FARMSPACE BARNSLEY CIC

Complaints Policy

Policy Owner: Farmspace Barnsley CIC
Date Adopted: September 2026
Review Date: September 2027
Review Frequency: Annually or sooner if required

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1. Policy Statement

Farmspace Barnsley CIC is committed to providing a safe, nurturing, inclusive and high-quality Alternative Provision where every child and young person is supported to achieve positive outcomes.

We value feedback and recognise that concerns and complaints provide valuable opportunities to improve our practice and strengthen our provision.

We aim to resolve concerns quickly, fairly and respectfully through open communication, positive relationships and a willingness to listen.

Most concerns can be resolved informally, and we encourage individuals to raise concerns at the earliest opportunity.

Where concerns cannot be resolved informally, this policy sets out the formal complaints process.

Farmspace will ensure that complaints are:

- listened to respectfully
- investigated fairly
- handled impartially
- responded to within published timescales
- recorded appropriately
- used to improve practice where appropriate.

No individual will be treated unfairly or disadvantaged for raising a genuine concern or complaint.

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2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that complaints are managed in a fair, transparent, consistent and timely manner.
Farmspace is committed to resolving complaints at the earliest opportunity whilst maintaining positive relationships with pupils, families, commissioning schools, Local Authorities and partner agencies.

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3. Legal Framework

This policy has been developed with reference to:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (Current Edition)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (Current Edition)
- Equality Act 2010
- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Data Protection Act 2018
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Human Rights Act 1998.

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4. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to complaints relating to:

- quality of provision
- communication
- staff conduct
- educational provision
- behaviour management
- health and safety
- administration
- customer service
- facilities.

This policy does not replace statutory safeguarding procedures.

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5. Complaints Not Covered by this Policy

The following are managed under separate procedures:

- child protection or safeguarding concerns
- allegations against staff
- whistleblowing
- staff grievances
- disciplinary matters
- subject access requests
- Freedom of Information requests (where applicable)
- criminal investigations
- insurance claims.

Safeguarding concerns should always be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

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6. Guiding Principles

Farmspace will ensure all complaints are handled:

- fairly
- promptly
- confidentially
- proportionately
- consistently
- without discrimination.

Everyone involved will be treated with dignity, courtesy and respect throughout the process.

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7. Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is:
"An expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, regarding the actions, decisions or services provided by Farmspace Barnsley CIC."
Complaints may be made by:

- parents
- carers
- pupils
- commissioning schools
- Local Authorities
- visitors
- members of the public.

Where appropriate, pupils will be supported to express their own concerns.

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8. Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints will be considered where:

- safeguarding concerns are raised
- there is potential risk to children
- serious misconduct is alleged.

Farmspace may decide not to investigate anonymous complaints where insufficient information has been provided.

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9. Persistent, Serial or Unreasonable Complaints

Farmspace recognises the right of individuals to raise concerns.
However, where complaints become:

- repetitive
- abusive
- threatening
- unreasonable
- vexatious

the Directors may:

- limit methods of communication
- require correspondence in writing
- decline to respond to issues that have already been fully investigated.

Any decision will be proportionate, recorded and communicated appropriately.

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10. Confidentiality

Complaint information will be treated confidentially.
Information will only be shared with those directly involved in investigating or resolving the complaint.
Records will be stored securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.

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11. Equality and Accessibility

Farmspace is committed to ensuring that everyone can access the complaints process.
Reasonable adjustments may include:

- large-print documents
- Easy Read versions
- interpreter services
- support from an advocate
- additional time where appropriate
- alternative methods of communication.

No individual will be disadvantaged because of disability, SEND, language or communication needs.

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12. Time Limits

Complaints should normally be raised within **three months** of the incident or within three months of becoming aware of the matter.
Complaints submitted outside this timeframe may still be considered where exceptional circumstances exist, particularly where safeguarding concerns are involved.

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13. Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

Farmspace encourages concerns to be raised as early as possible.
Most concerns can be resolved through discussion with the relevant member of staff or the Farm Manager.
Farm Manager
Kelly Richardson
Complainants are encouraged to:

- speak with the member of staff involved where appropriate
- contact the Farm Manager
- request an informal meeting to discuss their concerns.

The aim is to resolve concerns through open communication and constructive dialogue.
Most concerns should be resolved within **10 school days**.
If the complaint relates to the Farm Manager, Kelly Richardson, it should be referred directly to one of the Company Directors.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

Where concerns cannot be resolved informally, a formal complaint should be submitted in writing.
Formal complaints should normally be addressed to:
Kelly Richardson
Farm Manager
The complaint should include:

- the complainant's name and contact details
- details of the complaint
- relevant dates and times
- supporting information where available
- the outcome being sought.

The complaint will normally be acknowledged within **five school days**.
The Farm Manager will:

- investigate the complaint fairly
- review relevant documentation
- speak with those involved where appropriate

- maintain confidentiality throughout
- provide a written response within **20 school days**, where reasonably possible.

Where additional time is required due to the complexity of the investigation, the complainant will be informed of the revised timescale.

Complaints About the Farm Manager

Where a complaint concerns **Kelly Richardson**, the complaint must be submitted directly to one of the Company Directors.
The Directors are:

- **Emily Cappleman-Smith**
- **Rachael Green**

Kelly Richardson will take no part in the investigation or decision-making process relating to that complaint.

Complaints About a Company Director

Where a complaint concerns one Director, the remaining Director will investigate or oversee the investigation where appropriate.
Where a complaint concerns both Directors, or where a conflict of interest exists, Farmspace will appoint a suitably independent person to investigate the complaint and make recommendations.

Complaint Review

If the complainant remains dissatisfied following the formal response, they may request a review within **10 school days**.
The review will consider:

- whether the complaints procedure was followed correctly
- whether all available evidence was considered
- whether the decision reached was reasonable.

The review will normally be undertaken by a Director not previously involved in the complaint or, where appropriate, by an independent person.
The outcome will normally be issued within **20 school days**.
The review decision represents the final stage of Farmspace Barnsley CIC's internal complaints procedure.

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14. Complaints Relating to Safeguarding

Complaints involving safeguarding concerns will always take priority.
Where concerns relate to:

- abuse
- neglect
- child protection
- radicalisation
- staff conduct towards children
- safeguarding failures

they will immediately be referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and managed in accordance with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.
Where necessary, referrals will be made to Children's Social Care, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), the Police or other relevant safeguarding agencies.
The complaints procedure may be paused whilst statutory safeguarding investigations take place.

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15. Complaints Involving Staff Conduct

Where a complaint indicates that disciplinary action may be necessary, the complaint investigation and disciplinary process will be managed separately.
This ensures:

- fairness
- confidentiality
- compliance with employment legislation.

The complainant will be informed where delays occur, although confidential employment matters cannot be disclosed.

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16. Record Keeping

Farmspace will maintain a confidential Complaints Register.
Records will include:

- date received
- complainant details
- summary of the complaint
- investigation undertaken
- outcome
- actions identified
- date closed.

Records will be retained securely in accordance with the Farmspace Data Protection Policy and Records Retention Schedule.

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17. Learning from Complaints

Complaints provide valuable opportunities for reflection and continuous improvement.
Following investigations, Farmspace may:

- review policies
- update procedures
- provide additional staff training
- improve communication
- review risk assessments
- strengthen quality assurance processes.

Themes and trends will be monitored by the Directors to support continual improvement.

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18. Malicious or False Complaints

Farmspace recognises that the overwhelming majority of complaints are genuine.
Where there is evidence that a complaint has been deliberately fabricated, malicious or intended to harass individuals, appropriate action may be taken.
This will never discourage or prevent genuine concerns from being raised.

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19. External Agencies

If a complainant remains dissatisfied after exhausting Farmspace's internal complaints procedure, they may contact the appropriate external organisation, including:

- the commissioning school
- the commissioning Local Authority
- Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council (where appropriate)
- Ofsted (where concerns fall within Ofsted's remit).

Where safeguarding concerns exist, individuals may also contact Children's Social Care or the Police directly if they believe a child is at immediate risk of harm.

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20. Monitoring and Review

The Directors will monitor:

- the number of complaints received
- complaint themes and trends
- response times
- outcomes
- lessons learned.

This information will be used to improve the quality of Farmspace's provision and ensure effective governance.
This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner where changes to legislation, statutory guidance or operational practice require amendment.

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21. Contact Details

Farm Manager

Kelly Richardson
Email: **kelly@farmspacebarnsley.co.uk**

Company Directors

Emily Cappleman-Smith
Email: **Emily.cappleman@gmail.com**
Rachael Green
Email: **rgreen.tutor@yahoo.co.uk**

Farmspace Barnsley CIC
Lower Coates Farm
Blacker Green Lane
Barnsley
S75 4PR

Our Commitment

Farmspace Barnsley CIC is committed to resolving complaints fairly, transparently and promptly. We value feedback from pupils, families, commissioners and partner agencies and recognise that listening to concerns helps us continually improve our provision.

Our aim is to maintain trusting relationships built on openness, respect and a shared commitment to achieving the very best outcomes for every child and young person in our care.