COMPLAINTS POLICY

Reviewed by the Governing Body
October 2020

Complaints Procedures

Introduction

Ysgol Penrhyn Dewi has a clear policy for dealing with complaints. When a person raises a concern or complaint with us, we will look into it and deal with it in a fair and suitable way.

When the person making the complaint is a pupil, we have extra procedures to help them with the complaints process. These are shown in this policy.

A Complaint is when you are dissatisfied with:

- the services or facilities provided by the school
- the behaviour or actions of teachers and others working in the school
- the behaviour or actions of pupils
- the behaviour or actions of the governing body.

A Complaint is not a concern relating to:

- the curriculum
- sex education
- special educational needs provision
- religious worship
- school admissions or exclusions
- staff grievance, disciplinary and capability concerns
- child protection issues.

These are all covered by separate procedures. We will give you copies of these procedures if you ask for them.

We will respond to all concerns and complaints in a consistent way. We will:

- listen to your complaint and make sure we understand the problem
- investigate the complaint to find out exactly what happened
- speak to, and if necessary meet with, people involved in the complaint so that we have all the facts
- look at all the evidence and then decide on a fair and acceptable solution to the problem
- let you know how we have resolved the problem, either verbally or in writing.

Different complaints need different responses. Whenever we can, we will respond to your complaint quickly and informally and give you a verbal response. However, if your complaint is more serious or complicated we will need more time to investigate it, and we will usually give you a written response. We will tell you how long we expect this process to take. If there are any delays in the process, we will let you know.

We will keep a record of every complaint, our investigation and how the problem was resolved.

The Complaints Process

Our complaints process has three stages:

Stage A - Informal
Stage B - Formal Complaint to Headteacher
Stage C - Formal Complaint to Governing Body

You should normally start at stage A – we hope to resolve the majority of concerns or complaints in this informal way. However, if your complaint is more serious then you can go straight to stages B or C.

Stage A - Informal

Concerns or complaints can often be sorted out quickly by the first staff member you speak to. This might be a class, subject or form teacher, middle leader or other senior member of staff. Normally we would expect you to raise your issue within 10 school days of any incident.

1. **Raise your concern with a staff member, either verbally or in writing.**

   Parents: please follow our normal school procedures for contacting the staff member
   Pupils: you can contact your form tutor / class teacher or a member of staff chosen to deal with pupil concerns (as appropriate for the school). We will usually want to make sure you have also told your parents about your concerns.

2. **Your complaint will be investigated and if possible, quickly resolved. If your complaint is covered by any existing school policies, we will try to resolve it using the solutions set out in these policies. We will tell you which policy applies. If you need a copy of any policy, please ask us for one.**

   Pupils: if your complaint is about something that affects many pupils we might suggest taking it to the school council. Any resolution would then benefit everyone.

3. **We will give you a response to your complaint, either verbal or written, within 10 school days. If there is a delay, we will tell you.**

4. **We will keep a written record of the complaint and how it was resolved.**

If we cannot resolve your complaint, or you are not happy with our response, you can progress your complaint to the next stage.

Pupils: Your complaint will only progress with your agreement. Your form tutor / class teacher / member of staff chosen to deal with pupil concerns will explain what happens in the next stage to you. You can have help to present your complaint if you want it. We will tell you about the different types of help there are and you can choose which to use.

Stage B - Formal Complaint to Headteacher

If we fail to resolve your complaint at stage A, or your complaint is more serious, you can make a formal complaint to the Headteacher. We would expect you to aim to do this within five school days of receiving a response to your concern under Stage A of the process, as it is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as soon as possible.

If you complain directly to the Headteacher without raising your concern with a staff member first, the Headteacher may decide that your complaint could be dealt with informally using the stage A process. They will refer your complaint to a suitable member of staff to deal with and tell you they have done this.

1. **Raise your complaint in writing to the Headteacher.**

   Parents: Your letter should explain what your complaint is about. If we could not resolve your complaint at stage 1, or you were not happy with our response, you should tell us what you are looking for as the outcome.

   Pupils: You can talk to the Headteacher about your complaint instead of writing it down. You can have someone with you for support at this meeting. We will write down everything you say, and you will be asked to read, agree and sign this record to make sure it correctly sets out your complaint. We will give you a copy of the record. The Headteacher will ask you what you are looking for as a solution or outcome to the problem. They will also let you know how it will be investigated.

2. **The Headteacher will acknowledge receipt of your complaint in writing. They will let you know by when you should receive a response – usually within 10 school days.**

   Pupils: If you talk to the Headteacher about your complaint in step 1 then we will not need to give you a written acknowledgement. The Headteacher will have given you a response time at this meeting.

3. **The Headteacher will investigate your complaint. This will usually include having a meeting with those involved. If you are asked to a meeting then you can bring a relative, friend, advocate or other person with you for support. However, we will expect you to speak and to answer questions; it is not for your companion to do that on your behalf. The Headteacher may also choose to have another person present as a witness to what is discussed.**

   Pupils: The Headteacher may not need to have a meeting with you if you already met in step 1.

4. **The Headteacher will keep a record of all meetings and discussions and the outcome of these.**

5. **Once the investigation is complete, the Headteacher will give you a written response to your complaint, normally within 10 days of completion.**

   Pupils: The Headteacher will also tell you their decision verbally to make sure you fully understand it and can ask any questions if necessary.

Stage C - Formal Complaint to Governing Body

It is rare that a complaint will progress to this stage. However, if we fail to resolve your complaint at stages A and B, or you feel that your complaint has not been dealt with fairly, you can make a formal complaint to the governing body. You should only complain directly to the governing body when there are special reasons for not using stages A and B, such as a serious complaint against the Headteacher.

If the Chair of Governors receives a complaint that could have been dealt with at stages A and B, and these have not been used, he or she may refer your complaint back to the Headteacher for investigation. They will tell you if this is the case.

1. **Complaint made in writing to Chair of Governors, through the school's address. We would normally expect you to do this within five school days of receiving the school's response to stage B.**

   Parents: Your letter should explain what your complaint is about, what the school has done to investigate and resolve it, and why you are not happy with the outcome.

   Pupils: You can talk to the Chair of Governors about your complaint instead of writing it down. We will write down everything you say, and you will be asked to read, agree and sign this record to make sure it correctly sets out your complaint. We will give you a copy of the record. The Chair will ask you what you are looking for as a solution or outcome to the problem. They will also let you know how it will be investigated.

2. **The Chair will acknowledge receipt of your complaint in writing and will let you know how your complaint will be dealt with. The Complaints Committee will normally have a meeting with you within 15 school days of receipt of your letter. You will be asked to agree a suitable time and venue for the meeting. The letter will also tell you when all the evidence and documentation to be considered by the complaints committee 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.**

   Pupils: If you talk to the Chair about your complaint in step 1 we will not need to give you a written acknowledgement. The Chair will have given you a response time at this meeting.

3. **Chair passes complaint to the Governing Body Complaints Committee. The Committee will have at least three members. The Governing Body may decide that one of the people appointed to this committee is an independent person instead of a governor, but the majority of committee members will always be governors.**

4. **The Complaints Committee will meet with you to consider the complaint. You can bring a relative, friend, advocate or other person with you for support. However, we will expect you to speak and to answer questions; it is not for your companion to do that on your behalf.**

Pupils: You can ask someone else to help you explain your complaint at the meeting.

The meeting will be conducted in an informal way with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy. Normally, in order to deal with the complaint as quickly as possible, the Complaints Committee will not reschedule the meeting more than once; after that, the committee may think it reasonable to make a decision on the complaint in your absence to avoid unnecessary delays.

At the meeting:

- you will be told the names and roles of the other people present;
- the purpose of the meeting will be explained;
- You will be asked to talk through your complaint. If you have witnesses, they will be asked to give their evidence. The committee may ask you questions.
- the Headteacher or other witnesses will explain the school's actions and response to the complaint. The committee may ask them questions.

At the end of the meeting the Chair will check:

- that you have said everything you wished to;
- that the committee has understood all the points made so that it is able to make a decision based on the facts;
- that you are clear about when you will be told the committee's decision and that you understand the decision will be final.

5. **The Complaints Committee considers all the evidence and reaches a decision. They may ask for advice from the Local Authority (Pembrokeshire County Council) or Diocesan Authority if appropriate.**

6. **The Committee will give you their decision in writing, usually within 10 school days of the meeting. They will tell you the reasons for their decision and any action to be taken by the school as a result.**

   Pupils: The Chair of the complaints committee will also tell you their decision verbally to make sure you fully understand it and can ask any questions if necessary.

7. **We will keep a record of your complaint, including any evidence presented and minutes of any meetings or discussions, for seven years.**

8. **Once you have been given a decision at the end of stage C the complaints process will end. There is no appeals process.**

If you are dissatisfied with the procedures used by the governing body to deal with your complaint, you can ask the Local Authority (LA) to review the governing body's actions. If the LA concludes that the governing body has not followed its procedure, or has acted unreasonably, or has failed to carry out its statutory duty to deal with the complaint, then the LA can direct the governing body to reconsider the complaint or to change its process to ensure future complaints are dealt with correctly. The LA cannot however overturn any governing body decision in respect of the complaint.

Pembrokeshire County Council has its own published complaints policy and procedures. However, complaints relating to schools made directly to the county council will be referred back to the school to deal with.

Special Circumstances

In some cases, for example if your complaint is against the Headteacher or a member of the governing body, we will follow slightly different procedures to the ones described above. If we need to do this, we will explain the differences to you.