



# Ysgol Bethania

## COMPLAINTS POLICY

Signed by:

Headteacher

Date:

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26/05/2026

Director/Proprietor

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Director/Proprietor

26/05/2026

Date:

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## Mission Statement

The school is part of Shining Stars School and College. Shining Stars School and College is the operational name for the education services of Shining Stars School and College Limited. Shining Stars School and College is an organisation with a social purpose that seeks to transform the lives of children and young people who have ALN and Complex Needs. Our approach is grounded in the lived experience of the children and young people we support and in valuing their contributions. As experts by experience, Shining Stars School and College ensure the services they receive are personal to them.

## Introduction

This Complaints Policy is underpinned by the Essential Standards below. Along with the Shining Stars School and College Mission Statement, these Essential Standards set out the organisation's commitment to safeguarding and promoting children's welfare.

## Essential Standards

- **Individualised Education** - Children and young people will receive education and support that is tailored to meet their specific needs and any diverse needs.
- **Dignity and respect** – Shining Stars School and College will ensure children and young people have privacy when needed and appropriate, are treated as equals, are given appropriate support to help them to be independent, to fulfil their potential, and to be involved in their respective local communities.
- **Equality** – Shining Stars School and College is an inclusive organisation that works hard to ensure that children and young people are safeguarded and have the same protection regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation. Shining Stars School and College is committed to anti-discriminatory practice. In so doing, we recognise the additional needs of children from minority ethnic groups and disabled children, including the barriers they face.
- **Safety** – Shining Stars School and College will ensure that appropriate safeguarding practice is in place so that children and young people do not receive unsafe care or treatment or be put at risk of any potential harm. A robust risk assessment strategy will be in place to minimise harm during activities and the delivery of education and support. Shining Stars School and College will ensure children and staff have the appropriate knowledge, qualifications, experience, competence, and skills to keep children and young people safe through appropriate learning and development opportunities.
- **Safeguarding from abuse** - Children and young people have an absolute entitlement to receive care and support without suffering any form of abuse or improper care. This includes disproportionate restraint, unnecessary or inappropriate restrictions on freedom, bullying, neglect, and abuse from their peers, carers, and all professionals involved in their care.
- **Complaints** – Shining Stars School and College will ensure that the systems in place for handling complaints are followed by staff to make sure that all complaints are monitored and considered seriously, handled, and responded to sensitively. The complaint investigation will be comprehensive and conducted in a timely manner, including informing the complainant about the outcome of their complaint. Any areas for learning will be identified and discussed to enable appropriate action.
- **Whistleblowing** – Shining Stars School and College have a robust whistleblowing policy, and staff have a duty of care to raise and report concerns. That it is known by all staff and is supported by staff training.

We encourage the active reporting of any concerns raised by our staff, our children, and young people, and third parties, and we ensure that all such concerns are addressed in a timely manner. Any learning from such reports will be embedded into continuing professional development and will inform professional practice.

- **Good governance** – Shining Stars School and College have an Independent Safeguarding and Quality Improvement Governance Board to ensure that a robust governance framework is in place, including scrutiny and oversight of internal and external service audits. Good governance will help improve the delivery of services and identify and minimise risks to children and young people’s health, safety, and wellbeing.
- **Legislative framework** – Shining Stars School and College will ensure that it complies with regulatory standards, regulations, and government guidance that underpins its services relating to schools in Wales.
- **Staffing** – Shining Stars School and College will ensure that its staff comply with these essential standards through appropriate levels of support, culturally appropriate training, and supervision that is reflective, empowering, and insightful to effectively assist them in their role.
- **Fitness to practice** – Shining Stars and College will seek to recruit and retain a staff that can evidence their competence, knowledge, and professional practice to provide safe and appropriate care in line with their roles and responsibilities.

## Introduction

At Ysgol Bethania, we have a vested interest and are committed to ensuring that children are happy, do well, and have a range of ways to raise their concerns. We recognise the importance of listening to children’s experiences and views about their school, particularly if they are unhappy. Additionally, we want to respond to parents, carers, and others where appropriate, and will use the issues raised to support the ongoing development of our school.

Complaints will be dealt with in the most suitable way for the issues, not just according to a set of procedures, while recognising the importance of a clear policy and procedures in the process. This means addressing the complaint will take into account:

- The complainants’ views.
- The nature of the complaint
- The potential implication for the complainant
- The potential implications for Shining Stars School and College Ltd

Our primary aim is to make sure that everyone, children, parents, and others, has and feels confidence in the complaint process and that we take their complaints/concerns seriously.

Complaints can be made through the medium of Welsh, or if requested, a response to the complaint can also be provided through the medium of Welsh. In both instances, however, a translated English version would also be required.

## 1. Aims

Our school aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from students, parents, carers of students at the school, and others.

When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- Be impartial and non-adversarial.
- Facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary.
- Address all the points identified within the complaint and provide an effective and prompt response.
- Respect the complainant's desire for confidentiality, although if the complaint relates to a safeguarding matter, the complainant will be informed of our duty to safeguard children and therefore the information will need to be shared with the relevant agencies in line with our Safeguarding policy, and Keeping Learners Safe in Education <https://www.gov.wales/keeping-learners-safe>.
- Treat the complainant with respect and courtesy. Where the complainant is a pupil, it is important that we take into account their age, understanding, and any additional circumstances.
- Ensure that any decisions we make are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair, and proportionate, in line with the principles of our Essential Standards, the need to safeguard and promote students' welfare, and in line with the regulatory requirements.
- Keep the complainant informed at all stages of the complaints process, including any delays.
- We will use the learning and outcomes from complaints to assist us in developing and improving our practice.

We aim to resolve all concerns and complaints in a timely manner, and to do so through an informal process wherever possible. Where this is not possible, formal procedures will be followed.

Throughout the process, we will be sensitive to the needs of all parties involved and make any reasonable adjustments needed to accommodate individuals.

## 2. Legislation and guidance

This document meets the requirements set out in part 7 of [the Education \(Independent School Standards \(Wales\) Regulations 2024](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2003/3234/contents/made), <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2003/3234/contents/made> which states that we must have and make available a written procedure to deal with complaints from parents, when appropriate and where appropriate and carers of students at the school.

### **3. Scope**

The school intends to resolve complaints informally where possible, at the earliest stage. Students, in particular, may not wish for their complaints or concerns to be dealt with formally and may want their complaints/concerns to be addressed quickly. Wherever possible, it is important to listen to what students want. However, we recognise that there may be occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns/complaint formally. This policy outlines the procedure relating to handling such complaints.

### **5. Roles and responsibilities**

#### **5.1 The complainant**

The complainant will always secure an effective and timely response to their complaint where they:

- Follow the procedures.
- Co-operate with the school throughout the process, and support the process by responding timely for example, request for more information.
- Treat all those involved with respect.
- Not publish details about the complaint on social media, especially if the complaint mentions other students and their families/carers.

#### **5.2 The investigating Officer.**

An individual will be appointed to investigate the complaint/concerns and establish the facts.

They will:

- Interview all relevant parties, keeping notes.
- Consider records and any written evidence, and keep these securely.
- Prepare a comprehensive report for the Headteacher and/or Education Director/Proprietor. This report will address the issues investigated and include any learning and or recommendations for improvement, as well as where the standard has been breached.

The investigating officer will:

- Be the contact point for the complainant and the Senior Leadership Team, including circulating the relevant papers and evidence before complaints meetings.
- Arrange the complaints hearing.
- Record and circulate the minutes and outcome of the hearing.

## **6 Principles for investigation**

When investigating a complaint/concern, we will try to clarify:

- What has happened.
- Who was involved.
- What the complainant feels would put things right

### **Time scales**

Where a complaint is from a child, it will be addressed within 7 days of receipt. They will be notified of any delays. This is because a child may not fully understand why their complaint is taking a long time to be resolved. Furthermore, a child may not want to make a complaint at the time of the incident, and we must be sensitive to this.

All other complainants must raise the complaint within 3 months of the incident. If the complaint is about a series of related incidents, it must be raised within 3 months of the last incident.

We will consider exceptions to this time frame in circumstances where there are valid reasons for not raising their complaint at the time, and the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved.

When complaints are made outside of term time, we will consider them received on the next school day.

If at any point we cannot meet the time scales set out in this policy, we will:

- Set new time limits with the complainant.
- Send the complainant details of the new deadline and explain the delay.

As most of our children are looked after, we will only notify parents where it is safe to do so of a concern raised by their child, but we will always notify the carers.

## **7. Stages of complaint (not complaints against the Headteacher or teaching staff)**

### **7.1 Stage 1**

The school will take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter quickly. It may be that providing or clarifying information will resolve the issue.

The complainant should raise the complaint as soon as possible with the relevant member of staff or the Headteacher, either in person or in writing by using one of our forms, letters, telephone, or email. If the complainant is unclear who to contact or how to contact them, they should contact the office at [amanda.higham@ysgolbethania.co.uk](mailto:amanda.higham@ysgolbethania.co.uk), Telephone 07834604628, or the Managing Director at [liliana.modoi@ysgolbethania.co.uk](mailto:liliana.modoi@ysgolbethania.co.uk), Telephone 07808223690, or, if the complaint/concerns relate to the Proprietor, Education Director, or Headteacher.

Upon receipt of a formal complaint, the Managing Director and/or the Education Director will appoint an Investigating Officer to investigate it.

On receipt of the complaint, the member of staff receiving the complaint will then do the following:

- Log the complaint into the Complaints File on the Log Sheet for that month.
- Acknowledge the complaint via a letter.
- Hold an initial fact-finding meeting with the complainant and record this.
- Complainants are entitled to bring a representative to this or any other meeting.

- Most complaints can be resolved at this stage. If the complaint is resolved at Stage 1, the complainant will be asked to sign a record of the meeting as an indication of their agreement with the outcome. They will be given a copy of the signed minutes, and the school will retain the original.
- The complaints form will clearly indicate “Informal Resolution Agreed”.
- The complaints log will then be completed with the outcomes.
- If the complaint is not resolved informally the Investigating Officer will carry out any subsequent checks / speak to any other staff or students as required and then agree with an outcome.
- An outcome letter will be sent to the complainant with a comments page to be returned to the school.
- Stage 1 should be completed within 14 days of the receipt of the complaint.
- If the complainant is not happy with the outcome, this is then referred to as stage 2.

#### **Stage 2:**

Upon initiation of a stage 2 inquiry, the Headteacher will liaise with the Education Director, who will:

- Nominate a Stage 2 Investigating Officer, external to the school, to look at the complaint.
- Further investigations may take place, with all previous paperwork being perused thoroughly.
- Stage 2 should be completed within 14 days of its initiation and in total a maximum of 28 days from the start of Stage 1. A further outcome letter will be sent to the complainant with a comments page to be returned to the school.
- If the complainant is still not happy with the outcome at Stage 2, it will be referred to Stage 3.

#### **Stage 3:**

The complainant will be advised of their right to ask an independent body or Children’s Rights to investigate the complaint, and will be supported throughout the process.

#### **General Notes**

Throughout the stages, all investigations carried out will be documented, recorded, copied, and placed in the complaint as evidence.

Any meetings/discussions held must be signed and dated by all parties involved. At any time during the complaint investigation, complainants have the right to:

- Withdraw the complaint at any stage.
- Refer the complaint to the placing authority where the complaint/concerns relate to safeguarding, ill-treatment of the pupil, and or a serious incident impacting on the pupil's welfare.
- Refer the complaint to the police if the nature of the complaint warrants this, such as safeguarding and physical or sexual assaults, for example.
- Refer the complaint to an independent body.

Complaint outcomes can be of 3 categories, and all complaints must be concluded with one of the following categories:

- **Upheld** - there is evidence to support the complaint.
- **Partially Upheld** - there is evidence to support aspects of the complaint.
- **Not Upheld** - there is no evidence to support the complaint.

If this raises any safeguarding concerns, then this should be managed via our safeguarding procedure. Concerns about staff conduct may be addressed by the company through the company's Disciplinary and Grievance processes.

Complaints against the Headteacher will be referred directly to the Education Director, and then to the Managing Director, who will make the necessary arrangements to ensure an appropriate, open, and transparent investigation.

Complaints will be escalated to the panel hearing stage if the complainant is not satisfied with the response to the complaint at the second, formal stage.

The panel will be appointed by or on behalf of the Proprietor and will consist of at least three (3) people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. At least one (1) panel member is assigned as the independent person not involved with the management and running of the school. The panel will consist of a group of people, not just board members, but also individuals independent of the school.

The panel will have access to the existing record of the complaint's progress (see section 10).

The complainant must have reasonable notice of the date of the review panel; however, the review panel reserves the right to convene at their convenience rather than that of the complainant. At the review panel meeting, the complainant and representatives from the school, as appropriate, will be present. Each will have an opportunity to set out written or oral submissions prior to the meeting.

The complainant must be allowed to attend the panel hearing and be accompanied if they wish.

At the meeting, each individual will have the opportunity to give statements and present their evidence, and witnesses will be called, as appropriate, to present their evidence.

The panel, the complainant and the school representative(s) will be given the chance to ask and reply to questions. Once the complainant and school representative(s) have presented their cases, they will be asked to leave, and evidence will then be considered.

The panel will then put together its findings and recommendations from the case. The panel will also provide copies of the hearing minutes and the findings and recommendations to the complainant and, where relevant, the individual who is the subject of the complaint, and make them available for inspection by the Proprietor and Headteacher.

## **8. Complaints against the Headteacher and school staff**

### **Stage 1: informal**

Complaints made against the Headteacher or school staff member should be directed to the Education Director.

### **Stage 2: formal**

If the complaint concerns the Headteacher or a school staff member, an independent investigator will follow the steps in stage 2 and write a formal response at the end of their investigation.

### **Stage 3: review panel**

If the complaint is about the Headteacher or a member of school staff, then the Managing Director will hear the complaint and will carry out the steps at stage 3.

## **9. Referring complaints on completion of the school's procedure**

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of the school's complaints investigation into their complaint, and the complaint is regarding the school not meeting standards in any of the following areas, the complainant can refer their complaint to the Governing Board/Proprietor/Managing Director.

- Education
- Pupil welfare and health and safety
- School premises
- Staff suitability
- Making information available to parents
- The spiritual, moral, social, or cultural development of students

## **10. Persistent complaints**

### **Unreasonably persistent complaints**

Most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore, we will treat them seriously. However, a complaint may become unreasonable if the person:

- Has made the same complaint before, and it's already been resolved by following the school's Complaints Procedure.
- Makes a complaint that is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, defamatory, or repetitive, or knowingly provides false information.
- Insists on pursuing an unfounded complaint, or out of the scope of the complaint's procedure.
- Pursues a valid complaint, but unreasonably, e.g., refuses to articulate the complaint, refuses to cooperate with this complaint procedure, or insists that the complaint is dealt with in ways that are incompatible with this procedure and the time frames it sets out.
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation goes on.
- Make a complaint designed to cause disruption, annoyance, or excessive demands on schooltime.
- Seeks unrealistic outcomes or a solution that lacks any serious purpose or value.

### **Steps we will take**

We will take every reasonable step to address the complainants' concerns and give them a clear statement of our position and their options. We will maintain our role as an objective arbiter throughout the process, including when we meet with individuals. We will follow our complaints procedure as normal (as outlined above) wherever possible.

If the complainant continues to contact the school in a disruptive way; we may put communications strategies in place. We may:

- Give the complainant a single point of contact via an email address.

- Limit the number of times the complainant can make contact, such as a fixed number per term.
- Ask the complainant to engage a third party to act on their behalf, such as [Citizens Advice](#)
- Put any other strategy in place as necessary.

### **Stopping responding**

We may stop responding to the complainant when all of these factors are met:

- We believe we have taken all reasonable steps to help address their concerns.
- We have provided a clear statement of our position and their options.
- The complainant contacts us repeatedly, and we believe they intend to cause disruption or inconvenience.

When we stop responding, we will inform the individual that we intend to do so. We will also explain that we will still consider any new complaints they make.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from our school site.

### **10.1 Duplicate complaints**

If we have resolved a complaint under this procedure and receive a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a partner, family member, or other individuals, we will assess whether there are aspects that we hadn't previously considered or any new information we need to take into account.

If we are satisfied that there are no new aspects, we will:

- Tell the new complainant that we have already investigated and responded to this issue, and the local process is complete.
- Direct them to the Managing Director if they are dissatisfied with our original handling of the complaint.
- If there are new aspects, we will follow this procedure again.

### **11. Record keeping**

The school will record the progress of all complaints, including information about actions taken at all stages, the stage at which the complaint was resolved, and the outcome. The records will also include copies of letters and emails, and notes relating to meetings and phone calls.

This material will be treated as confidential and held centrally and will be viewed only by those involved in investigating the complaint or on the review panel.

Except where the National Assembly, or a body conducting an inspection under section 163 of the 2002 Act, requests access to any documents relating to the complaint.

All complaints will be stored securely and kept in line with The Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR. Please see the school's GDPR policy for more information.

### **12. Learning lessons**

We will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the Education Director/ Managing Director and then Senior leadership team (SLT), where appropriate, and respecting confidentiality, if and where appropriate to do so, to determine whether there are any improvements that the school can make to its procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future and or to safeguard and promote pupil's welfare.

### **13. Monitoring arrangements**

The complaints records will be logged and managed by the Headteacher.

This policy will be reviewed and approved by the Managing Director, Education Director, Headteacher, and the Governance Board every 12 months.

### **14. Links with other policies**

Policies dealing with other forms of complaints include:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures
- Admissions policy
- Exclusions policy
- Employee Handbook
- ALN policy

Ysgol Bethania makes its Complaints Procedure available to all parents/carers of students and of prospective students on the Ysgol Bethania website. Ysgol Bethania will ensure that parents of students and of prospective students who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and of the form in which it is published or available.

At Ysgol Bethania, we feel that the pupils' voices are a crucial part of our community. We encourage our young people to follow the pupil complaint procedure that can be found in each classroom.

The Welsh Government has established MEIC, which is a national advocacy and advice line for children and young people. Advice and support can also be accessed from the children's commissioner for Wales. The entire complaints process is also guided by the UNCRC and the Rights of the Child will be kept in ongoing consideration when responding to any complaint.

MEIC may be contacted by freephone: 0808 802 3456, or text: 04001. This service is operated 24 hours a day.

The children's commissioner of Wales can be contacted BY FREEPHONE: 0800 801 1000 ( Mon- Fri 9am to 5pm), text 80 800 (Start your message with CONM) or email: [advice@childcomwales.org.uk](mailto:advice@childcomwales.org.uk)