Simply Sensory
Training and Support
Creating The Building Blocks For Learning

"Live, Laugh, Learn"

SIMPLY SENSORY COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

September 2026 - 2027

Reviewed: September 2026
Next Review Date: September 2027

Who can make a complaint?

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that Simply Sensory supports. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to Simply Sensory about any provision of facilities or services that we provide

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. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. Simply Sensory 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 your views. In these cases, The Principal Officer will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, The Principal Officer will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important. If Simply Sensory Principal Officers Helen Dillon and Julie Cowpe-Stephens are unable to resolve the issue we will liaise with ICDS.

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing 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. We may ask you for evidence of this consent.

Concerns should be raised initially with the staff member involved and then referred to Helen Dillon and or Julie Cowpe-Stephens. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

If your complaint is in writing, please mark the correspondence as Private and Confidential.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact Simply Sensory. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help you.

In accordance with equality law, 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.

Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. Simply Sensory, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation. However, the outcome of any investigation will not be provided to an anonymous complainant.

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

Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Simply Sensory. Any third party providers offering community facilities or services through the Simply Sensory, or using their facilities, should have their own complaints procedure in place, and complaints about these services will not be considered through this policy.

Complaints that are outside of this procedure will be dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions to this procedure	**Who to contact**
• Admissions to Alternative Provision • Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school reorganisation proposals should be raised with Nottinghamshire County Council. ICDS Duty Desk Tel: 01158041275
• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). Tel: 0300 500 8090.
• Exclusion of children from Alternative Provision	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions. **Complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the complaints procedure.*

• Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters directly with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus. Volunteer staff that have concerns about Simply Sensory should complain through the complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain directly to the Local Authority or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.
• Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. 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 that the matter is being addressed in line with internal procedures.
• Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use facilities	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them directly.
• National Curriculum - content	Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus

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 a complainant commences legal action against Simply Sensory in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have been concluded.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint at any stage of the procedure, we will ask them to confirm this in writing. Once received, we will confirm in writing to the complainant that this matter is now closed and the complaints process will cease.

Resolving complaints – the procedure

The majority of concerns from parents, carers and any other interested parties who raise a concern or complaint are handled under the following procedures. At each stage in the procedure, Simply Sensory wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- 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 recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or 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
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology

Informal Stage

Many concerns will be dealt with informally when you make them known to us. The first point of contact should be the member of staff. If your concerns are in respect of a particular member of staff, you should contact the management of Simply Sensory. There is no need at this stage to make your concerns known in writing, but the staff member responsible for resolving the matter will keep a note of the nature of your concerns and any agreed actions.

Once your concern is made known to us, we will contact you by telephone or in writing as soon as possible and we may make arrangements to meet with you to discuss your concerns and desired outcomes in more detail to gain a better understanding. Any actions or monitoring of the situation that has been agreed will be communicated clearly and confirmed in writing to you.

If necessary, we will contact appropriate people who may be able to assist us with our enquiries into your concerns. We will normally update you on the progress of our enquiries within 10 working days. Once we have responded to your concern, you will have the opportunity of asking for the matter to be considered further. We would expect that the majority of concerns or complaints will be resolved at this early stage. If you are still dissatisfied following this informal approach, your concern will become a formal complaint and we will deal with it at the next stage (Stage 1).

Stage 1

This stage in our procedures deals with written complaints. It applies where you are not happy with the informal approach to dealing with your concern, as outlined above. You should submit your written complaint within 10 working days at the end of discussions to resolve your complaint at the informal stage.

Normally, your written complaint should be addressed to the management of Simply Sensory. If, however, your complaint concerns a member of management, it should be sent to ICDS marked "for the attention of your Key Worker.

We will acknowledge your complaint in writing as soon as possible after receiving it. This will usually be within three working days. The acknowledgement letter will detail who will be investigating your complaint.

We will enclose a copy of these procedures with the acknowledgement letter or email.

Normally, we would expect to respond in full to your complaint within 15 working days but if this is not possible we will write to explain the reason for the delay and let you know when we hope to be able to provide a full response.

As part of our consideration of your complaint, we may invite you to a meeting to discuss the complaint in order to fully understand the matters concerning you and how you feel the complaint can be resolved. If you wish, you can ask someone to accompany you to help you explain the reasons for your complaint.

The person investigating your complaint may also be accompanied by a suitable person if they wish. A note-taker may also be present.

Following the meeting, the person investigating your complaint will, where necessary, talk to witnesses and take statements from others involved. If the complaint centres on a pupil, we may talk to the pupil concerned and, where appropriate, others present at the time of the incident in question. Witnesses will be reminded that the statements they make, whilst confidential, may be used as evidence later in the procedure and could therefore be seen by other parties considering the complaint. It may be necessary to redact or remove the identity of the person giving the statement or any third party it may mention.

We will normally talk to pupils with a parent or carer present, unless this would delay the investigation of a serious or urgent complaint, or where a pupil has specifically said that they would prefer the parent or carer not to be involved. In such circumstances, we will ensure that another member of staff, with whom the pupil feels comfortable, is present.

The person investigating your complaint will keep written/typed, signed and dated records of all meetings and telephone conversations, and any other related documentation.

Once the person investigating your complaint has established all the relevant facts, they will send you a written response to your complaint. They will give an explanation of their decision and the reasons for it. If follow-up action is needed, they will indicate what Simply Sensory is proposing to do. You may be invited to a meeting to discuss the outcome as part of our commitment to building and maintaining good relations with you.

The person investigating your complaint may decide that we have done all we can to resolve the complaint, in which case we may use our discretion to close the complaint at this point. Please see the “Closure of Complaints” section below for further information about this process.

If you are unhappy with the outcome of your complaint, you may wish to proceed to stage two, as detailed below.

Stage 2 - Consideration by an Independent Complaints Panel

If your complaint has already been through Stage 1 and you are not satisfied with the outcome you can ask for your complaint to be considered at an Independent Complaints Panel. This is a formal process. Should your complaint be upheld fully by Simply Sensory at Stage 1 and any residual issues cannot be addressed by the complaints procedure, a request to move to Stage 2 may be refused. You will be advised of this in writing and the decision will be final.

The purpose of Stage 2 is to give you the chance to present your case in front of a panel of 3 independent persons who have no prior knowledge of the details of the complaint or any connection to you or your family (either formally or informally) and who can, therefore, consider it without prejudice.

The Independent Complaints Panel hearing operates according to the following formal procedures:

Within 10 working days of receiving the outcome of your complaint at Stage 1, you must write to Simply Sensory clearly stating the reasons for your appeal against that outcome. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

You should state specifically why you are not satisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and what resolution you are seeking. If the reasons for your appeal against the outcome at Stage 1 are not clear, Simply Sensory may come back to you for further clarity. If clarification is not received from you, Simply Sensory may consider that there may be a case to close the complaint without a Stage 2 Independent Complaints Panel, as detailed in the procedure below (Closure of Complaint Section).

A Clerk will be appointed who will acknowledge your request to move to Stage 2 and will convene a panel of three independent persons. The Clerk will aim to arrange for the panel meeting to take place within 20 working days of acknowledging your request for a panel meeting (subject to the availability of all parties)**.**

The Clerk will ask you whether you wish to provide any further written documentation in support of your appeal. You should only provide information that is relevant up to the time of raising your concerns and not issues that have arisen subsequent to the investigation findings. You will also be asked whether you will be calling any witnesses and if you are being accompanied by a companion.

The person who investigated your complaint will also be asked to submit documentation related to the investigation and the outcome in response to your appeal. They will also be asked to provide details of any witnesses that they intend to call and any companions.

Please note that representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

All parties will be asked for dates when they will be available and you will be informed, at least ten working days in advance, of the date, time and place of the meeting and who will be attending including witnesses and companions. A mutually suitable venue for the meeting will be agreed.

The Clerk will provide all parties with a date to submit the documentation and names of witnesses/companions that **must** be adhered to. Once all the documentation has been received, the clerk will collate and distribute the papers to all parties, **at the same time** at least five days prior to the panel meeting. All parties will receive copies of all the papers presented for consideration by the Independent Complaints Panel.

With the invite letter, you will be provided with a copy of the Procedure for the Complaints Panel Hearing that explains what will happen at the hearing.

If you reject the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in your absence on the basis of written submissions from all parties.

The chair of the panel will bear in mind that the formal nature of the meeting can be intimidating for you and will do their best to put you at ease.

As a general rule, no evidence (documentary or otherwise) or witnesses previously undisclosed should be introduced into the hearing by any of the participants. If any party wishes to do so, a request must be made to the panel and, if allowed, the hearing will be adjourned so that the other parties have a fair opportunity

to consider and respond to the new evidence. The Clerk will manage the adjournment.

The chair of the panel will ensure that the hearing is properly minuted. The minutes are strictly confidential and should not be shared with parties external to the process. You may not record the meeting without the express permission of the chair of the panel and this is not normally something that is allowed. Such recordings can often be a hindrance and may prevent all parties from speaking freely. It is advisable that no parties make covert recording of the meeting as this may hinder a satisfactory resolution to the complaint. However, recording may be permitted if a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Consent must be sought from all parties prior to the meeting and consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

In closing the hearing, the chair will explain that the panel will now consider its decision and that written notice of the decision will be sent to you by the clerk within 5 school days. However, if this timescale cannot be met, you will be advised accordingly and a new time scale determined.

The panel will then consider the complaint and all the evidence and make the following decisions:

- Dismiss or uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint, if it is upheld in whole or in part
- Recommend changes to the schools systems and procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not reoccur.

The Clerk will send you and the person who investigated your complaint a letter outlining the decision of the panel. The letter will also explain that you are entitled to have the handling of the complaint reviewed by the Secretary of State for Education – See below.

We will keep a copy of all correspondence and notes on file in the school's records but separate from any pupils' personal records. If at any formal stage of the complaint it is determined that staff disciplinary or capability proceedings are necessary in order to resolve the issue, the details of this action will remain confidential to the management of Simply Sensory. You are not entitled to participate in those proceedings or receive any detail about them.

Stage 2 will be heard by a committee of independent persons following the process outlined above. Support will be sought from NCC Governor Services to facilitate this.

Final Steps

If you believe the Simply Sensory did not handle your complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, you can contact the Department for Education after Stage 2 has been completed.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Simply Sensory. They will consider whether Simply Sensory has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

You can refer your complaint to the Department for Education online at:
www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate

Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD.

Managing serial and persistent complaints

Simply Sensory 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 Simply Sensory. 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.

Simply Sensory defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact, such as, if the complainant:

- Refuses within a reasonable timeframe 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 cooperate with the complaints investigation process
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account 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 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 time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and/or by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- 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.

You should try to limit your communication with Simply Sensory that relates to your complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email, or via social media), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, Simply Sensory will discuss any concerns with you informally before applying an '*unreasonable'* marking.

If your behaviour continues, Simply Sensory will write to you explaining that your behaviour is unreasonable and ask you to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Simply Sensory 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.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing.

Closure of Complaints

Very occasionally, Simply Sensory will feel that it needs, regretfully, to close a complaint where the complainant is still dissatisfied.

We will do all we can to help to resolve a complaint but sometimes it is simply not possible to meet all of the complainant's wishes. Sometimes it is simply a case of "agreeing to disagree".

If a complainant persists in making representations to Simply Sensory, the Local Authority or anyone else – this can be extremely time-consuming and can detract from our responsibility to look after the interests of all the children in our care.

Simply Sensory will write to the complainant explaining that the matter has been dealt with fully in line with the school complaints procedure, and therefore the case is now closed.

After closing a complaint, if Simply Sensory receives a duplicate (or substantially the same) complaint from a partner, spouse, grandparent, child or other person in a close relationship with the original complainant, Simply Sensory can inform the new complainant that they have already considered the complaint and the process is now complete.

In exceptional circumstances, closure may occur before a complaint has reached Stage Two of the complaint procedure. This is because an Independent Complaints Panel takes considerable time and effort to set up and we must be sure that it is likely to assist the process of resolving the complaint.

Simply Sensory may decide, therefore, that every reasonable action has been undertaken to resolve the complaint and that an Independent Complaints Panel would not help to move things forward.

The complainant will be provided with the contact details of the Department for Education (as detailed above) if they wish to take the matter further.

Complaint Form

Please complete and return to **simplysensory@outlook.com** who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address: **Postcode:** **Day time telephone number:** **Evening telephone number:** **Email Address:**
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at Simply Sensory 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:**
Official use
Date acknowledgement sent:
By who:
Complaint referred to:
Date:

Roles and Responsibilities

Complainant

The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- Explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- Cooperate with Simply Sensory in seeking a solution to the complaint
- Respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint
- Ask for assistance as needed
- Treat all those involved in the complaint with respect
- Refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

The Role of the Investigator

The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

- Providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
- Sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
- Interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint
- Consideration of records and other relevant information
- Analysing information
- Liaising with the complainant and the complaints co-ordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

The investigator should:

- Conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- Keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting
- Ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal
- Be mindful of the timescales to respond
- Prepare a comprehensive report that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

Clerk to the Complaints Panel

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the committee and should:

- Ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- Set the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- Collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example; stage 1 paperwork, Simply Sensory and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale
- Record the proceedings
- Circulate the minutes of the meeting
- Notify all parties of the committee's decision.

Chair of the Independent Complaints Panel

The Chair of the Independent Complaints Panel, who is nominated in advance of the panel meeting, should ensure that:

- Both parties are asked (via the Clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting
- The meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy
- Complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person
- The remit of the panel meeting is explained to the complainant
- Written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the Data Protection Act 2018 or General Data Protection Regulations.
- Both the complainant and Simply Sensory are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself
- The issues are addressed
- Key findings of fact are made
- The panel is open-minded and acts independently
- No member of the panel has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- The meeting is minuted
- They liaise with the Clerk.

Independent Complaints Panel Members

Panel members should be aware that:

- The meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so
- No person may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it or have any family/personal connection with the complainant.
- The aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between Simply Sensory and the complainant. We recognise that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations.
- Many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child. Extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and present during all or part of the meeting. Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated.
- The panel should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults. If the child/young person is the complainant, the panel should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the panel should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend. However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the panel considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.
- **The welfare of the child/young person is paramount**

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

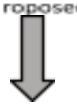
Informal

concern or complaint



oncern responded to and resolution

roposed/action taken.



Investigation



oncern or complaint resolved.

The person investigating the complaint will be appointed and will aim to respond in full to the complaint within 15 working days.

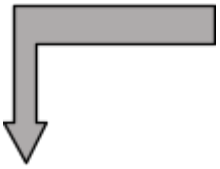


Complainant remains dissatisfied

Written complaint to be submitted within 10 working days of the conclusion of the informal stage



Stage 1 – Formal Complaint



t resolved.

Complaint acknowledged By Simply Sensory within 3 working days



Unsatisfactory outcome for the complaint

Complainant to request complaint be considered at Stage 2 within 10 working days of receiving Stage 1 outcome



Stage 2 – Independent Complaints Panel

Panel aims to consider the complaint with 20 working days of the Clerk acknowledging receipt of the request



Complaints Panel Decision

The Clerk will confirm in writing the decision of the panel within 5 working days of the panel meeting. Simply Sensory procedure concluded. If the complainant remains unsatisfied they must contact the Department of Education

Complaint relates to:	**Informal**	**Stage 1** **Formal** (Investigation)	**Stage 2** **Complaint Panel**
Pupils, parents or staff (other than Simply Sensory Management)	The appropriate member of staff	Simply Sensory Management	Panel appointed by Simply Sensory
Simply Sensory Management	No informal stage (go to Stage 1)	Impartial person nominated by Simply Sensory	Panel appointed by Simply Sensory