satisfied with the outcome. At this stage, the Operations Director will generally direct a Regional Operational Lead, Senior Group Support Team or an Independent Voice to handle the complaint.

You will receive an acknowledgment of receipt of your complaint within five school days and an indicative timescale for response.

We will investigate the complaint and make every effort to resolve the issue. We may meet with you if we need clarification or if further information is necessary.

On conclusion of the investigation you will receive a written response of the outcome reached and information on how to request a complaints panel hearing if still dissatisfied.

Stage 4 - Review Panel Hearing

Chair and Complaint Lead - Exec Chair

Potential Panel Members include:

- Executive Leadership Team
- Senior Group Support Team
- Independent Voice

Should the matter then remain unresolved to the Complainant's satisfaction, they have the right to appeal the outcome, within 10 WORKING DAYS of the full response being sent. This must be in writing.

Where the Complainant has appealed in writing against the response provided, an Appeal Hearing will be arranged by the chair of board, Stephen Bradshaw. The appeal will be heard by a panel of at least 3 people, who have not previously been involved in the complaint, and will include at least one member who is independent to the management and governance of the school.

The complainant may attend the panel meeting and may also be accompanied by a friend.

The Appeal Hearing will be arranged by the Governance team within 15 working days (during term time), with at least three working days' notice given to the complainant to allow for their attendance.

Panel members will be asked to consider the substance of the original complaint and the response provided to this complaint to date. They will then be free to make their own findings and recommendations.

The outcome of any Appeal hearing will be formally recorded, and copies of the findings and recommendations distributed within 10 working days to the Complainant, the Headteacher, and other relevant parties.

Next steps

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of Spaghetti Bridge complaints procedure and the complaint is regarding a school not meeting the regulatory standards, the complainant can refer their complaint to the DfE if complaint falls within the following areas:

- Education,
- student welfare and health and safety,
- School premises,
- Staff suitability,

- Making information available to parents, or
- the spiritual, moral, social or cultural development of pupils.

The DfE will consider reports of a major failure to meet the standards. Where appropriate, it can arrange an emergency inspection to look at student welfare and health and safety, and make sure that the school deals with serious failings.

For more information or to refer a complaint, see the following webpage:

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-to-dfe>

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is vital. All conversations and correspondence will be treated with discretion.

Complainants have the right to know what use will be made of personal information and accordingly, personal information will only be shared between staff on a 'need to know' basis.

All complaint correspondence will be kept confidential on a central system with access limited to relevant senior staff.

(The exception to this is the requirement of the school to provide parents and other interested parties with information about the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding year, and to inspectors conducting inspections under section 108 or 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, or to the Secretary of State, should they ask for such records.

Equal access, accompaniment and representation

Steps will be taken to ensure that any individual has the opportunity to raise their concerns or submit a complaint. This includes the right to be accompanied or represented by a friend or relative at discussions and hearings and /or to submit complaints which have been written by another individual on their behalf. Should any meeting need to be held where any parties would have difficulties in terms of access, the headteacher will assist with providing an appropriate venue.

It is an expectation that equal respect will be granted to each person involved within the process and that differences between people will be respected and understood.

4. Roles & Responsibilities

The complainant

The complainant will get a more effective and timely response to their complaint if they:

- Follow these procedures
- Cooperate with Spaghetti Bridge throughout the process and respond to deadlines and communication promptly.

- Treat all those involved with respect.
- Do not publish details about the complaint on social media.

The Headteacher

Will acknowledge the complaint.

- Where a complaint is raised by a third party, they will ensure they have the consent of the child or young person involved where applicable.
- Ensure that the complaint is within scope.
- Investigate and aim to resolve any concern or formal complaint as soon as possible.
- Where an immediate resolution cannot be found the service lead will conduct a thorough investigation or will appoint an investigating officer to undertake this work.
- Record the complaint using the complaints system
- Ensure the complaints system is maintained and update the complaints notes / actions as necessary.
- Correspond with the complainant to review timescales where necessary and conclude the complaint once investigated.
- Ensure that the service quality is not compromised, withdrawn or reduced as a result of a complaint.

The Investigating Officer

When an individual is appointed to look into the complaint and establish the facts. They will:

- Interview all relevant parties, keeping notes and centrally upload these.
- Consider records and any written evidence and keep these securely.
- Prepare a comprehensive report to the Director of Operations which includes the facts, recommendations, and potential solutions.
- Ensure that the investigation report has been quality assured to confirm that the process has been robust and so reduce the need for further escalation.

The Review Panel Administrator

The administrator will:

- Be the contact point for the complainant and the review panel, including circulating the relevant
- papers and evidence before complaints committee meetings.
- Arrange the complaints hearing.
- Record and circulate the minutes and outcome of the hearing

The Review Panel Chair

The panel chair will:

- Chair the meeting, ensuring that everyone is treated with respect throughout.
- Make sure all parties see the relevant information, understand the purpose of the committee, and are allowed to present their case.
- Inform the complainant of the decision in writing.

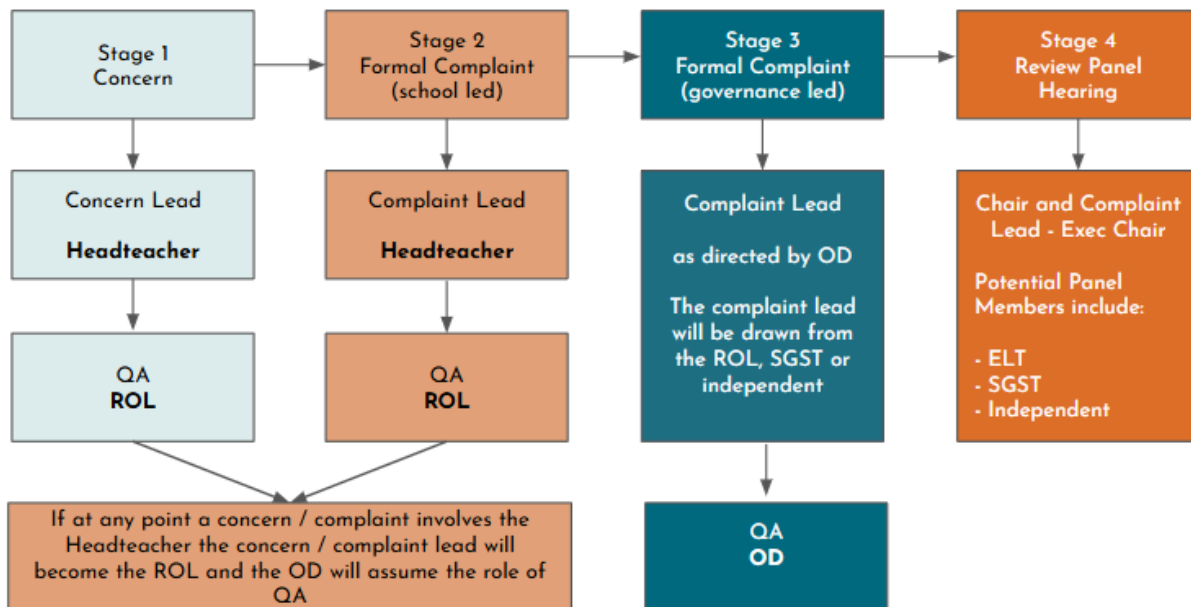
Complaints are monitored on a monthly basis whereby themes and lessons learnt are discussed and actioned.

Implementation, Support, Advice and Communication

Guidance and support on handling complaints at service level is provided by the Director of Operations and the Head of HR. At group level, the Head of Human Resources and Regional HR Business Partner can advise and support.

Training will be provided for any staff undertaking an investigation.

Appendix 1 - Complaints flow



TIMEFRAMES FOR ESCALATION

S2 - WITH THE OUTCOME SHARED, THERE ARE 10 TERM TIME DAYS TO RAISE S3



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