

The PENARTH GROUP

Complaints & Representations Policy

Issue: October 2015
Reviewed: October 2018

This policy is put onto PENARTH's websites to comply with regulations about access to information for parents

Equality Act 2010

PENARTH and its Schools/Homes will make reasonable adjustments to accommodate complainants to ensure they have access to this policy. If a complainant require a modification to this policy to accommodate their specific needs, this should be raised so that the School/Home may make reasonable adjustments. Such changes will be documented.

1. Aims

PENARTH through its School aims to provide a happy, safe and caring environment that will enable the young people to learn and communicate with confidence. This complaint's policy is designed to allow parents (and others) to raise issues of concern/complaint with the School as set out in

"The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010" and "The Education (Independent School Standards) (Wales)

Regulations 2003 as amended". From here on in, the regulation cited is that of the 2010 English regulations. The Welsh regulations have the same structure, but in Statute, different regulation numbers.

However there may be times when a young person, their parents/guardians or any other person who comes into contact with the school/home may wish to make a complaint about any aspect of the school or care home. We encourage comments from all, so that we may improve the service we deliver. We acknowledge that complaints do occur and respect those who do complain or comment and we seek to respond in a positive and open manner. There are **no** restrictions on the issues that a student or adult can make a complaint about.

PENARTH's schools and their associated children's homes operate within the guidelines set out in the National Minimum Standards for Children's

Homes, which promote good practice, and the Independent School Registration Regulations. This policy is the formal written complaints procedure for the School and the Children's home

The policy will be available to young people, parents and any interested person at individual establishments or through PENARTH, head office.

Complaints will be managed within the timeframes set out in this policy in the 5 stages of complaints resolution.

1. How complaints are received

All complaints by parents/guardians, students or any other person are to be made to a member of the School or Care Home's staff and will be recorded as a concern and passed to a member of the management team (education, care and therapy) for response. **A complainant may contact our regulator Ofsted directly at any time if they so wish (see contact numbers later).**

A **central register** is kept of all complaints made and monitored regularly by the Senior Leadership Team.

The Senior Leadership Team decides who is best placed to investigate the complaint without bias.

Any person is entitled to make a complaint about any aspect of the School/Children's Home or their experiences of it. This includes people who are not directly involved with the School/Home (e.g. members of the public). Their complaints or representations should initially be taken by the staff in the School Office or with a School/Home manager and then they should proceed according to the procedures detailed in the following advice.

Young people may have difficulties with speech, language and communication. Therefore making a complaint may be a difficult task for them to manage themselves. Anyone reviewing a complaint from a young person or advocating on their behalf should take account of these difficulties and employ communication strategies suited to the young person's needs.

When a person needs to register a major complaint or representation, the member staff who has worked with the person or parent making a complaint will contact a member of the Senior Leadership Team at the earliest opportunity (normally within 24 hours).

The Senior Leadership Team will consider the content of the complaint and decide on action to be taken. Where a complaint involves Child Protection issues then the Child Protection officer who is a member of the Senior Leadership Team will be responsible for informing the Local Safeguarding Board and placing authority, including notifications to Ofsted or Adult Protection Services within 24 hours of receiving the complaint.

When a young person wants to make a minor complaint about any aspect of school/home, this should be dealt with by talking to the key care worker, tutor, Speech & Language Therapist (SLT), Head of Care, or, indeed, any staff member in the school. All staff have a duty of care to the young people, and should be an advocate for the young person.

Examples of (but not limited to) minor complaints are:

- ☐ A person is unhappy with the food that s/he has been served
- ☐ A person is unhappy with the variety of after-school activities that are offered
- ☐ A person feels that the pillows that are offered are too lumpy
- ☐ That the classroom is too hot/cold/bright/dark
- ☐ The soft play area is not accessible at an agreed time for the young person

If the complaint is of a more serious nature it will be acted upon by a member of the Senior Leadership Team according to the procedures that follow. The person making a complaint also

has access to outside advice and this right should be made aware to the person making a complaint by the person they are making the complaint to.

Examples of more prima facie more serious complaints (these which should be referred to the Senior Leadership Team without undue delay) are:

- A student/resident or their representative believes themselves to be the target for bullying by his/her peers
- A student/resident or their representative believes themselves to be the subject of abuse or bullying by any adult (including their home setting)
- A person feels that the content of a lesson or activity in which they were present (or had evidence of) was not fully matched to the need of a student
- A member of staff fails to deliver a promised commitment to a parent/child/external professional

At all stages it must be made clear to the person making a complaint that there will be no reprisals against them as a result of making a complaint.

At all stages complaints should be made in confidential surroundings and the privacy and dignity of the complainant should be protected.

2. Procedures for resolving complaints and timescale

Complaints and concerns received by staff will be acted upon by that member of staff or passed on to the relevant staff for action. In either case appropriate 'Concern' form (or equivalent) needs to be completed and the complaint recorded in the School/Home complaint book.

There are five (5) possible stages to the complaints procedure as follows:

1) *Informal stage:* discussion between the complainant and a member of the School's staff. This may be a minor complaint and one which can be dealt with very quickly by the member of staff concerned. This is typically done within 5 working days.

2) *Formal stage:* if the complainant is not satisfied, he or she can put their complaints in writing to the School or Home manager who will inform the Senior Leadership Team, who will nominate a member of staff to investigate the complaint.

Within 10 school days the nominated member of the Senior Leadership Team must either inform the complainant of a decision, or tell the complainant when a decision will be made.

This stage will have included consultation with the person making a complaint.

Once the complaint or representation has been resolved the nominated member of the Senior Leadership Team will write to the person making a complaint, to outline the resolution.

Where a complaint or representation takes longer than 10 school days to resolve, records showing ongoing communication with the person making a complaint should be filed with the original complaint.

3) *Reconciliation stage:* if the complainant remains dissatisfied, the Head

Teacher/Principal must try to resolve the matter. Within 10 school days, the Head Teacher/Principal must either inform the complainant of a decision, or tell the complainant when a decision will be made.

4) Proprietor non-hearing stage: if the complainant remains dissatisfied, the head of establishment will refer the issue to PENARTH, the proprietor.

A senior manager from PENARTH will seek to resolve the complaint within 10 school days, or if this will take longer, inform the complainant when a decision will be made.

If the complaint is not resolved as this stage, then the complainant will be offered a 3-person panel hearing under stage 5.

The PENARTH senior manager may choose to bypass this stage and move straight to a 3-person panel hearing under stage 5.

5) Hearing Panel stage: if the complainants wish the matter to be considered further, a hearing before a panel of at least 3 people who were not directly involved in previous determination of stages 1, 2 or 3 of the complaint will be arranged (regulation 25e). The panel will be held in accordance with Part 7 of the

Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) Regulations 2010. To that end:

- a) PENARTH as the proprietor is responsible for the appointment of the panel (regulation 25f)
- b) One person on the panel must be independent of the management and running of the establishment. Typically PENARTH will seek all panel members to be independent of the School/Home. (regulation 25g)
- c) The complainants may attend the panel, and if so wished be accompanied, with all costs for attendance being for the complainant's sole account. (regulation 25h)
- d) The panel's chair will agree within 10 school working days of receiving the appeal to panel, a hearing date with the complainant, subject to the complainant being contactable.
- e) This hearing date will typically be within 28 school days of the date of appeal unless Safeguarding requirements necessitate that the complaints procedure is suspended until a Safeguarding matter is resolved. Once resolved, the complaints procedure timetable will restart from the time it was suspended
- f) The panel will hear the complaint and make its findings known to the complainant in writing (by way of letter or email), and where relevant the person the person complained about, within with 10 school working days. (regulation 25i)
- g) The findings and recommendations are available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the Head Teacher. (regulation 25i)
- h) All the complaints and the outcomes will be recorded in the settings complaint register and made available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor, head teacher and

regulatory authorities. They will indicate whether the complaint was resolved at the preliminary stage or preceded to a panel hearing. (regulation 25j)

i) Complaint records will be stored confidentially. They will also be made available to Ofsted and the Secretary of State. (regulation 725)

j) The PENARTH panel's decision is final.

Complainants may then raise the issue with the School's regulator the DfE or the Children's Home's regulator, Ofsted.

3. Staff complaints about other staff (non safeguarding or pupil welfare issues)

Complaints from staff about other staff (i.e. grievances) will be managed through the staff complaints and grievance procedure set out in the staff handbook.

A staff complaint about the practice of another employee concerning the welfare of a young person, parent/guardian or professional will be managed via the safeguarding procedures and/or this complaints procedure

4. Minor complaints

Minor complaints and representations made by young people and parents must be logged in **The Complaints Book** kept on the Residential Houses with a record of how they have been addressed.

All entries should be signed and dated by the member of staff addressing the complaint. The Complaints Book should be kept in a locked cupboard when not in use. The central log of complaints kept for formal complaints also provides a central record of all minor complaints as well.

For non-resident young people and their parents minor complaints and representations can be made to the tutor team- teacher/SLT/Learning Support Assistant (LSA). These will be dealt with in the same manner as above, by completing **The Complaints Book (central register)**. This book will be kept in a secure place designated by the Head Teacher.

The Senior Leadership Team will review the contents of the Complaints Books on a regular rolling programme. Where there are inaccuracies or discrepancies discovered the Senior Leadership Team, this will be investigated for the cause of the inaccuracies or discrepancies.

More serious complaints and representations should be addressed to, and will be acted upon by, the Senior Leadership Team.

These will be made and recorded using the establishments' formal documentation. NB It is not generally expected that a young person will complete documentation. An adult advocate is available to do this for them. However where a young person particularly wishes to complete their own documentation, they should be provided with the appropriate documentation

Examples of very serious complaints may be:

- ❑ A person believes that a member of staff has abused their position with students
- ❑ A person believes that an act of abuse has been perpetrated by a staff member

5. Complaints about the Senior Leadership Team

Complaints and representations about the heads of establishment and/or the Senior Leadership Team should be made directly to the Penarth Group proprietor – Mrs . Pat Swallow. She can be contacted as follows:

Email pat@penarthgroup.com or

In Writing

97 Higher Bents Lane,
Bredbury,
Stockport, Cheshire,
SK6 2NA

Tel: 0161 406 0244
Fax: 0161 430 7551

6. The School's/Home's Regulator

The School and children home's regulator is Ofsted in England

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester M1
2WD
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk or **0300 123 4234**

7. Other contacts

The telephone numbers of outside agencies which can help young people are displayed around the school and are as follows:

Childline (run by NSPCC)

0800 11 11

NSPCC help for adults

0800 800 5000

8. Registered Complaints

In the school year 2017/18 there was two complaints registered against Penarth Group School.

Both were fully investigated, and no further action was taken as the complaints were unfounded.

The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010

PART 7 : Manner in which complaints are to be handled

25. The standard about the manner in which complaints are handled is met if the proprietor ensures that a complaints procedure is drawn up and effectively implemented which deals with the handling of complaints from parents of pupils and which—

(a) is in writing;

(b) is made available to parents of pupils;

(c) sets out clear time scales for the management of a complaint;

(d) allows for a complaint to be made and considered initially on an informal basis;

(e) where the parent is not satisfied with the response to the complaint made in accordance with sub-paragraph (d), establishes a formal procedure for the complaint to be made in writing;

(f) where the parent is not satisfied with the response to the complaint made in accordance with sub-paragraph (e), makes provision for a hearing before a panel appointed by or on behalf of the proprietor and consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint;

(g) ensures that, where there is a panel hearing of a complaint, one panel member is independent of the management and running of the school;

(h) allows for a parent to attend and be accompanied at a panel hearing if they wish;

(i) provides for the panel to make findings and recommendations and stipulates that a copy of those findings and recommendations is—

(i) sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about; and

(ii) available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the head teacher;

(j) provides for a written record to be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing;

(k) provides that correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Act requests access to them; and

(l) where the school provides accommodation, is drawn up having regard to Standard 5 of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools or where applicable Standard 4 of the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools.