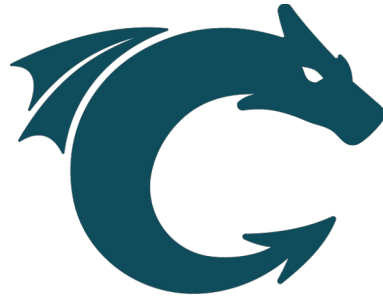




CLARE HOUSE SCHOOL PORTHCAWL

COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Intended effective date: September 2026 (on school opening)

Review date: July 2027

Approved by: Board of Directors

Owner: Head of School

Applies to: Whole School

Proprietor: CHS Porthcawl Ltd

This document sets out the intended policy and procedural framework of Clare House School from the date of opening. It has been prepared as part of the registration application to Welsh Government under the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024.

1. Purpose

Clare House School is committed to providing a high standard of education and care. We aim to resolve concerns promptly, fairly and proportionately.

This policy sets out the procedures for handling complaints in accordance with:

- Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024
- Education Act 2002
- Equality Act 2010
- EYFS Statutory Framework (England, 2025), voluntarily adopted by the school

This procedure applies to complaints from parents and carers of current pupils of Clare House School. (Admissions concerns from prospective parents are handled separately, as set out below.) It does not apply to: child protection matters (see Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy); exclusion decisions (see Behaviour, Rewards and Sanctions Policy); or allegations against staff (see Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy).

Where a prospective parent has a concern about the admissions process, they should raise it in writing with the Head of School in the first instance. If the concern relates directly to the conduct or decision of the Head of School, it should be submitted to the Chair of the Board of Directors. The formal three-stage complaints procedure, including the right to a panel hearing, is available to parents of current pupils; it is made available to prospective parents for information, but admissions concerns are handled by the Head of School as described here rather than through the full three-stage process.

2. Principles

Complaints will be: taken seriously; handled confidentially; investigated impartially; resolved as quickly as possible; and recorded appropriately. We encourage concerns to be raised as early as possible. The school uses two terms in this procedure. A **concern** is something raised informally that can usually be sorted out quickly, and is dealt with at Stage 1. A **complaint** is a formal, written expression of dissatisfaction that the parent wants investigated under the formal stages (Stage 2 onwards). Whatever it is called, any matter a parent is unhappy about and wants the school to act on can be raised under this procedure.

3. Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

Most concerns can be resolved informally. Parents should raise concerns with the relevant class teacher in the first instance. If the matter is not resolved, it may be referred to the Head of School. We aim to resolve informal concerns within 5 school days. The member of staff who receives an informal concern will make a brief written record of it, including the date it was raised and how it was resolved, and will pass this record to the school office for central logging. This enables the school to monitor concerns and identify any emerging patterns, even where matters are resolved informally.

4. Stage 2 – Formal Complaint to the Head of School

If the matter cannot be resolved informally, a formal complaint should be made in writing to the Head of School. The complaint should include: the nature of the complaint; relevant dates and details; and what outcome is sought.

The Head of School will: acknowledge receipt within 5 school days; investigate the complaint; and provide a written response within 15 school days. If more time is required, the complainant will be informed.

Complaints concerning the Head of School

Where a complaint directly concerns the conduct or actions of the Head of School, it should not be submitted to the Head of School. In such cases, the complainant should submit the complaint in writing to the Chair of the Board of Directors. The Chair will manage the complaint from Stage 2 onwards, assuming the investigatory and decision-making responsibilities set out above. The same timescales apply.

5. Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may request a panel hearing.

The panel will consist of at least three members. At least one member of the panel must be independent of the management and running of the school. This independent member will be an appropriately qualified individual appointed by the Chair of the Board of Directors for each panel as required. The remaining panel members will be drawn from the Board of Directors, provided that no panel member has had prior involvement in the complaint at an earlier stage. The complainant may attend the panel hearing and may be accompanied by one other person if they wish, such as a relative, friend or colleague. Legal representation is not appropriate at the hearing and the companion should

not be acting in a legal capacity. The complainant should confirm the identity of any companion in advance of the hearing.

The panel will review the complaint, consider the evidence, and issue written findings and recommendations to the complainant within 10 school days of the hearing. The panel's decision is final within the school's internal procedures.

The panel's findings and recommendations will be provided in writing to the complainant, the Head of School, the Proprietor (CHS Porthcawl Ltd), and, where relevant, the person complained about.

A copy will be available for inspection by the Proprietor, Estyn, and Welsh Government on request.

6. Recording of Complaints

The school will maintain a written record of all complaints, including: whether they were resolved at Stage 1, 2 or 3; the action taken; and the outcome. Records will be kept securely and confidentially. Records of informal concerns (Stage 1) are collated centrally and reviewed periodically by the Head of School, so that any recurring themes or wider issues can be identified and addressed. The Head of School reports any significant patterns to the Board of Directors.

7. Publication of Complaints Information

Details of this procedure and the number of formal complaints received during each academic year will be made available to parents of pupils and prospective pupils, in accordance with the Independent Schools (Provision of Information) (Wales) Regulations 2024. This information will be published on the school's website and provided on request.

8. Data Protection Complaints

Where a complaint includes a data protection element — for example, relating to a subject access request or the handling of personal data — the school will acknowledge the data protection aspect of the complaint in writing within 30 days, in accordance with ICO guidance and applicable data protection legislation. The school will respond to the data protection element without undue delay and may deal with it as part of the wider complaints process where this is the most practical approach. Complainants retain the right to contact the ICO directly if they remain dissatisfied with how their data protection concern has been handled.

9. Early Years Complaints

Complaints about the school's Early Years provision follow the three stages set out above. In addition, where a written complaint concerns whether the school is meeting the requirements of the EYFS Statutory Framework, the school will investigate and notify the complainant of the outcome within 28 calendar days of receiving the complaint.

10. External Agencies

The decision of the Stage 3 panel is the final stage of the school's complaints procedure. Estyn is not an escalation route for individual complaints: it does not have powers to investigate or adjudicate individual parental complaints, to reopen the school's decision, or to act as the regulator of the school. Separately from the outcome of any individual complaint, a person who believes that Clare House School is failing to meet the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024 may raise that concern with the Welsh Government as the registration authority for independent schools: IndependentSchools@gov.wales.

11. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually each July by the Head of School and approved by the Board of Directors, or sooner in the event of legislative or regulatory change.

This Complaints Policy and Procedure supports compliance with Part 1 (Quality of Education), Part 3 (Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils), and Part 6 (Provision of Information) of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024, and Paragraphs 12 and 14 of the Independent Schools (Provision of Information) (Wales) Regulations 2024.