

CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

General Principles:

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.

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 improve 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: weekly newsletter and parent mail, termly parent meetings and individual meetings and an AGM. We 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.
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 impossible. On those rare occasions, once all stages of our procedure have been exhausted, the 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.

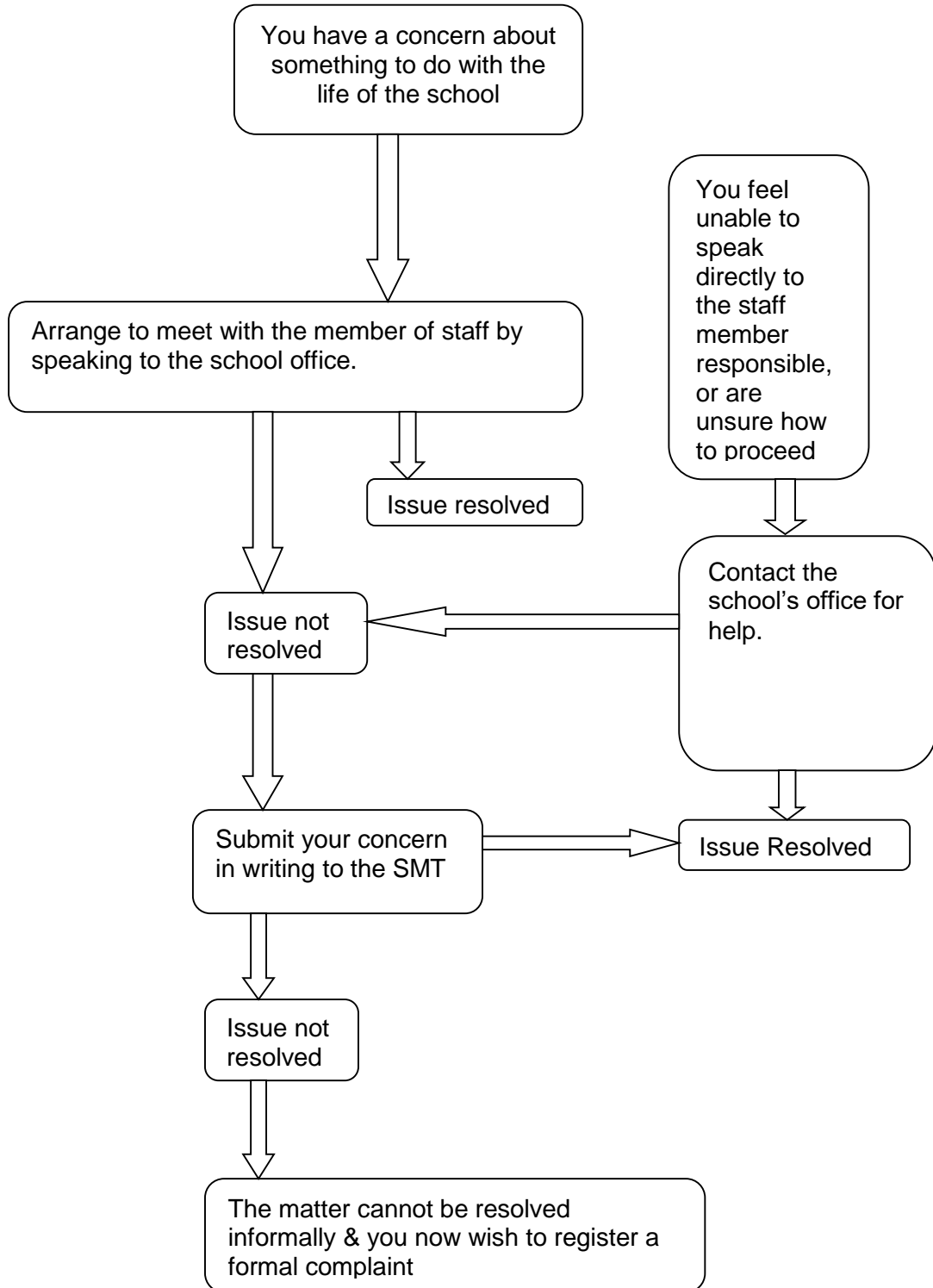
1. If a concern is about any aspect of the school, please communicate this to the person/team directly responsible for the subject of your concern. If you are unsure of whom to contact, please go to the school office.



2. Concerns, and any further steps identified during the meeting, will be recorded by the admin staff (i.e. actions arising).
If no further action is required, the concern will be recorded and filed for review by 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. This procedure should be used immediately if the issue is one of a serious nature.

Stage 1: Concerns Flowchart

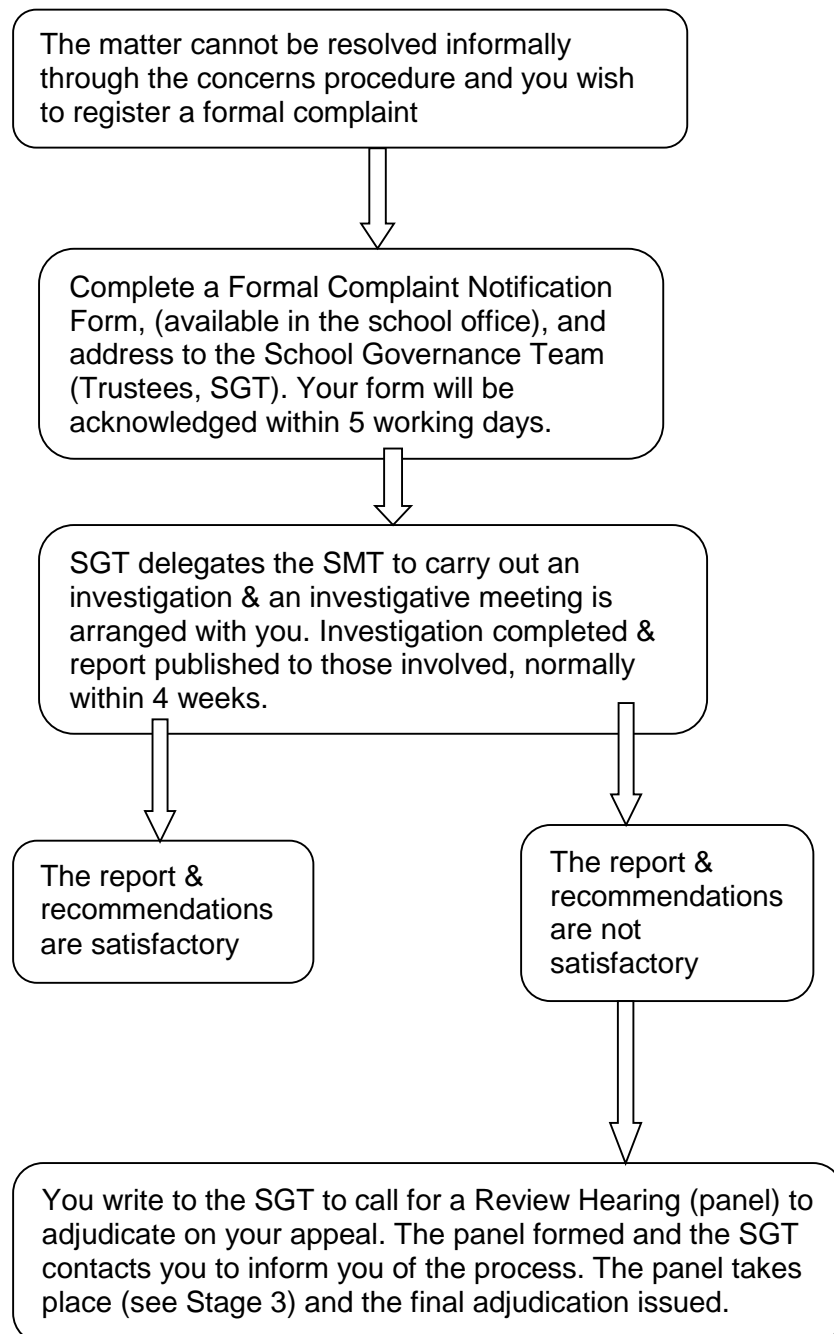


Stage 2: Formal Complaints

1. To register a formal complaint put your complaint in writing on the **Formal Complaint Notification Form**, (copies available from the school office), addressed to the Trustees (SGT), who will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 5 working days and delegate SMT to administer the formal stage of the procedure.
2. SMT will 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 four weeks of receipt of the formal complaint.
3. For the Complaints Meeting, SMT will gather all information surrounding the complaint; the details of the Concerns Stage; what was carried out; and any other relevant evidence and information.
4. A nominated administration person 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 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.
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 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 Complaint

Formal Complaints Flowchart



Stage 3: Review by Complaints Panel

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

1. 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 complainant that the complaint will be heard by the Review Hearing within 4 weeks of receiving the formal complaint. It will also inform the complainant of the right to submit any further documents other than the 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.
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 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.

The Welsh Assembly 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:

Julie Webster
Cathays Park
Welsh Assembly
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

Author: TT/SMT
Reviewed March 2019
Review Date: March 2020



FORM A2

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.

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/will be communicated to person/s expressing the concern.

Signed

Staff member recording the concern

Person/s expressing the concern

Please hand your completed form to the office for file and review.



Form A3

**Formal Complaint Notification
(Formal stage of Complaint Procedure)**

Your name & contact details:

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:

Date:

**Please return this form to the school's Administrator, who 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.**

Form A4

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 & 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. New information should be made available 7 days prior to the hearing so that everyone has time to consider & 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 & companion, introduces the Review Panel & outlines the process that will be followed
3. The complainant is asked to explain their objections to the conclusions of the 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 & companion leave the meeting room
7. The Chair welcomes the member of staff representing the recommendations of the investigation, introduces the Review Panel & 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 & the evidence & may recall either party for to answer further questions
10. The panel considers its decision – either to
 - give a verbal summary of its unanimous decision
 - reserve its decision for to 36 hours, at the end of which a final judgement will be issued in writing
 - 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

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...

- 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 for either to -
 - o hear a brief summing up from the panel, or
 - o to be told of the decision to reserve judgement
 - o 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