

Complaints Policy

Introduction

Cardiff Steiner School 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. Our complaints procedure aims to deal with issues in a fair and open manner with respect for the rights and feelings of all involved. If parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School with care and in accordance with this Complaints Procedure. Cardiff Steiner School makes its Complaints Procedure available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the School's website and in the School office during the School day,

Although this Procedure is made available to parents of prospective pupils, it is not available for use by them; it may only be used by parents of current pupils.

Complaints by parents of former pupils will be dealt with under this Complaints Procedure only if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil to which the complaint relates was still registered as a pupil at the School.

The School will be mindful of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 in the application of this policy.

Although the School endeavours to manage complaints in an open and transparent manner, parents should be aware that there may be circumstances which mean the School is unable to share complete details about how a complaint has been handled by the School, the evidence collated, steps taken in response or other related matters. This could be the case even when a complaint is upheld. For example, this may be because such information constitutes sensitive third-party data (for example belonging to a staff member, pupil or other parent), legal or regulatory requirements prohibit disclosure, or withholding information is in accordance with specific instructions from a statutory agency. This list is not exhaustive.

"Parent(s)" means the holder(s) of parental responsibility for a current pupil about whom the complaint relates.

What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the School as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff, and any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the School is within the scope of this

procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where Welsh Government or a body conducting an inspection under the Education Act 2005 and related regulations requests access to them. There may also be other circumstances in which the School is required to share information relating to a concern or a complaint in order to comply with its legal or regulatory obligations.

The School is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you raise in good faith.

The Three-Stage Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

- It is our experience that most complaints and concerns can be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their child's Class / Kindergarten Teacher or Guardian. If the Class / Kindergarten Teacher or Guardian cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for them to consult a member of the School Management Team. However, if parents are unsure of who to contact, or the complaint involves their child's Class / Kindergarten Teacher or Guardian, parents should contact the School's Administrative Manager, Miranda Knight.
- Complaints made directly to School Management Team will usually be referred to the relevant Class / Kindergarten Teacher or Guardian in the first instance, unless the School Management Team deems it appropriate for them to deal with the matter themselves.
- The Class / Kindergarten Teacher or Guardian will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the Class / Kindergarten Teacher or Guardian and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents will usually be advised to arrange a further meeting with a member of the School Management Team to try and resolve the matter informally. To deal with your complaint or concern the member of SMT will need the following information:
 - a) Who or what the complaint is about.
 - b) The nature of your complaint, in as much detail as you wish to give.
 - c) Action taken to date (including staff member(s) who has/have dealt with it so far) and solutions offered.

- d) The reason(s) that this was not a satisfactory resolution for you.
 - e) What you would like done to resolve it.
 - f) Your contact details.
- Should the matter not be resolved **within 10 school days**, or in the event that the School Management Team member and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Complaints Procedure.
 - If the complaint is against the School Management Team itself, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Trustees whose contact details are available from the School Office on request.

Stage 2 - Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Chair of the School Management Team (SMT). The Chair of the SMT may require further information from the parents to help clarify the scope and nature of their concerns. The Chair of the SMT will nominate an SMT member to manage the Stage 2 complaint process. They may in some circumstances deem it appropriate to nominate a non-SMT staff member. The SMT member (or their nominee) will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- Upon receipt of the complaint one of the SMT will contact you within 10 school days. They will acknowledge your receipt and inform you of the details of the procedure that will be followed to resolve the complaint. In some cases, the SMT member (or their nominee) will meet or speak to the parents concerned to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. It may be necessary for further investigations to be carried out. The SMT member (or their nominee) will determine who should carry out any investigation and this may be someone external to the School.
- Written records will be kept of all formal meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the SMT member (or their nominee) is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The SMT member (or their nominee) will also give reasons for their decision. In most cases, the SMT member (or their nominee) will make their decision and provide the parents with reasons within 20 school days of the complaint being put in writing (or

following the provision of any further clarificatory information about the complaint to the SMT, if so requested).

- If the complaint is against the School Management Team itself, the complaint should be made to the Chair of Trustees. The Chair of Trustees will nominate someone to determine the complaint. The Stage 2 process described above will then be followed as if the references to the SMT member (or their nominee) is to the individual nominated by the Chair of Trustees to determine the complaint against the SMT.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3 - Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they should do so in writing to the convenor within 5 days of receiving the decision at Stage 2, setting out their grounds of appeal. Any supporting evidence which the parents wish to rely on should also be provided with their grounds of appeal. To the extent the parents are unable to provide their complaint within the time period stipulated due to extenuating circumstances which have impeded the parents from taking action, the parents should request an extension in writing. Such a request should be made to the convenor in advance of the original deadline, setting out the further time period requested and the reason for this. This will be considered. In the event the parents are unable to provide their complaint within the time period stipulated (including to the extent applicable any extensions if agreed) the School reserves the right to conclude the complaint process and not progress the matter to Stage 3.
- The convenor, who has been appointed by the Trustees to call hearings of the Complaints Panel, will then refer the appeal to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the School. The Complaints Panel will appoint one of the Panel members to act as the Chair of the Panel. The convenor on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint **within 5 school days** and schedule a hearing to take place **within 20 school days**.
- If the Panel deems it necessary, they may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing or further investigation be carried out. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties **not later than 5 school days** prior to the hearing.

- The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. The Stage 2 decision-taker shall also be entitled to be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not be appropriate and the companion should not be a lawyer. The identity of the companions should be confirmed to the convenor as soon as possible and by no later than **2 school days** before the hearing. The Panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend.
- A note-taker will attend the hearing to take a note. This will not be a verbatim note but an accurate reflection of what was discussed. Notes of the hearing will be shared with attendees as soon as practicable after the hearing. To the extent there is any disagreement about the content of those notes or further comments from the parties, these will be considered by and, where possible, resolved by the Chair. A copy of any comments on the notes will be appended to the notes.
- The remit of the Panel shall be at the discretion of the Chair of Trustees and the manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the Panel.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. The panel will explain the evidence and the reasoning which led to the school's earlier written response to you.
- After due consideration of the merits of the complaint and all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and decide whether to:
 - dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part;
 - uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part; and
 - make recommendations for the School to consider. Stage 3 Panels cannot require that any financial compensation is paid to parents or otherwise obligate the School to take particular steps.
- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, **within 5 school days of the hearing** (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing). The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chair of Trustees and the Stage 2 decision-taker. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Chair of Trustees and the School Management Team.

Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously, sensitively and within clear and reasonable timescales.

It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the School's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure **within 20 school days**. Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed **within a further 20 school days**.

For complaints about Kindergarten for children under statutory school age, and 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.

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, **school days** refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays and half term. This means that during School holidays it may take longer to resolve a complaint although the School will do what is reasonably practicable to avoid undue delay. It may also take longer to resolve a complaint during periods of significant disruption to School life or as a consequence of unavoidable staff absence, however deviation from the normal timescale for resolving a complaint during term time will only occur on an exceptional basis, and the School will take all reasonable steps to limit any such delay. The School expects parents to engage in the process in a reasonable, constructive and responsive manner to help ensure matters can be dealt with in a timely way and in line with the targets set out in this Procedure.

Persistent correspondence

Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this will be regarded by the School as vexatious and outside the scope of this procedure.

Recording Complaints and use of personal data

Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all formal complaints, whether they are resolved at the formal stage (Stage 2) or proceed to a Panel hearing (Stage 3) and any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld).

The School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice. When dealing with complaints the School (including any Panel member appointed under the Stage 3 process) may process a range of information, which is likely to include the following:

- Date when the issue was raised

- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name and contact details of member (s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)
- Notes/minutes of the hearing, and
- The Panel's written decision

This may include 'special category personal data' (as further detailed in the School's *Privacy Notice* but potentially including, for instance, information relating to physical or mental health) where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint. This data will be processed in accordance with the School's *Privacy Notice*.

The School will keep records of formal complaints and Complaints Panel hearings, as required by regulation. It will do so in accordance with its *Privacy Notice*. All records relating to complaints shall be treated as confidential. In addition to where requested by Welsh Government or an inspector (see above), there may be other circumstances where disclosure of the substance of a complaint or particular confidential records relating to it is required, for example, where there is a legal, regulatory, safeguarding or data protection obligation (eg, in response to a subject access request) which prevails over the requirement to maintain the records as confidential.

Cardiff Steiner School will ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and of the form in which it is published or available, and of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding School year.

In accordance with The Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024 Cardiff Steiner School will also make available, on request, to Estyn, or Welsh Government, details of this Complaints Procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding School year.

For the academic year 2024-25 the School received 3 formal complaints, all of which were resolved at the preliminary stage 2 process.

Parents of Kindergarten children under statutory school age, and of children in Wraparound Care, should follow the three stages of this Complaints Procedure. These parents also have the right at any time to complain to Care Inspectorate Wales (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 November 2025.

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 November 2025
