

Complaints Policy and Procedure

We are committed to dealing effectively with complaints. We aim to clarify any issues as swiftly as possible and put right any mistakes we have made. We aim to learn from our mistakes and use the experience to improve.

Our definition of a complaint is:

‘An expression of dissatisfaction in relation to our company or a member of its staff.’

This Complaints Policy and Procedure supports our commitment and is a way of ensuring that anyone with an interest in the company can raise a concern, with confidence that it will be heard and, if well-founded, addressed in an appropriate way.

It is vital that complaints are treated with respect, sympathy, and confidentiality to create an environment where pupils and stakeholders understand and believe that trusting relationships can develop and that their complaints will be responded to with complete clarity.

We welcome feedback and suggestions and will always take any complaints made seriously and aim to resolve them in a timely manner as set out in this policy. Complaints will be kept confidential although they will be made available to Estyn when inspected and copies will be provided for the Registration Authority on request.

Aim of the Policy

We take all complaints seriously and seek to use the outcome of any complaints to further strengthen and develop the service we offer. Criticism of staff or the service the pupils receive should be accepted in a professional manner and not taken personally. The aim of this policy is to give clear guidance on the process by which complaints within the school are dealt with in accordance with The Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

If you have a complaint

If you are not happy with anything, please approach us to discuss the issue. Most concerns can be settled quickly just by speaking to the relevant person in school, without the need to use a formal procedure. Once you have made your complaint, please give us a chance to respond. However, if you are not happy with our response then you may use the procedure below.

What we expect from you

We understand that all complaints have a right to be heard, understood and respected. We expect you to be polite and courteous. We will not tolerate aggressive, abusive or unreasonable behaviour. We will not tolerate unreasonable demands or unreasonable persistence or vexatious complaining.

Our approach to answering your concern or complaint

1. We will consider all your concerns and complaints in an open and fair way.
2. We will respect your rights and feelings of those involved and make every effort to protect confidential information.
3. Timescales for dealing with your concerns or complaints may need to be extended following discussion with you.
4. We may ask for external advice.
5. Some types of concern or complaint may raise issues that have to be dealt with in another way, in which case we will explain why this is so, and will tell you what steps will be taken.
6. Records will be kept for seven years and then the decision will be made if they need to be kept longer.
7. Complaints that are made anonymously will be recorded but investigation will be at the discretion of the school, depending on the nature of the complaint.
8. Where complaints are considered to have been made to cause harm or offence to individuals or the school, the Head teacher will ensure that records are kept of the investigations that are made and what actions are taken, including the reasons for 'no action'.

Answering your concern or complaint

There are up to three stages: A,B and C.

Most complaints can be resolved at Stages A and B. You can bring a relative or companion to support you at any time during the process, but you will be expected to speak for yourself.

As far as possible, your concern or complaint will be dealt with on a confidential basis. However, there could be occasions when the person dealing with your concern or complaint will need to consider if anyone else in the school needs to know, so as to address it appropriately.

If you are a student under 16 years of age and wish to raise a concern or complaint, we will ask for your permission before we involve your parents/carers.

Stage A

If you have a concern, you can often resolve it by talking to your son/daughter's teacher. If you need to speak to them, please make sure that you book an appointment with them. You may bring someone with you to support you.

To do this, please telephone 01352 961844. You should raise the concern as soon as you can, normally we would expect you to raise your issue within **10 school days** of any incident. The longer you leave it, the harder it might be for those involved to deal with it effectively.

If you are a pupil, you can raise your concerns with the teacher involved or another teacher who you feel you could talk to. This will not stop you, at a later date, raising a complaint if you feel that the issue has not been dealt with properly.

We will try to let you know what we have done or are doing about your concern normally within 10 working days, but if this is not possible, we will talk to you and agree a revised timescale with you.

The person overseeing your complaint will keep you informed of the progress being made. This person will also keep a log of the concern for future reference.

Stage B

In most cases, we would expect your concern to be resolved informally. If you feel that your initial concern has not been dealt with appropriately you should put your complaint in writing to the Headteacher, Frances Morgan Head@pathways-learning.co.uk

We would expect you to aim to do this **within five school days of receiving a response to your concern as it is in everyone's interests to resolve a complaint as soon as possible.**

The Headteacher (Or Directors) will invite you to discuss your complaint at a meeting (You may bring someone with you to support you). Timescales for dealing with your complaint will be agreed with you. We will aim to have a meeting with you and to explain what will happen, normally within **10 school days** of receiving your letter. The Headteacher, or Directors, will complete the investigation and will you know the outcome in writing **within 10 school days** of completion.

If you have a complaint about the Headteacher, you should put your complaint in writing to one of the Directors – Mr D Martin or Mrs A Matthias, to ask for your complaint to be investigated.

Stage C

It is rare that a complaint will progress any further. However, if you still feel that your complaint has not been dealt with fairly, you should write to one of the Directors to state this, and ask for your complaint to be heard externally by a panel appointed by the Directors. The panel will be made up of at least three people who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom is independent of the management and running of the school. You should set out your reasons for asking them to consider your complaint. You do not have to write down the details of your complaint again.

If you prefer, instead of sending a letter, you can telephone the school directly (01352 961844), to write down what is discussed and what, in your own words, would resolve the problem. We would normally expect you to do this **within five school days** of receiving the initial response. You will be asked to read the notes or will have the notes read back to you and then be asked to sign them as a true record of what was said. We will let you know who will be dealing with the complaint and will send a letter to confirm this. You will normally hear back within **15 school days** of receiving your letter.

The letter will also tell you when all the evidence and documentation to be considered must be received. Everyone involved will see the evidence and documentation before the meeting, while ensuring that people's rights to privacy of information are protected. The letter will also record what we have agreed with you about, when and where the meeting will take place and what will happen. You will be able to attend this meeting along with a friend or representative if you wish. The timescale may need to be changed, to allow for the availability of people, the gathering of evidence or seeking advice. In this case, the person dealing with the complaint will agree a new meeting date with you.

Normally, in order to deal with the complaint as quickly as possible, the complaints committee will not reschedule the meeting more than once. If you ask to reschedule the meeting more than once, the committee may think it reasonable to make a decision on the complaint in your absence to avoid delays.

We will write to the proprietor, the Headteacher and yourself **within 10 school days** of the meeting explaining the findings and recommendations of the complaints committee's consideration.

The correspondence, statements and records of complaints will be kept confidential. These records will be kept for a minimum of **seven** years.

Right to be Accompanied

You have a statutory right to be accompanied by a friend, relative or representative at any stage of this process.

Special circumstances

Where a complaint is made about any of the following, the complaints procedure will be applied differently.

The Headteacher

One of the Directors will be informed and will investigate it or delegate it to an external body. Stage B onwards of the complaints procedure will apply.

In all cases we will ensure that complaints are dealt with in an unbiased, open and fair way.

Our commitment to you

We will take your concerns and complaints seriously and, where we have made mistakes, will try to learn from them.

We will keep written records of all complaints and make note as to whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage or whether they proceeded to a panel hearing.

All correspondence, statements and records of complaints will be kept confidential.

If you need help to make your concerns known, we will try and assist you. If you are a young person and need extra help, the Welsh Government has established MEIC which is the national advocacy and advice helpline for children and young people. Advice and support can also be accessed from the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

MEIC - Telephone 08088023456 or text 84001.
This service is operated 24 hours a day

Children's Commissioner for Wales - Telephone 08088011000 (Monday to Friday 9am-5pm)
Text 80800 (start your message with COM)
Email advice@childcomwales.org.uk

Appendix 1 – Complaints Policy Flowchart

Stage A

Raise concern with teacher

Pathways Learning – 01352 755141

Complaint to be raised within 10 school days.

You have a statutory right to be accompanied by a friend, relative or representative

Resolved – completed

Not Resolved – Stage B

Write to headteacher/directors (if it is about the headteacher)

Letter to be received with 5 school days

Meeting held

Normally within 10 school days

You have a statutory right to be accompanied by a friend, relative or representative

The headteacher/director will complete the investigation and inform you of the outcome, in writing

Normally withing 10 school days

Resolved - completed

Not Resolved – Stage C

Write to or telephone (01352 961844) one of the directors asking for your complaint to be heard by an external panel (3 people who have not dealt with the complaint so far, **1 will be independent.**)

State how you would like the complaint to be resolved

Within 5 days of receiving your written response

You will hear who is dealing with your complaint within 15 days

The letter will tell you when all the evidence and documentation to be considered must be received and where and when the meeting will take place.

You have a statutory right to attend the meeting and be accompanied by a friend, relative or representative.

The complaints committee will not reschedule the meeting more than once and if you request this, they may meet without you being present

The proprietor, headteacher and yourself will receive a letter of the meeting explaining the findings and recommendations.

This is normally within 10 school days