

Complaints Policy

Acorns Cottage

Policy Author / Reviewer	Samantha Price/John Curtis
Approval Date	January 2022
Reviewed	January 2025
Next Review Date	January 2026
Version No	6
Policy Level	Local
Staff Groups Affected	All Staff

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1. Monitoring & Review

The Policy Author will undertake a formal review of this policy for the purpose of monitoring and of the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged, by no later one year from the date of approval shown above, or earlier if significant changes to the systems and arrangements take place, or if legislation, regulatory requirements or best practice guidelines so require.

Signed:

Signed;

John Curtis

Samantha Price

John Curtis

Responsible Individual

Registered Manager

January 2025

January 2025

2. Concerns and Complaint Helpful Information

We want you and your child to be completely satisfied with the quality of service you receive from all of us here at Spring Hill. If you are unhappy or worried about anything, then we are here to listen and help.

Rarely, despite our best efforts, things do go wrong and you may wish to make a formal complaint. You can access the company policy via our website:

<https://www.cambiagroup.com/specialist-education/our-schools/autism-schools/spring-hill-school/reports-policies/> or, if you prefer, you can request a printed copy for your information.

3. Who Can Make Complaints

Our complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children and young people that are registered at Cambian Spring Hill School; any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to the school about any provision of facilities or services that we provide.

Staff who wish to make a complaint are to follow the Grievance Policy (which encourages informal resolution ahead of the formal grievance process) or the Whistleblowing Policy.

4. 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. Please find attached a useful flowchart to help guide you with any

questions, concerns or complaints you may have. If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In such cases, Samantha Price, Responsible Individual, will refer you to an appropriate member of the Care team so that you can discuss your concerns. However, it may be that you prefer the matter to be managed directly by the Responsible Individual, Samantha Price.

Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure, however we take concerns and complaints seriously and will make every effort to resolve matters as quickly as possible. We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, Cambian Spring Hill School will attempt to resolve the issue, through the stages outlined in this information sheet.

5. How to Raise a Concern or make a Complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. Concerns may be made by a third party acting on behalf on a complainant, as long as the appropriate consents have been given.

Complaints against care staff (with the exception of the Responsible Individual) should be made in the first instance, to Samantha Price (the Responsible Individual) via Acorns Cottage office. To support the process, we have a standardised form available (see below) however you may prefer to send in a letter or email. Please mark written complaints as Private and Confidential and for the attention of a of a named staff member.

Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints should they need to be involved at a later stage.

Complaints that involve or are about the Responsible Individual should be addressed to Richard Winzor, Regional Lead via the main site office, located within the school building. Please mark envelopes as Private and Confidential.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included in the Admissions pack with additional copies held in the school office; please ask the receptionist if you require one or a compliments form.

We will consider making reasonable adjustments, if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

6. Anonymous Complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. We are required to report progress updates to the complainant, which we are unable to do under such circumstances. However, if appropriate, the Responsible Individual or Regional Lead, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants further investigation.

7. Timescales

You must raise the complaint within three months of the alleged incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these

incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

Complaints need to be considered and resolved, as quickly, and efficiently as possible. As each complaint will require bespoke management, we will have realistic time limits for each action within each stage; these will be shared with you throughout the process. Rigid timeframes, set at the beginning of the process may not be practical; each case will be managed uniquely and within realistic timeframes. However, where further investigations are necessary, revised time limits may need to be set. However, where further investigations are necessary, new time limits can be set. The complainant will be sent details of the new deadline and an explanation for the delay. Changes will be recorded on the Complaints Tracker.

8. Scope of Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Spring Hill School other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below:

Exceptions	Who to Contact
Concerns regarding admissions or initial assessments prior to admission	Wayne Parkes wayne.parkes@cambianguroup.com
Matters likely to require a safeguarding investigation	Complaints regarding specific safeguarding concerns are managed under our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and in accordance with statutory guidance. If you have serious concerns, you may wish to discuss these directly with our Operations Director Care (SEN) Graham Norris (Graham.Norris@cambianguroup.com) or talk to your child's social worker if appropriate
Exclusion from school	Further information about raising concerns regarding exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions Complaints about the application of the Behaviour Policy are made via our complaints procedure
Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all of our employees to include temporary staff and contractors.
Staff Grievances	Complaints from staff will be managed under Cambian's Grievance Policy

Staff Conduct	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under Cambian’s Disciplinary Policy and procedures, if appropriate</p> <p>Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified if the matter is being addressed.</p>
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9. Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints

Cambian Spring Hill 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 regarding Acorns Cottage. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will act to protect staff from such behaviour, including that which is verbally or physically abusive, offensive or threatening.

Cambian Spring Hill School defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant’s contact with the residential cottages, such as, if the complainant:

- 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 complaint’s investigation process
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaint’s procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaint’s procedure or in line with good practice
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be considered and commented on
- 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
- seeks an unrealistic outcome

- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- makes direct and frequent contact with staff outside of school hours and expects an immediate response
- uses threats to intimidate
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- knowingly provides falsified information
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint while the 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.

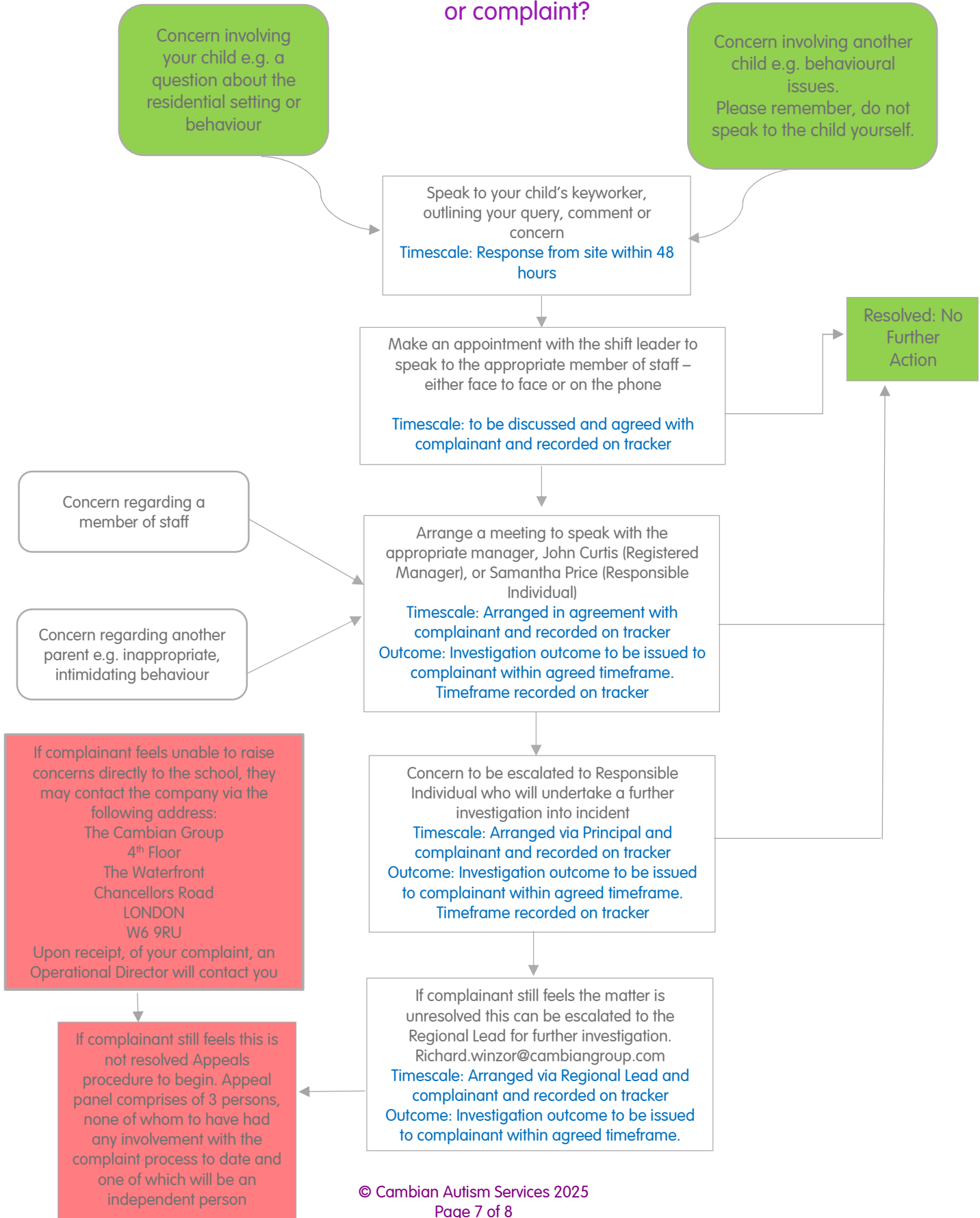
Whenever possible, the Responsible Individual or Regional Lead will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

If unreasonable behaviour and/or expectations continue, the Responsible Individual will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and respectfully ask them to reconsider their approach. For complainants who excessively contact Spring Hill School causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan; this will be reviewed after six months and the outcome shared to the complainant via letter.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from Spring Hill School and further information regarding our expectations with respect to parent/carer and visitor behaviour can be accessed via our Parent/Carer and Visitor Code of Conduct.

10. Appendix A – Complaints Flowchart

Who should I talk to if I have a question, concern or complaint?



11. Appendix B – Complaint Form

Please complete and return to a named staff member, marking your envelope PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL, who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Childs's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the child (if relevant):
Address:
Postcode:
Day time telephone number:
Evening telephone number:
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have already spoken to anybody at the school about it.
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.
Signature:
Date: