



Concerns and Complaints Policy and Procedure

General Principles:

Our Concerns and Complaints Procedure is intended to support our core ideals and to contribute to the continual improvement of the education we provide.

Principles in practice:

Independent schools in Wales are required by Regulation to offer a procedure for concerns and complaints.

This procedure meets the regulatory requirements in full. It is intended to support us in effective listening so that problems can be positively resolved wherever possible. Our core purpose is to offer high quality Waldorf education. In order to improve our work, we seek to achieve this by evaluating and reviewing our practice.

We believe that the education of children is most effective when there is co-operation and mutual trust between all parties involved in the upbringing and education of the child.

1. Communication with parents is via
 - a. weekly newsletter,
 - b. emails when necessary,
 - c. termly parent meetings,
 - d. individual meetings and
 - e. an Annual General Meeting (AGM).

We encourage all members of the School 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.

2. Our concerns and complaints procedure aims to deal with issues in a fair and open manner. We intend to respond to questions and criticisms promptly and to resolve problems effectively.
3. In situations where there are allegations of professional misconduct, criminal offences, including matters covered by our Safeguarding Children Policy, or others that might result in a member of staff facing disciplinary action, an urgent investigation will take place. Evidence will be gathered from all parties.
4. We endeavor to take all reasonable steps to resolve complaints via the procedures set out in this document. There may be circumstances where resolution proves to be unobtainable. On those rare occasions, once all stages of our procedure have been exhausted, the School Governance Team (Trustees) reserve the right to treat the matter as closed. Further steps open to the complainants are indicated at the end of the document.

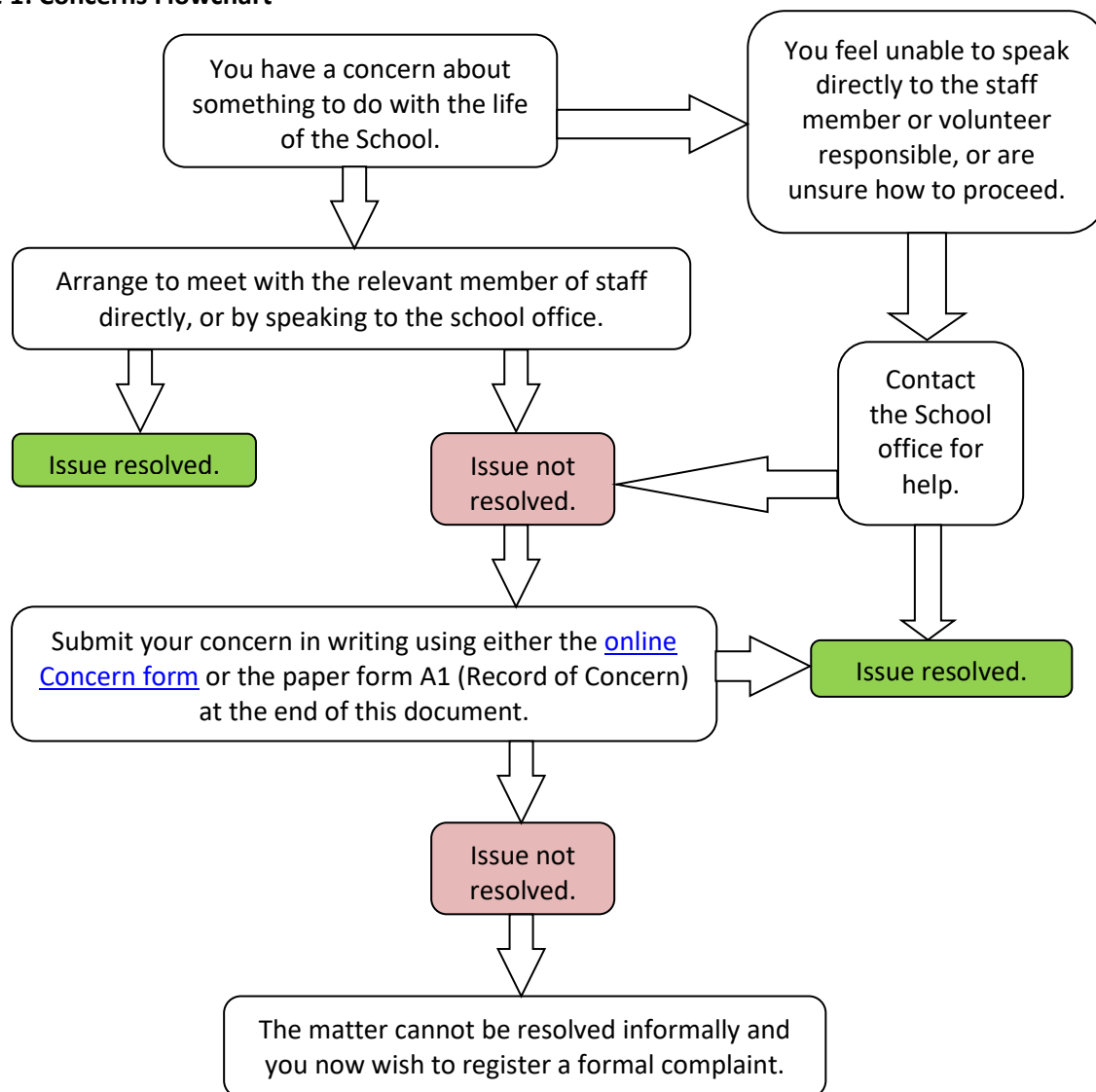
Stage 1: Concerns:

We hope that this procedure will help us to listen, acknowledge concerns, and be fair and consistent. We are committed to treating concerns seriously, and finding solutions.

1. If a concern is about any aspect of the School, please communicate this to the person, or team, directly responsible for the subject of your concern. If that is difficult, or you are unsure of who to contact, please go to the School office.
2. Concerns, and any further steps identified during the meeting, will be recorded by the School Administrator (i.e. actions arising). If no further action is required, the concern will be recorded and filed for review by the School Management Team.
3. If concerns remain, the School Management Team can arrange a further meeting to help explore the matter informally.

It is our aim to deal with issues that may arise through our concerns procedure. However, if the matter cannot be resolved informally, it should be raised as a written formal complaint (Stage 2). That Stage 2 procedure should be used immediately if the issue is one of a serious nature.

Stage 1: Concerns Flowchart

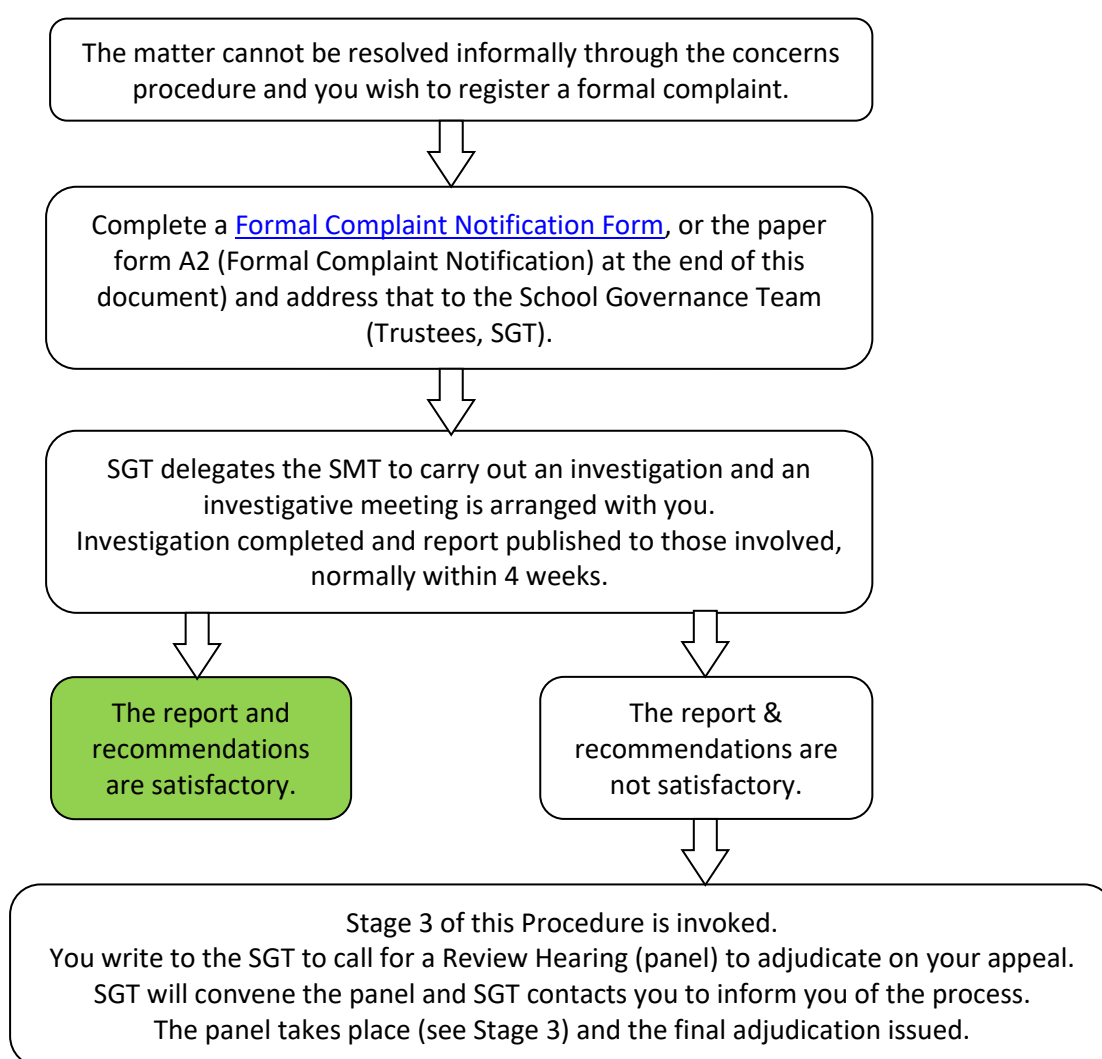


Stage 2: Formal Complaints

1. To register a formal complaint you should complete the [online Complaint Form](#) or the paper form A2 (Formal Complaint Notification) at the end of this document. You will receive an acknowledgement from the School Administrator, and a progress report within 5 working days from the School Management Team (SMT) who will administer the formal stage of the procedure.
2. SMT will arrange a Complaints Meeting of the relevant staff or volunteer and the complainant to discuss and investigate as soon as possible. The aim is to have a written response sent within four working weeks of receipt of the formal complaint.
3. For the Complaints Meeting, SMT will gather all information surrounding the complaint; the details of the any Concerns (Stage 1), what was carried out, and any other relevant evidence and information.
4. A nominated member of staff will attend the Complaints Meeting to take proper records of discussions and agreed actions, outcomes, and timetables of implementation.

5. Following the Complaints Meeting, the agreed results will be communicated verbally to the complainant by the nominated member of staff and confirmed in writing. The aim is that such a letter should be issued within four working weeks of the written formal complaint being received. If for any reason (i.e. because of holidays or complexity of the complaint) there is a delay, a letter will be sent by the nominated member of staff explaining the reason for the delay and giving a revised date for a formal response.
6. 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.
7. The complainant will be advised that if they remain dissatisfied, in order to progress the complaint further, they must write to the School Governance Team (SGT) within two weeks. They will be offered the opportunity of taking the complaint to a Review by a Complaints Panel at Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 2: Formal Complaints Flowchart



Stage 3: Review by Complaints Panel

We hope that complaints rarely reach this level. However, if the need arises, an objective Complaints Panel will review the procedure followed and a hearing will take place.

1. Once a formal request for a Review Hearing has been submitted, the nominated administration person will issue a written acknowledgement of receipt. This letter will also confirm to the complainant that the Review will be heard by the Review Hearing within 4 weeks of receiving the formal request. It will also inform the complainant of the right to submit any further documents other than the Stage 2 Formal Complaint Form. Any further information supplied 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 be accompanied by a companion of his/her choice, will also be explained in this initial letter.
2. The trustees will appoint the panel, normally 2 members of the panel will be trustees and the third a suitably qualified person independent of the SMT and SGT. The appointment of the panel is the responsibility of the SGT. 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.
3. Once appointed the Panel Chair will contact the complainant and all relevant staff who may need to attend, within 48 hours to inform the complainant of the procedure and composition of the panel, this will include:
 - The date and time and location of the hearing.
 - The process and aim of the hearing.
 - Members of the panel will review the complaint confidentially, with objectivity and without fear or favour.
 - The panel will make themselves familiar with the procedure and information relevant to the complaint.
 - The panel will hear your concerns and may call for the staff members against whom the complaint has been made.
 - The role of the panel is to verify whether the school has acted appropriately and to judge whether there is a need to change any procedures in light of the complaint.

Form A3 at the end of this document details guidelines for the conduct of a Review Hearing.

4. A written decision will be sent by the Chair of the Review Hearing within two weeks of the meeting, to the complainant, relevant staff and the School Governance Team.
5. The decision of the Panel will be final. The school offers no further appeal to the decision of a Review Panel.

Complaint Records

We keep the following records of the complaint:

- The complaint will be listed with the date first raised.
- The nature of the complaint.
- Dates of meetings, communications and those attending them.
- The outcome.
- Copies of all documentation.

Complaint records will be kept confidential and secure.

The school will publish the number of complaints dealt with each year, as required and made available to school inspectors in accordance with the law.

Other Routes of Complaint

Parents can contact the Welsh Assembly Independent School Department direct, quoting our school number - 6696008.

In the first instance the Welsh Assembly cannot consider complaints about independent schools. However, once the School's own Complaints Procedure has been followed and exhausted, a parent can send their complaint in writing to Julie Webster, Cathays Park, Welsh Assembly, Cardiff. CF10 3NQ

Author: TT/SMT
Reviewed January 2021
Review Date: March 2022

Stage 2 - Record of Concern

We hope this procedure will help us to listen, acknowledge concerns and be fair and consistent. We are committed to treating concerns seriously and finding solutions.

Submitting your concern using the [online Concern form](#) may save time in resolving it but completing this paper form will be dealt with in the same way.

Date Concern was reported:	
Staff member recording concern:	
Person/s expressing the concern:	
Nature of concern (in brief):	
Details of the concern (please record all relevant dates, people involved etc. and continue overleaf if required.)	
Action agreed:	
How actions were, or will be, communicated to person/s expressing the concern.	
Signed by staff member recording the concern	Signed by person/s expressing the concern
Date:	Date:

Please hand this completed form to the office for action, review, and filing.

Stage 3 - Formal Complaint Notification

Submitting your concern using the [online Complaint form](#) may save time in resolving it but completing this paper form will be dealt with in the same way.

Date complaint was reported:	
Person/s submitting the complaint:	
Staff member acknowledging the complaint:	
Please set out the issues of your complaint. Please be as specific as possible, giving dates, sequence of events:	
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please list it here.	
What do you feel needs to be done to resolve this matter?	
Signed by person/s making the complaint	
Date:	

**Please hand this completed form to the School office for action, review, and filing.
The School Administrator will inform the Chair of Trustees that a formal complaint has been lodged.**

We recommend that you keep a copy of this form for your own records.

Stage 3 - Review Hearing – Guidelines for Conduct

The Panel Chair is responsible for the conduct of the hearing.

Normally the Panel Chair would be the “independent” panel member. The following notes provide a general overview of the way a hearing will normally be conducted:

The role of the Panel Hearing is to verify whether the School has acted appropriately during all stages of this procedure, and to judge whether there is a need to change any of its procedures in the light of this complaint. The Panel Chair will ensure that the proceedings are accurately recorded.

Normally, no new information, witnesses, or other evidence can be allowed at the time of the Panel Hearing. If new information is available it should be submitted 7 days prior to the hearing so that everyone has time to consider and respond to it. New evidence supplied later than this may lead to an adjournment of the hearing.

1. Prior to the hearing, the parties should wait in separate rooms. The Review Panel will hear evidence from the parties separately.
2. The Chair welcomes the complainant and companion, introduces the Review Panel, and outlines the process that will be followed.
3. The complainant is asked to explain their objections to the conclusions of the Stage 2 investigation.
4. Agreed witnesses may be called (normally witness evidence will be provided in written form).
5. The Panel may ask questions for clarification.
6. The complainant and companion leave the meeting room.
7. The Chair welcomes the member of staff representing the recommendations of the investigation, introduces the Review Panel, and outlines the process that will be followed.
8. The staff member explains the original response to the panel: steps 4, 5, 6 follow as above.
9. The panel considers what it has heard and the evidence, and may recall either party to answer further questions to resolve inconsistencies.
10. The panel considers its decision – either to
 - give a verbal summary of its unanimous decision,
 - reserve its decision for up to 36 hours, at the end of which a final judgement will be issued in writing, or
 - state that it is unable to arrive at a decision, in which case the procedure should be restarted with a different panel¹.
11. The deliberations of the panel are confidential. If there is a split decision, the Chair has the casting vote.
12. The panel decision will –
 - uphold or deny the complaint according to the evidence available. In addition -
 - it may recommend changes to School procedure or other measures to help ensure similar complaints do not reoccur, or
 - it may require the School to take action to redress the complaint, e.g. to issue an apology, or statement of correction
13. The parties will be recalled to the meeting room either to -
 - hear a brief summing up from the panel, or
 - to be told of the decision to reserve judgement, or
 - to be told that the panel, having been unable make a decision, will dissolve with a new panel to be convened at the earliest possible opportunity.
14. If there is to be a summing up, the panel Chair should explain that he will give its view of what they have heard, that this is not an opportunity for either party to ‘argue the matter further’, however, after the verbal summary has been made the parties may put a limited number of questions to the panel to assist their understanding of the adjudication.
15. The outcome of the panel will be confirmed in writing within 10 working days.
16. The School’s internal procedure is complete.

¹ While the final option should be available, in reality, a non-decision of this type ought to be rare. To record a non-decision is, in effect, a panel is passing a vote of no-confidence in itself...