

Clytha Primary School

Complaints Policy

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**‘To Lift Ourselves and Others into our Best Future’ ‘I godi’n hunain a phawb
ar gyfer dyfodol disglair’**

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INTRODUCTION

This policy explains concisely the approach which the school will take to address complaints raised by parents or other third parties.

Clytha Primary School is staffed by teachers and support staff who are not only qualified and expert in their own field, but who have also chosen to work with children because they care for children and wish to help them in every way possible.

Nevertheless, as a school, things from time to time arise which may lead a parent, pupil or other person involved with the school to express a concern. A concern is not a complaint and should not be treated as such by the parent or the school. Our definition of a complaint is 'an expression of dissatisfaction in relation to the school or a member of its staff that requires a response from the school.'

The school is committed to dealing effectively with complaints. We aim to clarify any issues about which you are not sure. If possible we will put right any mistakes we have made and we will apologise. We aim to learn from mistakes and use that experience to improve what we do.

When concerns that have been raised are resolved there should be no need for a formal complaint. However, failure to respond to a concern could give rise to a complaint.

The school follows the Welsh Government Policy and Procedure Guidelines. A copy of this is available from the School Office and is on our website. The full procedure also contains a model complaints form which may be used if necessary to submit a complaint.

It is the policy of the school that records will be maintained of all complaints raised in order that full consideration may be made of the complaint at each stage. Records also assist the school in learning from issues raised and to evaluate and improve school performance.

This complaints procedure supports our commitment and is a way of ensuring that anyone with an interest in the school can raise a concern, with confidence that it will be heard and, if well-founded, addressed in an appropriate and timely fashion.

SUMMARY OF PROCEDURE

The School Complaints Procedure is summarised in this document. The Procedure encompasses a range of scenarios including complaints from parents about staff, the Head teacher and the Governing Body.

The Complaints Procedure follows a staged approach as set out in Welsh Government guidelines and can be summarised as follows:

Stage 1- Informal Stage

The complaint is raised with the initial point of contact, which in Clytha is the class teacher, although this could also refer to the Head teacher. At this stage the complaint may be verbal, or in writing.

Stage 2- Formal Stage

If the complaint is not resolved by the initial contact to the satisfaction of the parent or other complainant, the matter should be referred to the Head teacher in writing, so that the nature of the complaint can be easily explained.

If the complaint is about the Head teacher, the complaint should be made to the Chair of Governors.

In most circumstances, a meeting with the Head teacher will take place to discuss the complaint. It is anticipated that most complaints will be resolved, to the satisfaction of the complainant, at this stage of the process.

Stage 3-Complaints Committee Hearing

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome at Stage 2, the complaint may be referred to the Governing Body for consideration. Initially, this should be conveyed in writing to the Chair of Governors, whose contact details can be obtained from the School Office, from the Annual Report to Parents and from the school website. The Governing Body annually elects a panel of Governors to consider complaints that reach Stage 3. The panel will meet, together with the parties involved, to consider the matter.

There is no Complaints Appeal Process within the remit of the Governing Body. If the complaint is not resolved by the Governing Body, the complainant may make representation to the Local Authority. Further information about this process is available from the school and from the Local Authority.

In extreme circumstances, the complainant can address their complaint to the Welsh Ministers or Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The complainant should put their complaint in writing and enclose copies of their original complaint and any other relevant papers.

STATUTORY COMPLAINTS

There are special arrangements for dealing with statutory complaints and they are not to be dealt with under the above procedures.

The following special arrangements exist for dealing with statutory complaints:

- The Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to consider a relevant complaint about the curriculum, Religious Education, Sex and Relationships Education and Collective Worship. In each case, it is suggested that they should discuss the problem with the Head teacher first.
- Appeals against decisions about a child's special educational needs. A Tribunal has been established to deal with complaints of this nature. The school or the Local Authority will be able to give details to parents.
- If parents are not offered a place at the school of their choice, or if their child is suspended or excluded from school. The school will tell them how to appeal if this situation should ever arise.

OTHER COMPLAINTS

Complaints can be made by a number of people/bodies.

They can be made by members of the public, local residents, after-school club coordinators. They can be in regard to the conduct of the children, conditions of the building, usage of the school site etc. In these circumstances, complaints are to be made to the Head teacher, preferably in writing. Those complaining will be advised of the complaints procedures, with unresolved complaints being referred to the Governing Body.

The Governing Body also has a Grievance Panel of three Governors that can be called in the event of a member of staff alleging a grievance. The grievance is heard according to grievance procedures.

2. WHEN TO USE THIS PROCEDURE

- 2.1 When you have a concern or wish to make a complaint we will usually respond in the way we explain below. Sometimes you might be concerned about matters that are not decided by the school, in which case we will tell you who to complain to. At other times you may be concerned about matters that are handled by other procedures, in which case we will explain to you how your concern will be dealt with.
- 2.2 If your concern or complaint is about another body as well as the school (for example the local authority) we will work with them to decide how to handle your concern.

3. HAVE YOU ASKED US YET?

- 3.1 If you are approaching us for the first time you should give us a chance to respond. If you are not happy with our response, then you may make your complaint using the procedure we describe below. Most concerns can be settled quickly just by speaking to the relevant person in school, without the need to use a formal procedure.

4. WHAT WE EXPECT FROM YOU

- 4.1 We believe that all complainants have a right to be heard, understood and respected. But school staff and governors have the same right. We expect you to be polite and courteous. We will not tolerate aggressive, abusive or unreasonable behaviour. We will also not tolerate unreasonable demands or unreasonable persistence or vexatious complaining.

5. OUR APPROACH TO ANSWERING YOUR CONCERN OR COMPLAINT

- 5.1 We will consider all your concerns and complaints in an open and fair way.
- 5.2 At all times the school will respect the rights and feelings of those involved and make every effort to protect confidential information.
- 5.3 Timescales for dealing with your concerns or complaints may need to be extended following discussion with you.
- 5.4 We may ask for advice from the local authority or diocesan authority where appropriate.
- 5.5 Some types of concern or complaint may raise issues that have to be dealt with in another way (other than this complaints policy), in which case we will explain why this is so, and will tell you what steps will be taken.

- 5.6 The governing body will keep the records of documents used to investigate your concern or complaint for seven years after it has been dealt with. Records will be kept in school and reviewed by the governing body after seven years to decide if they need to be kept for longer.
- 5.7 Complaints that are made anonymously will be recorded but investigation will be at the discretion of the school depending on the nature of the complaint.
- 5.8 Where complaints are considered to have been made only to cause harm or offence to individuals or the school, the governing body will ensure that records are kept of the investigations that are made and what actions are taken, including the reasons for 'no action'.

6. ANSWERING YOUR CONCERN OR COMPLAINT

- 6.1 The chart in Appendix A shows what may happen when you make a complaint or raise a concern. There are up to three Stages: A, B and C. Most complaints can be resolved at Stages A or B. You can bring a relative or companion to support you at any time during the process but you will be expected to speak for yourself. However, we recognise that when the complainant is a pupil it is reasonable for the companion to speak on their behalf and/or to advise the pupil.
- 6.2 As far as possible, your concern or complaint will be dealt with on a confidential basis. However, there may be occasions when the person dealing with your concern or complaint will need to consider whether anyone else within the school needs to know about your concern or complaint, so as to address it appropriately.
- 6.3 If you are a pupil under 16 and wish to raise a concern or bring a complaint we will ask for your permission before we involve your parent(s) or carer(s). If you are a pupil under 16 and are involved in a complaint in any other way, we may ask your parent(s) or carer(s) to become involved and attend any discussion or interview with you.

STAGE A

- 6.4 If you have a concern, you can often resolve it quickly by talking to a teacher or a member of the office staff. You should raise your concern as soon as you can; normally we would expect you to raise your issue within 10 school days of any incident. The longer you leave it the harder it might be for those involved to deal with it effectively.
- 6.5 If you are a pupil, you can raise your concerns with your school council representative, form tutor or a teacher chosen to deal with pupil concerns. This will not stop you, at a later date, from raising a complaint if you feel that the issue(s) you have raised have not been dealt with properly.
- 6.6 We will try to let you know what we have done or are doing about your concern normally within 10 school days, but if this is not possible, we will talk to you and agree a revised timescale with you.

- 6.7 The person overseeing your concern or complaint will keep you informed of the progress being made. This person will also keep a log of the concern for future reference, giving reasons for the delay.

STAGE B

- 6.8 In most cases, we would expect that your concern is resolved informally. If you feel that your initial concern has not been dealt with appropriately you should put your complaint in writing to the headteacher.
- 6.9 We would expect you to do this within five school days of receiving a response to your concern as it is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as soon as possible. There is also a form attached (Appendix B) that you may find useful. If you are a pupil we will explain the form to you, help you complete it and give you a copy.
- 6.10 If your complaint is about the headteacher, you should put your complaint in writing to the chair of governors, addressed to the school, to ask for your complaint to be investigated.
- 6.11 In all cases a member of staff can help you to put your complaint in writing if necessary.
- 6.12 If you are involved in any way with a complaint, the Headteacher will explain what will happen and the sort of help that is available to you.
- 6.13 The Headteacher will invite you to discuss your complaint at a meeting. Timescales for dealing with your complaint will be agreed with you. The Headteacher will aim to have a meeting with you and to explain what will happen, normally within 10 school days of receiving your letter. The Head teacher will complete the investigation and will let you know the outcome in writing within 10 school days of completion.

STAGE C

- 6.14 It is rare that a complaint will progress any further. However, if you still feel that your complaint has not been dealt with fairly, you should write, to the Chair of Governors (at the school address) setting out your reasons for asking the governing body's complaints committee to consider your complaint. You do not have to write down details of your whole complaint again.
- 6.15 If you prefer, instead of sending a letter or e-mail, you can talk to the Chair of governors or Deputy Head teacher who will write down what is discussed and what, in your own words, would resolve the problem. We would normally expect you to do this within five school days of receiving the school's response. You will be asked to read the notes or will have the notes read back to you and then be asked to sign them as a true record of what was said. We will let you know how the complaint will be dealt with and will send a letter to confirm this. The complaints committee will normally have a meeting with you within 15 school days of receiving your letter.
- 6.16 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. The letter will also record what we have agreed with you about when and where the meeting will take place and what will happen. The timescale may need to be changed, to allow for the availability of people, the gathering of evidence or seeking advice. In this case, the person dealing with the complaint will agree a new meeting date with you.

- 6.17 Normally, in order to deal with the complaint as quickly as possible, the complaints committee will not reschedule the meeting more than once. If you ask to reschedule the meeting more than once, the committee may think it reasonable to make a decision on the complaint in your absence to avoid unnecessary delays.
- 6.18 We will write to you within 10 school days of the meeting explaining the outcome of the governing body's complaints committee's consideration.
- 6.19 We will keep records of all conversations and discussions for the purpose of future reference and review by the full governing body. These records will be kept for a minimum of seven years.
- 6.20 The governing body's complaints committee is the final arbiter of complaints.

7. SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

- 7.1 Where a complaint is made about any of the following the complaints procedure will be applied differently.
- i. **A governor or group of governors**
The concern or complaint will be referred to the chair of governors for investigation. The chair may alternatively delegate the matter to another governor for investigation. Stage B onwards of the complaints procedure will apply.
- ii. **The Chair of Governors or Headteacher and Chair of Governors**
The vice chair of governors will be informed and will investigate it or may delegate it to another governor. Stage B onwards of the complaints procedure will apply.
- iii. **Both the Chair of Governors and Vice Chair of Governors**
The complaint will be referred to the clerk to the governing body who will inform the chair of the complaints committee. Stage C of the complaints procedure will then apply.
- iv. **The whole Governing Body**
The complaint will be referred to the clerk to the governing body who will inform the headteacher, chair of governors, local authority and, where appropriate, the diocesan authority. The authorities will usually agree arrangements with the governing body for independent investigation of the complaint.

v. **The Headteacher**

The concern or complaint will be referred to the chair of governors who will undertake the investigation or may delegate it to another governor. Stage B onwards of the complaints procedure will apply.

7.2 In all cases the school and governing body will ensure that complaints are dealt with in an unbiased, open and fair way.

8. **OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU**

8.1 We will take your concerns and complaints seriously and, where we have made mistakes, will try to learn from them.

8.2 If you need help to make your concerns known we will try and assist you. If you are a young person and need extra assistance the Welsh Government has established MEIC which is a national advocacy and advice helpline for children and young people. Advice and support can also be accessed from the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

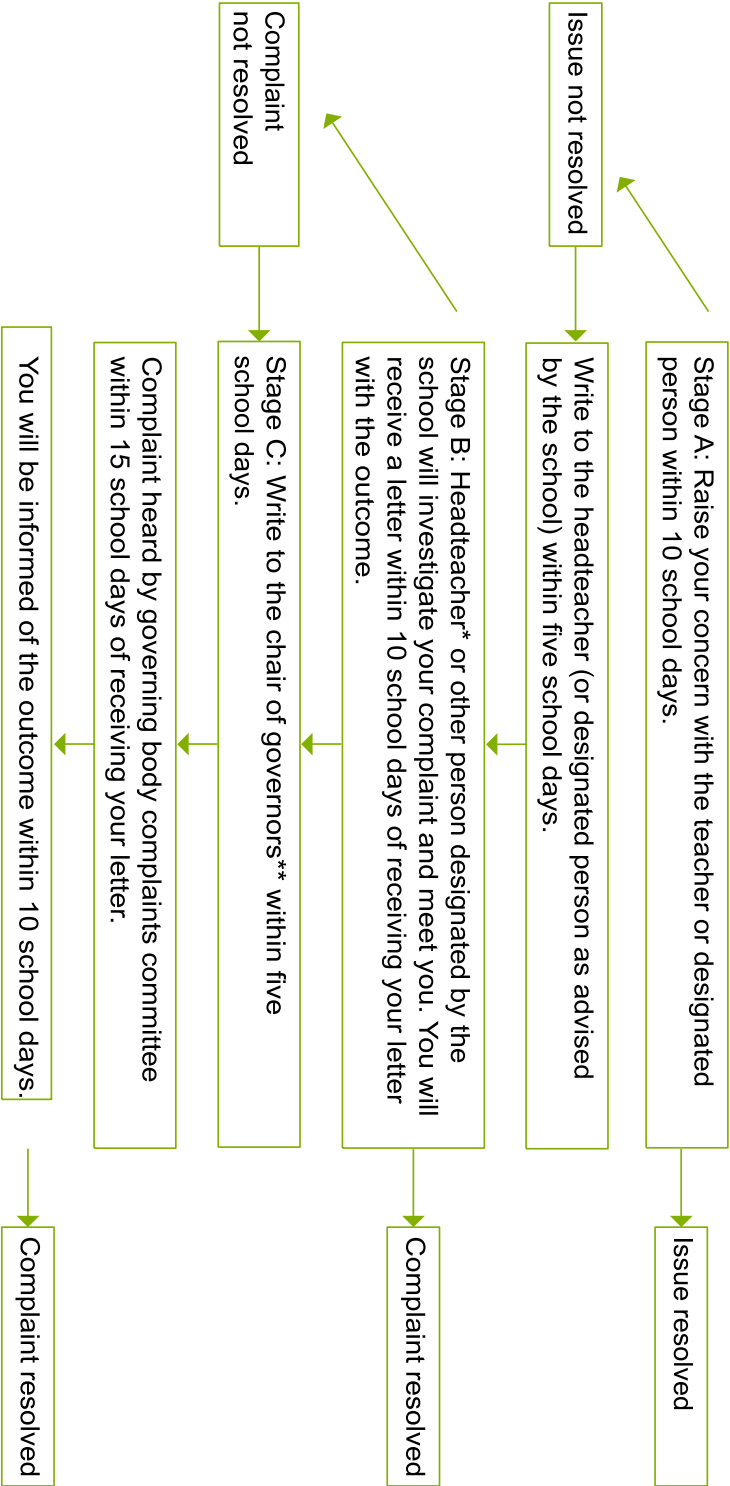
MEIC may be contacted by freephone: 0808 802 3456, or text: 84001. This service is operated 24 hours a day.

The Children's Commissioner for Wales can be contacted by freephone:

0808 801 1000 (Monday to Friday 9a.m. to 5p.m.), text: 80 800 (start your message with COM) or e-mail:
advice@childcomwales.org.uk

APPENDIX A: SUMMARY OF DEALING WITH CONCERNS OR COMPLAINTS

Appendix A: Summary of dealing with concerns or complaints
 This procedure will be followed in the event of a concern or complaint about the school, provided that the concern or complaint does not fall under other statutory procedures.



* If the complaint is about the headteacher you should write to the chair of governors.
 ** If the complaint is about the chair of governors you should write to the vice chair.
 All timescales shown are targets and are flexible; however it is in everyone's best interest to resolve a complaint as soon as possible.
 The school will work with you to ensure that the time allowed to deal with your concern or complaint is reasonable and helps to achieve an answer to the problem.

APPENDIX B: MODEL COMPLAINT FORM

The person who experienced the problem should normally fill in this form. If you are making a complaint on behalf of someone else, please fill in Section B also. Please note that before taking forward the complaint we will need to be satisfied that you have the authority to act on behalf of the person concerned. If you are a pupil the school will help you complete this form, will explain it to you and will give you a copy of it when it is completed.

Your details

Surname	
Forename(s)	
Title: Mr/Mrs/Ms/other	
Address and postcode	
Daytime phone number	
Mobile phone number	
e-mail address	

How would you prefer us to contact you? _____

If you are making a complaint on behalf of someone else, what are their details?

Their name in full _____

Address and postcode _____

What is your relationship to them? _____

Why are you making a complaint on their behalf?

Describe how you have been affected.

When did you first become aware of the problem?

If it is more than three months since you first became aware of the problem, please give the reason why you have not complained before.

What do you think should be done to put matters right?

Have you already put your complaint to a member of staff? If so, please give brief details about how and when you did so.

Signature of complainant:

Date:

Signature if you are making a complaint on behalf of someone else

Signature:

Date:

Please return this form and any documents to support your complaint to the school.