

Complaints Policy

Review: March 2025



Every child. Every chance. Every day.

Definitions

Chair	the chair of Ysgol Pen Coch's governing body
Complainant	a person/persons or body/bodies external to the school making a complaint within the scope of the Complaints Policy
Complaint	an expression of dissatisfaction in relation to the school or a member of its staff by a person or body external to the school that requires a response from the school
County	Flintshire County Council, or its committees, the Education and Youth department, other relevant departments or individual officers according to natural context of the text
CPOMS	Child Protection Online Management System used in Ysgol Pen Coch
Family, Families	an adult or adults with parental responsibility for Pupils at Ysgol Pen Coch
Governor, Governors	a member or members of the governing body of Ysgol Pen Coch, or the governing body corporately where in context that is the natural meaning to be inferred
Head	the Headteacher at Ysgol Pen Coch
Policy	Complaints Policy at Ysgol Pen Coch
Pupil, Pupils	a Pupil or Pupils at Ysgol Pen Coch
School	Ysgol Pen Coch
SMT	the senior management team at Ysgol Pen Coch
Staff	a person or people employed to work at Ysgol Pen Coch, full time or part time, temporary or permanent, agency or contract
Teacher, Teachers	a teacher or teachers at Ysgol Pen Coch

1. Introduction

A complaints procedure is a way of ensuring that anyone with an interest in a school can raise a concern, with confidence that it will be heard, properly considered and, if upheld, that the matter will be addressed in an appropriate and timely way..

The School is committed to dealing effectively with complaints in order to:

- clarify any issues about which the Complainant is unsure,
- if possible to resolve issues amicably between the Complainant and School,
- preserve open communication between the Complainant and School,
- where appropriate for School to explain and apologise for deficiencies it is responsible for,
- where possible for School to put right any deficiencies it is responsible for, and
- for School to learn from mistakes and use that experience to improve.

The School is committed to deal with Complaints in line with its values of respect, teamwork, trust, compassion and kindness.

The Policy has been adapted from [complaints-procedures-for-school-governing-bodies-in-wales-guidance.pdf](#)

2. When to use this procedure

2.1 If a Complainant has a concern about something that has happened or is happening for which School is responsible they are encouraged to speak with the relevant person in School. Most concerns can be settled quickly without the need to use a formal procedure. However if the Complainant feels their concern has not been addressed properly they should follow the procedure set out in section 6.

2.2 Sometimes a Complainant might be concerned about matters that are not decided by the School, or that the School is not otherwise responsible for, eg: school transport. The School will let the Complainant know who to complain to.

2.3 If there is a specific procedure to deal with a specific type of issue School will explain to the Complainant how their concern will be dealt with, eg: see Section 7.

2.4 If a concern is about another body as well as the School, eg: the Council, the School and the other body concerned will work together to decide how to handle the concern and advise the Complainant accordingly.

2.5 If a potential Complainant needs help to make their concerns known School will try to assist them.

4. Good faith and respect

The School believes that all Complainants have a right to be heard, understood and respected. The School and its Staff, Governors and representatives have the same right. Everyone involved in addressing a Complaint is expected to be polite and courteous. Aggressive, abusive or unreasonable behaviour will not be tolerated, nor will Complaints that become unreasonable, eg: there are unrealistic demands, or vexatious, eg: continuing with a Complaint that is unfounded. **We have a separate policy to manage situations where we find that someone's actions are unacceptable.**

5. Our approach to answering a concern or complaint

5.1 The School will consider all Complaints in an open and fair way.

5.2 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 a Complaint are set out in Section 6. If there is good reason for them to be extended the School will seek to agree new dates with the Complainant.

5.4 In dealing with a Complaint the School may need to seek advice from an appropriate external body, eg: County.

5.5 Some types of Complaint may raise issues that have to be dealt with in a different way to that outlined in the Policy. The School will explain why this is so, and will tell the Complainant who needs to do what next.

5.6 The Governors will keep the records of documents used to investigate a Complaint for 7 years after it has been dealt with. Records will be kept in School and reviewed by the Governors after 7 years to decide if they need to be kept for longer.

5.7 Anonymous Complaints 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 be vexatious, eg: only to cause harm or offence to the School, its Staff, Governors or representatives, the Governors will ensure that records are kept of the investigations that are made and what actions are taken, including any reasons for no action.

6. Procedure to resolve a complaint

6.1 There are 3 stages in-School that should be worked through to address a Complaint:

- first informal, then
- Complaint to the Head, next
- Complaint to the Chair of Governors.

Most Complaints can be resolved at the informal stage or by referral to the Head. Complaints that proceed to the Governors will be of a particularly complicated or serious nature. The flowchart in Appendix A shows the Complaint procedure. If a Complainant initiates their Complaint at a higher level without having exhausted prior stages they will be asked to attempt to resolve their Complaint at the appropriate stage before it will be considered at the higher stage.

6.2 It is hoped that a Complainant will be able to speak for themselves in the process, eg: at meetings. If they need to arrange an advocate, translator or similar they should let the School know so that the Complaint timescale may be altered and agreed to enable this to happen. If asked, the School should assist by signposting the Complainant to relevant services. In all cases the Complainant is welcome to bring someone to support them, eg: a family member or friend, in addition to any other support they may require. Separate arrangements will be made where a Pupil makes a complaint, see Section 6.4.

6.3 As far as possible, Complaints will be dealt with on a confidential basis. However, there could be occasions when the person in School responsible for dealing with a Complaint will need to consider whether anyone else within the School, eg: the Head when a Complaint is still at the informal stage, or an external body, eg: County, needs to know so it can be addressed appropriately.

6.4 Stage A: Informal stage

6.4.1 If a Complainant has a concern, it can most often be resolved quickly by discussing it with their child's Teacher, who is best placed to investigate and act on any day to day matters. It is best to raise concerns as soon as possible after any incident, within 10 school days of the concern arising. The longer a concern is left unaddressed the harder it will be to deal with effectively. The Complainant is encouraged to contact the Teacher directly using CPOMS, telephone or arranging to meet in person. If a meeting is arranged the Complainant should give the Teacher notice of the nature of the Complaint so that the Teacher can prepare as necessary to enable the meeting to be as productive as possible.

6.4.2 The Teacher will need a short time to gather information, speak to Staff involved and if necessary consult with SMT or others. The Teacher will respond to the Complainant as soon as possible but no later than 5 working days from when the Complaint was raised. Where a face to face meeting was arranged, the date of the meeting is deemed to be the start date. If the Teacher cannot meet this timescale to address the substance of the Complaint they must talk to the Complainant within the 5 school days to agree a revised timescale for a substantive response.

6.4.3 The Teacher will keep the Complainant informed of the progress being made, and where necessary agree further timescales with them.

6.4.4 The Teacher may hand over management of the Complaint to another Teacher or SMT. They will inform the Complainant of this step and explain why it is deemed necessary. The person taking over management of the Complaint must act in accordance with Section 6.4 from the point they take over.

6.4.5 The Teacher or other person managing the Complaint will keep a record of contact and follow up actions. CPOMS may be used if the Complaint refers to a Pupil. In other cases the Head will decide the appropriate recording mechanism.

6.5 Stage B: Complaints progressing to the Head

6.5.1 In most cases it is hoped that Complaints can be resolved informally at Stage A. If a Complainant feels their concern has not been dealt with appropriately they should move onto Stage B by putting their Complaint in writing to the Head within 5 school days once it becomes clear that Stage A has not resolved the issue or as soon as possible thereafter. The longer a concern is left unaddressed the harder it will be to deal with effectively. There is a complaint form that may be used, see Appendix B.

6.5.2 Stage B written Complaints should be handed in to the Head at School, sent by email marked "Confidential" and for the Head's attention to pcmail@hwbcymru.net or by post to the Head at Ysgol Pen Coch, Prince of Wales Avenue, Flint, Flintshire. CH8 7BB.

6.5.3 While written communication of a Stage B Complaint is best, the School will respect and act on any genuine attempt to do so by other means, eg: speaking to the Head whether or not a meeting has been requested, sending a message to the Head by Class Dojo, asking a Staff member to raise the concern with the Head. In these instances the School will keep a record of the initial communication that escalated the Complaint to Stage B.

6.5.4 If a Complaint is about the Head, see Section 7.2 for appropriate procedure.

6.5.5 If a Complainant needs assistance to put their Complaint in writing they may ask the Head, or a Governor, for assistance.

6.5.6 Upon receiving a Stage B notification the Head will contact the Complainant to arrange a meeting, explain the process and the sort of help that is available for them.

6.5.7 The meeting should be held within 10 school days of the Head receiving the Stage B notification, or the soonest date after that if there are extenuating circumstances. The Head will prepare for the meeting by investigating the Complaint and what has already been done to address it. At the meeting the Complainant and Head will discuss the issue, proposed follow up actions and agree timescales for them. Following the meeting and

ideally still within 10 school days of the Head receiving the Stage B notification, the Head will write or email to the Complainant confirming the outcomes.

6.5.8 The Head will keep a record of contact with the Complainant, investigation findings and follow up actions.

6.6 Stage C: Complaints progressing to the Chair of Governors

6.6.1 It is rare that a complaint will progress any further than Stage B. However, if the Complainant remains unsatisfied that their Complaint has been addressed by the Head they should move onto Stage C by writing to or emailing the Chair within 5 school days once it becomes clear that Stage B has not resolved the issue or as soon as possible thereafter, setting out their reasons for asking the Chair to consider their Complaint. They do not have to write down the details of the whole Complaint again. If possible the Complainant should explain what they believe is reasonable to resolve the problem.

6.6.2 Stage C written Complaints should be marked "Confidential" and handed in to the Chair at School, sent by email for the Chair's attention to pcmail@hwbcymru.net or by post to the Chair at Ysgol Pen Coch, Prince of Wales Avenue, Flint, Flintshire. CH8 7BB.

6.6.3 If the Complainant prefers, instead of sending a letter or email, they can talk to the Chair or Head who will write down what is discussed and what, in the Complainant's words, is reasonable to resolve the problem. The Complainant will be asked to read the notes or have them read back to them, and then sign them as a true record of what they said. These notes will be passed to the Chair as notification of a Stage C Complaint.

6.6.4 The Chair will write to or email the Complainant to:

- arrange a date within 15 school days of receipt of the Stage C notification for a Complaints Committee will meet to consider the Complaint,
- tell them what evidence and documentation will need to be considered, and when these must be collected by in advance of the Complaints Committee,
- confirm membership of the Complaints Committee and that everyone involved will see the evidence and documentation before the meeting, while ensuring that people's rights to privacy of information are protected.

6.6.5 The timescale may need to be changed to allow for people's availability, gathering evidence or seeking advice. In this case, the Chair will agree a new meeting date with the complainant.

6.6.6 Normally, in order to deal with the Complaint as quickly as possible, the Complaints Committee will not reschedule the meeting more than once. If the Complainant asks to reschedule the meeting more than once, to avoid unnecessary delays the Complaints Committee may think it reasonable to make a decision on the Complaint in the Complainant's absence.

6.6.7 The Chair will write to the Complainant within 10 school days of the Complaints Committee meeting explaining the outcome and follow up actions.

6.6.8 The Chair will arrange for the Governors to keep records of all conversations and discussions for the purpose of future reference and review. These records will be kept for a minimum of seven years.

6.6.9 The Complaints Committee is the final internal arbiter of Complaints. If a Complainant is still dissatisfied with the outcome they must seek external redress.

7. Special circumstances

7.1 Pupils

7.1.1 Pupils at the School have constrained cognitive and communicative abilities, and work at levels significantly lower than their calendar age. It is anticipated that it will be difficult for them to raise a concern or even recognise that they may have one. While Families may complain on their child's behalf, Staff are also Pupil advocates and must be alert and responsive to a Pupil's wellbeing and communicative abilities and have a responsibility to report any concerns to the Pupil's Teacher or SMT as appropriate. This may also need to be recorded as a "Pupil Voice" log on CPOMS. If it is considered that a Pupil communicates that they wish to raise a concern or otherwise bring a Complaint the School will speak to that Pupil's Family unless there is a safeguarding risk in doing so. The Pupil, their Family and School will work together to resolve the issue. School will make the Family aware of the procedures in the Policy so they can decide how to proceed in their child's best interests.

7.1.2 It is recognised that it may be difficult for Staff to interpret possible Complaints by Pupils, and challenging for them to initiate Complaint related action against their own employer. The first duty of all Staff is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of Pupils, which must override any other concerns. Understanding, respecting and acting on pupil voice is a critical element of securing Pupils' rights under the United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child, especially:

- Article 3 - The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children.
- Article 12 - Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously.
- Article 23 - A child with a disability has the right to lead a full and decent life with dignity and, as far as possible, independence and to play an active part in the community.
- Article 28 - Every child has the right to an education.

7.1.3 Organisations that may be able to support Pupils when considering or involved in a Complaints situation, or their Families when acting as advocates for them are:

- Meic (www.meiccymru.org) is a national advocacy and advice helpline for children and young people, set up by the Welsh Government, which may be able to assist the Pupil or their Family. Meic can be contacted freephone: 0808 802 3456 (and does not appear on the phone bill), text: 84001 or via chat: www.meiccymru.org/getting-help/.
- The Children's Commissioner (www.childcomwales.org.uk) can also be contacted for advice and support on freephone: 0808 801 1000 (9am - 5pm, Monday – Friday), text: 80 800 (start your message with COM) or email: advice@childcomwales.org.uk

7.2 Where a Complaint is made about any of the following persons the Policy will be applied differently:

- a Governor or group of Governors: the Complaint will be referred straight to the Chair for investigation. The Chair may delegate the matter to another Governor for investigation. In other respects this will proceed as if it were a Stage B investigation and the Complainant may still escalate to Stage C.
- the Chair or the Head and Chair together: the vice chair of Governors will be informed and will investigate it or may delegate it to another Governor. In other respects this will proceed as if it were a Stage B investigation and the Complainant may still escalate to Stage C.
- both the Chair and vice chair of Governors: the Complaint will be referred to the clerk to the Governors who will inform the Chair of the Complaints Committee. Stage C of the procedure will then apply, with the clerk acting instead of the Chair.
- the Governors in entirety: the Complaint will be referred to the clerk to the Governors who will inform the Head, Chair and County. County will be responsible for independent investigation of the complaint following their procedures for such a situation.
- the Head: the Complaint will be referred to the Chair who will undertake the investigation or may delegate it to another Governor. In other respects this will proceed as if it were a Stage B investigation and the Complainant may still escalate to Stage C.

7.3 In all cases the School and Governors will ensure that Complaints are dealt with in an unbiased, open and fair way (see the School’s Equal Opportunities Policy).

8. Review

8.1 This Policy has been approved by the Governors and is made publicly available on the School’s website or upon request from the School.

8.2 The Policy will be reviewed by the Head every four years following the date set out in the Policy, at such other times that the Governors or Head deem necessary or at any time when directed to do so by County.

8.3 The Policy will be reviewed in light of any statutory frameworks or guidance in place that pertain to schools in Wales and sector best practice current at the time.

8.4 Following any review and irrespective of whether any changes are made, the Policy must be ratified by the Governors.

8.5 Historic versions of the Policy should be archived but remain readily available for reference as required.

Signed: (Head Teacher)

Date:

Signed: (Chair of Governors)

Date:

Date of next review: March 2025

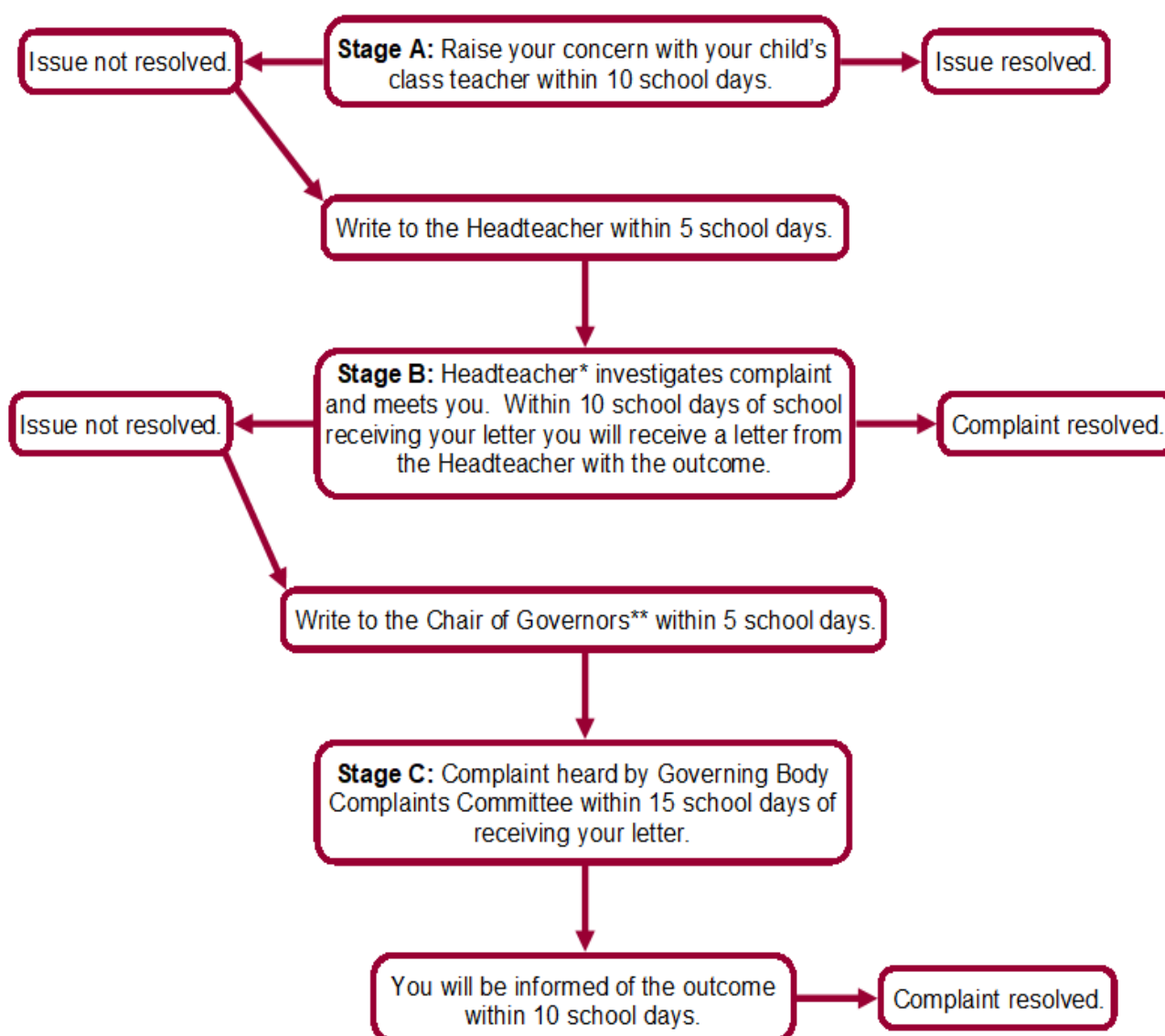
Complaints Policy Appendix A

Complaints Flowchart



Every child. Every chance. Every day.

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 that may become flexible by agreement. It is in everyone's best interests to resolve a complaint promptly. The school will work with the complainant to ensure that the time allowed to deal with the concern is reasonable and helps to achieve an answer to the problem.

Complaints Policy Appendix B

Complaint Form



Every child. Every chance. Every day.

Section A: Your details	
Full name	
Title	
Address and postcode	
Daytime phone number	
Mobile phone	
Email	
Preferred contact method	

Section B: If you are making a complaint on behalf of someone else, what are their details?	
Their full name	
Their address and postcode	
Your relationship to them	
Why are you acting for them?	

Section C: About your complaint	
Name of school	
What do you think they did wrong or did not do?	
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, and what staff did.	

Signed:

Date: