Gwenllian Education Centre

Independent Autism Specialist School

Complaints Procedures

Review date: May 2025
Next review date: May 2026

Complaints Procedure Policy for Parents and Carers

Gwenllian Education Centre *(In accordance with Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024).*

Policy Statement

Gwenllian Education Centre is committed to working in partnership with parents and carers and values all feedback. We aim to provide a high-quality educational experience and are committed to resolving concerns quickly and fairly. This policy outlines the steps for raising and resolving complaints, in line with the **Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations, 2024**, which requires that independent schools must have a clear and accessible complaints procedure.

Purpose and Scope

This policy is for the use of parents and carers of children currently attending the school. It applies to any concern or complaint about the actions, decisions, or conduct of staff or the school that parents/carers feel have not been resolved informally.

This procedure does **not** cover:

- Appeals related to admissions or exclusions (which follow a separate process)
- Child protection concerns (which are managed under the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy)

Guiding Principles

In accordance with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations:

- Complaints are taken seriously and handled sensitively, promptly, and fairly.
- Complainants will not be disadvantaged for raising a concern.
- All complaints will be kept confidential unless disclosure is required by law (e.g., safeguarding).

Stages of the Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

Objective: Encourage resolution through discussion and early intervention.

- Parents/carers are encouraged to raise concerns directly with the relevant staff member or tutor.
- Most issues can be resolved informally through clarification and discussion.
- If the matter is not resolved, or if the parent/carer is dissatisfied with the response, the complaint may move to Stage 2.

Response Timeframe: Aim to resolve within **10 school days**.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint (Written)

Objective: Provide a formal process for complaints not resolved informally.

- The parent/carer submits a written complaint to the Headteacher using the **Formal Complaint Form**, available from the school office or website.
- The complaint should state clearly the nature of the concern, actions already taken, and the desired resolution.

Investigation:

- The Headteacher (or delegated senior leader) will investigate and respond.
- The investigation may include interviews with staff, review of records, and discussion with the complainant.

Response Timeframe:

- Acknowledgement within **5 school days**.
- A written response within **15 school days**, unless further time is required (in which case the parent/carer will be informed).

Stage 3 – Complaint Panel Hearing

Objective: Provide an independent review of unresolved formal complaints.

- If the parent/carer remains dissatisfied, they may request a hearing by the **Complaints Panel**.
- The request must be made in writing within **10 school days** of receiving the Stage 2 response.

The Panel:

- Will consist of at least **three individuals** not directly involved in the complaint, one of whom is **independent of the school** (as required by Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024).
- Will consider the complaint, evidence from both parties, and may invite both to a hearing.

Hearing:

- The complainant may be accompanied by a friend, relative, or advocate.

Outcome:

- A written decision will be issued to all parties within **5 school days** of the hearing.
- The panel's findings and recommendations will be available for inspection by the proprietor and Headteacher and, where appropriate, sent to the complainant and the person complained about.

Finality:

- The panel's decision is final.

Record Keeping

In compliance with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024:

- A written record will be kept of all complaints, the stage at which they were resolved, and the outcomes.
- Records will show whether complaints were resolved informally, formally, or at panel stage.
- All records are retained securely for inspection by CIW and Estyn upon request.

Confidentiality

Complaints will be treated confidentially. The school will take all reasonable steps to protect the identity and dignity of those involved, unless legal disclosure is required.

External Oversight

If a complainant feels their concerns have not been handled appropriately after exhausting the school's procedure, they may raise the issue with:

- **Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)** – for complaints relating to care provision or pupil welfare
- **Estyn** – for complaints relating to educational standards

Availability of the Policy

This policy is made available to:

- Parents and carers of current and prospective pupils
- Staff, inspectors, and regulatory bodies
- Available in hard copy at the school office and published on the school website

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or in response to changes in relevant legislation or guidance, including updates to the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024.

In addition to this policy please read the following Appendix attached:

Appendix 1: Complaints Procedure Timescales Summary

Appendix 2: Complaints form

Appendix 1

Complaints Procedure Timescales Summary

This table outlines the key stages and timeframes of the complaints procedure at independent schools, in accordance with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations (2024).

Stage	Description	Timeframe
Stage 1 – Informal Resolution	Initial concern raised directly with a member of staff (e.g. class teacher, form tutor).	As soon as possible, ideally within 5 school days.
Stage 2 – Formal Complaint	Written complaint submitted to the Headteacher (using the Formal Complaint Form).	Acknowledgement within 5 school days. Investigation completed and written response provided within 15 school days of receipt.
Stage 3 – Panel Hearing	Complaint referred to a panel of at least 3 people, one of whom is independent of the school.	Hearing held within 20 school days of request. Written outcome provided within 10 school days of the hearing.
Record Keeping	A written record of all formal complaints, actions, and outcomes is kept.	Maintained for at least three years.
Accessibility	A copy of the complaints procedure and outcomes is made available to parents, inspectors, and regulatory bodies upon request.	Immediately upon request.

Appendix 2

Complaints form for parents and carers

Section 1: Complainant's Details

Full Name:

Relationship to Pupil:

Pupil's Name:

Pupil's Class:

Contact Address:

Telephone Number:

Email Address:

Section 2: Details of the Complaint

Please provide a clear summary of your complaint. Include relevant dates, the names of any staff members or pupils involved, and what actions you have already taken (if any) to try to resolve the issue informally. Attach additional pages if necessary.

Complaint Summary:

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Section 3: Resolution Sought

What would you like the school to do to resolve the issue?

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Section 4: Supporting Evidence (if applicable)

Please list any documents or evidence you are attaching to support your complaint (e.g., copies of emails, notes, reports):

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Section 5: Declaration

I confirm that the information provided is accurate to the best of my knowledge and that I am submitting this complaint in accordance with the school's complaints procedure.
Signature:

Date:

For School Use Only

Date Complaint Received:

Received By (Name & Position):

Complaint Reference Number:

Stage Initiated (e.g., Stage 2):

Acknowledgement Sent (Date):

Investigator Assigned:

Outcome Summary & Date Resolved:

Escalated to Stage 3? ☐ Yes ☐ No