

Concerns & Complaints Policy

(Last Reviewed February 2024, last Updated February 2024)

With reference to:

- paragraph 7 of the Schedule to the Independent Schools Standards (Wales) Regulations 2023
- The Education Act 2002

The Steiner-Waldorf movement was inspired by the ideals expressed by Rudolf Steiner and others in the early part of the 20th century. These ideals were based on recognising that each human being is an individual to be valued. As employers, the trustees of Steiner-Waldorf settings have many legal duties and responsibilities as well as a responsibility to uphold the founding ideals of Steiner-Waldorf education.

The following concerns procedure enables the school to fulfill its legal responsibilities, while at the same time seeking to uphold the dignity of the human being as indicated by Rudolf Steiner.

This policy is to be used for the following concerns and complaints:

Who is this policy for?

- **Parental concerns** - if a parent has a concern - this policy and procedure
- **Pupil concerns** - are usually handled under the School's ongoing policies and procedures with pupils, including including but not limited to the Pupil Voice Policy, Child Protection Policy and Anti-Bullying Policy, but there may be circumstances where this Complaints Policy is appropriate
- **Employee concerns** - are usually handled under the School's Grievance Policy, but there may be circumstances where this Complaints Policy is appropriate
- **Employer concerns** - if the employer (normally the school's Trustees) become concerned about the work of an employee - are usually handled under the performance management, Capability and Disciplinary policies and procedures, but there may be circumstances where this Complaints Policy is appropriate
- **Dignity at work** - if an employee is experiencing behaviour that is unacceptable to them - are usually handled under School's, Bullying and Harassment policy and procedures, but there may be circumstances where this Complaints Policy is appropriate

1. General Principles:

The Waldorf movement was inspired by the ideals expressed by Rudolf Steiner and others in the early part of the 20th century. These ideals were based on recognizing freedom and intrinsic value of each human being. Our respect for the spiritual uniqueness of each human being means that we endeavor to respect the dignity of all those in our communities.

Trustees of Steiner Waldorf schools have many legal duties and responsibilities alongside upholding our founding ideals. We wish to encourage all members of the school community to strive to fulfill their roles and responsibilities diligently and capably while upholding the dignity of the human being in all their encounters. Our Concerns and Complaint's Procedure is intended to support our core ideals and to contribute to the continual improvement of the education we provide.

2. Principles in practice

Independent schools in Wales are required by regulation to offer a procedure for complaint.

This procedure meets the regulatory requirements in full. In addition, this procedure is intended to help sustain a positive ethos within our school so that problems can be listened to appropriately and resolved wherever possible. Our core purpose is to offer high quality Waldorf education for all our children and in order to improve our work, we seek to learn from our mistakes and correct them whenever possible.

- 1.1 We believe that the education of our children can be most effective when there is close co-operation, mutual trust and respect between all those involved in their upbringing and education.
- 1.2 We offer the following opportunities for communication: Email Newsletters, individual meetings with Teachers, Kindergarten/Class Parents Evenings, individual Kindergarten/Class Parent Reps - and encourage all members of the community to contribute to the life of the School through these channels. We also welcome practical suggestions that can help us improve our communication and the way we work.
- 1.3 Our concerns and complaints procedures aim to deal with issues in a fair and open manner. We intend to respond to questions and criticisms promptly and to do all we can reasonably do to resolve any problems amicably.
- 1.4 Procedures may be supplemented where the issue involves allegations of professional misconduct, criminal offences, including matters covered by our safeguarding children procedure or others that might result in a member of staff facing disciplinary action. In cases of this sort, an urgent investigation will take place and evidence will be gathered as appropriate from all parties. We are obliged in such matters to maintain confidentiality.

1.5 We endeavor to take all reasonable steps to resolve complaints via the procedures. There may be circumstances where resolution proves to be impossible. On those rare occasions, once all stages of our procedure have been exhausted, the Trustees/Directors reserve the right to treat the matter as closed subject only to further steps that may be open to the complainants indicated at the end of the document.

3. Procedures for Raising Concerns

We hope that this procedure will help us to listen to and acknowledge your concerns and to treat you fairly and consistently. We are committed to treating your concerns seriously and to finding solutions that work for you and others involved.

3.1 If you have a concern about any aspect of the School, please speak to the person directly responsible for the subject of your concern. Normally this would be:

- Concerns about teaching or aspects of your child's education – your child's Kindergarten or Class Teacher.
- School management issues – the School Management Team
- Governance issues – the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

However, if you are unsure of who to contact please speak to the School Administrator, Miranda Knight.

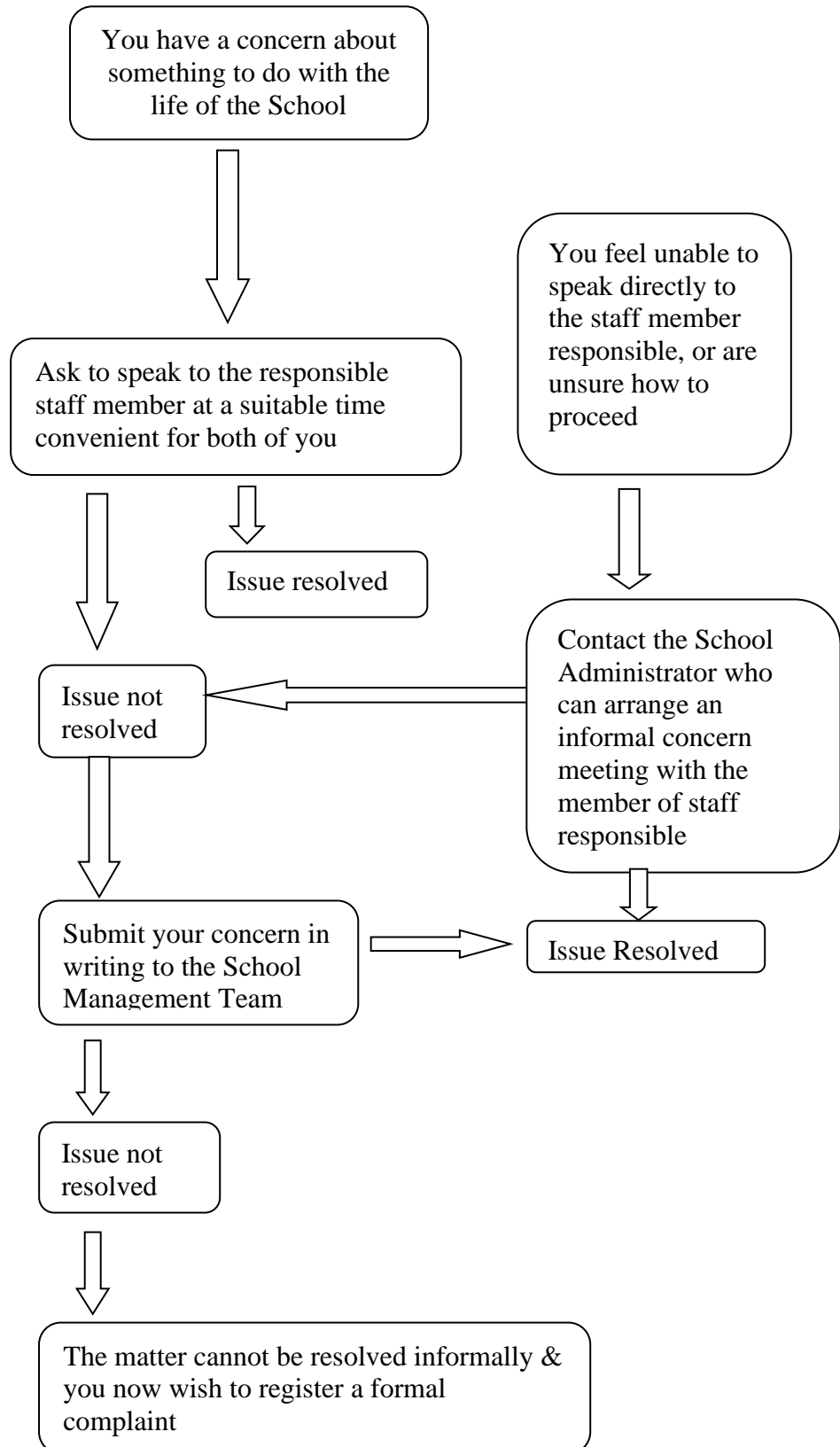
3.2 Members of staff have been asked to record the reason for any concern as well as next steps that may be identified during the conversation (i.e. actions arising). Where this is agreed to be unnecessary, the note will state the nature of the concern and "no further action required". You will be asked to sign the note and this will be filed for review by the School Management Team.

3.3 If concerns remain the School Management Team, at your request, will arrange a further facilitated meeting and/or meeting with a neutral note-taker to help explore your concern informally.

3.4 All concerns and correspondence and records relating to the concern will be kept confidential.

Stage 1: Informal Concerns

Informal concerns Flowchart:

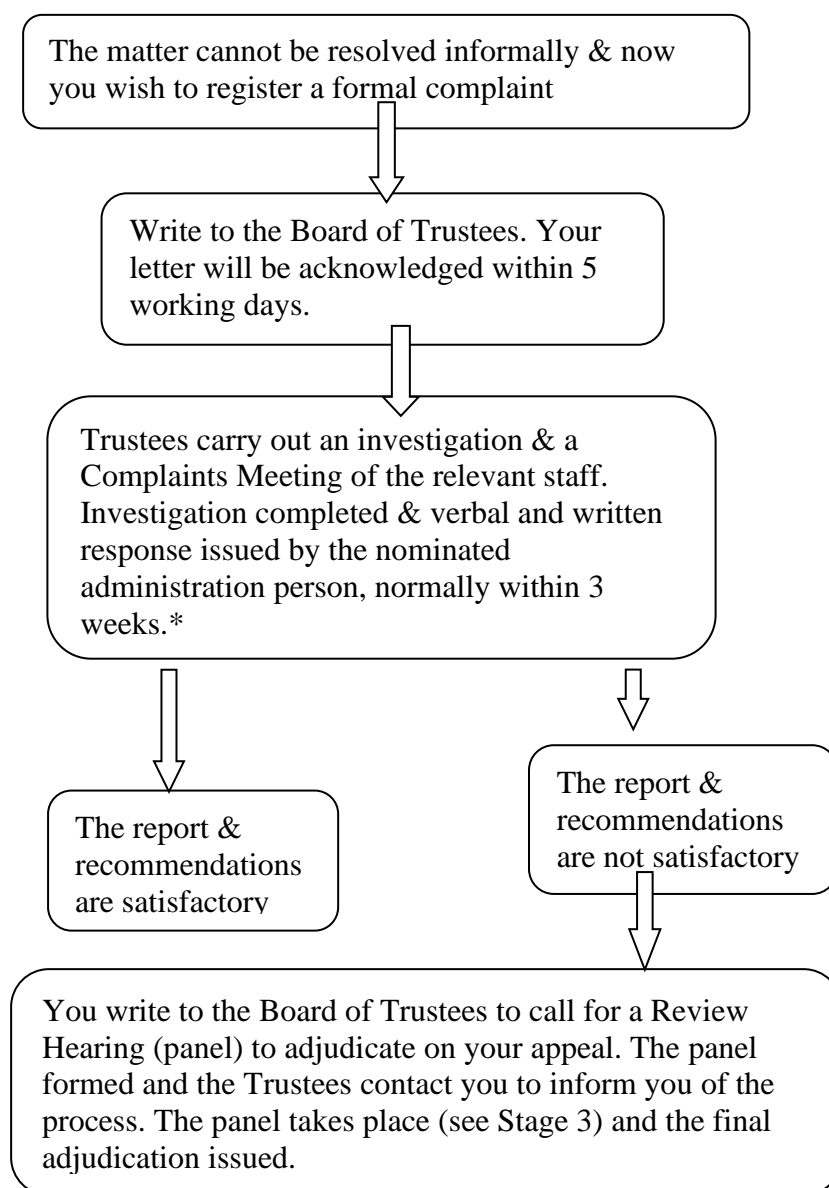


It is our aim to deal with any issues that arise through our concern procedure. However, if the matter cannot be resolved informally you should raise it as a formal complaint by putting it in writing. You should also use this procedure immediately if the issue is one of grave seriousness.

Stage 2: Formal Complaint

A formal complaint form should be completed at this stage.

Formal Complaints Flowchart



The Trustees will administer the formal stage of the procedure. They will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and arrange a Complaints Meeting of the relevant staff to discuss and investigate as soon as possible. The aim is to have a written response sent within three weeks of receipt of the formal complaint.

*(For complaints about Wraparound Care the outcome of the investigation/written response will be sent within 14 days of receiving the complaint. With the agreement of the complainant the period for resolution may be extended by up to a further 14 days if necessary)

For the Complaints Meeting, the Trustees will gather all information surrounding the complaint; the details of the Informal Stage; what was carried out; and any other relevant evidence and information.

A nominated administration person will attend the Complaints Meeting to take proper records of discussions and agreed actions, outcomes and timetables of implementation.

Following the Complaints Meeting, the agreed results will be communicated verbally to the parent by the nominated member of staff and confirmed in writing. The aim is that such a letter should be issued within three weeks of the written formal complaint being received. If for some reason because of holidays or complexity of the complaint there is a delay, a letter will be sent by the nominated administration person explaining the reason for the delay and giving a revised date.

The verbal and written response will include full reasons for the conclusions reached at the Complaints Meeting and what action, if any, will be taken to address the matter.

The parent will be advised that if they remain dissatisfied, in order to progress the complaint further, they must notify the nominated administration person in writing within two weeks. The parent will be offered the opportunity of taking the complaint to a Complaints Panel at Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3: Review by Complaints Panel

We hope that Complaints rarely reach this level, if the need arises, an objective and professional Complaints Panel will consider a review hearing. At least three people who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint will be appointed to this panel. One of this panel shall be independent of the management and running of the school.

The role of the panel is to act with and on behalf of the Trustees to ensure and verify that the school has acted appropriately, and to judge whether or not there is any need for changes to procedures or policies governing the school.

This panel will consist of at least three individuals who have not been directly involved in the complaint. One of these will be independent of the management and running of the school.

Once a signed formal complaint has been submitted, the nominated administration person will issue a written acknowledgement-of-receipt. This letter will also confirm to the parent that the complaint will be heard by the Review Hearing within 4 weeks of receiving the complaint. It will also inform the parent of the right to submit any further documents other than the Formal Complaint Form. Any further information supplied by the parent must be submitted to the nominated administration person within one week of the receipt of this acknowledgement letter. The right to call witnesses to the meeting (which is subject to the approval of the Chair of the review hearing), and the right of the parent to attend the panel hearing and be accompanied by a companion of their choice, will also be explained in this initial letter.

The Review Hearing will look at all the information from both the informal and formal stages of the procedure so far, and any additional information submitted by the parent or the relevant staff.

The date, time and venue for the meeting of the Review Hearing will be confirmed, at least one week in advance, to the parent and all relevant staff who may need to attend. At this time, any additional information submitted by either the parent or the staff against whom the complaint is made will be copied to all parties.

Any new information submitted at the Review Meeting by the parent may result in the deferment of any final decision and the need for the Review Hearing to reconvene at a later date.

A written decision will be sent by the Chair of the Review Hearing within two weeks of the meeting, to the parent, the relevant staff and the Directors.

This letter will explain that this decision is final.

Written records will be kept of all complaints indicating 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.

A log will be kept of all complaints and it will be recorded whether the complaint has been resolved or not.

Other Routes of Complaint

Parents of children of school age and above can contact Estyn direct. Estyn cannot consider complaints about independent schools in the first instance. However, once the School's own Complaints Procedure has been followed, a parent can send their complaint in writing to:

Estyn, Anchor Court, Keen Road, Cardiff, CF24 5JW, Tel: 029 2044 6446

enquiries@estyn.gov.wales

For Wrapround Care complainants have the right at any time to complain to CIW

To raise a concern:

- Phone : 0300 7900 126
- Email : CIW@gov.wales
- Online : www.careinspectorate.wales/contact-us/raise-concern

For general enquiries:

- Phone : 0300 7900 126
- Email : CIW@gov.wales
- Online : www.careinspectorate.wales/contact-us/get-in-touch

For written enquiries:

Write to CIW: Care Inspectorate Wales, Government Office, Rhydycar Business Park
Merthyr Tydfil CF48 1UZ 0300 7900 126

Issue date

This policy was originally approved and came into effect from July 2015, and was last revised in January 2024.

Review date

This policy will be reviewed and revised by The School Management Team and Trustees, in consultation with staff members at least every two years.

Endorsement

Full endorsement to this policy is given by:

Name: Brigid Bowen

Position: Chair of Trustees, Cardiff Steiner School

Signed: 

Date: 22 February 2024

Related policies

This policy should be cross-referenced to related School policies including:

- Grievance Policy
- Capability and Disciplinary Policies
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Unacceptable Actions by Complainants Policy
- Child Protection Policy and Procedures