

As a pupil you can make a complaint about any matter concerning your school. This page aims to explain how to do this.

We recognise that by making a complaint you will hope to make a positive difference to Penglais School.

1. Things for you to consider before making a formal complaint:

- Could you solve the problem in any other way by talking to your subject teacher, Form Tutor, Year Manager, Head of Year or someone else in school?
- Is your complaint about something which affects the whole school or a group of pupils? Could you ask the School Council to consider it?

If you decide to ask the School Council or an individual member of staff to take up the matter but you are not satisfied with the results, you can still use the school's complaints procedure.

2. Some things you could complain about are:

- an event - such as a school trip
- anything about your school life - such as homework, school uniform
- school services - such as school meals or the school bus service
- the behaviour of an individual(s) - for example another pupil or member of staff
- something that affects you as a pupil - such as bullying
- something that has happened outside school but which is connected to the school - such as the behaviour of pupils on a school bus or in the street.

These are only some examples. There may be other issues you want to complain about.

3. Privacy

All complaints will be kept private. If the person you talk to first is not in a position to resolve your problem, he/she will explain to you who else needs to be informed. Normally your complaint will not be discussed with anyone without your consent. However, there are some circumstances where a complaint must be shared with other people, especially if it means you or another child is in danger of being hurt. If this is the case this will be explained to you.

4. When you make a complaint:

- everything you say will be listened to
- you will be asked questions to make things clear
- you will be dealt with fairly

- your parents/guardian/carers will not be told you have made a complaint without your agreement
- you will be allowed to have someone with you to help you if you wish - a parent, friend, relative or someone else of your choosing
- you will be told how your complaint is progressing
- you will be told the outcome and given a letter confirming this.

5. Other situations involving pupil complaints

You could be:

- a pupil who is being complained about, or
- a pupil who has seen something happening that is being complained about.

In these situations:

- everything you say will be listened to
- you will be asked questions to make issues clear
- you will be dealt with fairly
- you will be allowed to have someone with you to help you if you wish - a parent, friend, relative or someone else of your choosing.

6. How to make a complaint

If you want to make a complaint, ask the School Council or a member of staff for a copy of the school's 'Pupil Complaints Procedure' which explains how to do this. (These are also kept on Pupil Reception).You can also ask the School Council, your Form Tutor, Year Manager or Head of Year to find someone to help you make your complaint and guide you through the process.

Pupil Complaints Procedure

AIMS

This leaflet explains the procedures to be followed when a pupil wishes to make a complaint about any matter concerning Penglais School. More general information about pupil complaints is contained in the 'Pupil Complaints Leaflet' which is available from your Year Manager, School Council or at Pupil Reception.

This document is laid out as a step-by-step guide. The exact path depends on the kind of complaint you are making and how serious it is. At every step you will be treated with respect, kept fully informed of progress in resolving your complaint and given the opportunity to have someone of your choosing to support you in all the meetings if you wish.

STEP 1: Deciding what to do

- Decide if making a complaint is the best way for you to get your problem resolved. Ask yourself the following questions:
 - Is your complaint about something which affects the whole school or a group of pupils? Could you ask the School Council to consider it?
 - Could you solve the problem in any other way by talking to your class teacher, Form Tutor, Year Manager, Head of Year or someone else in school?

- If you decide to ask the School Council or an individual member of staff to take up the matter but you are not satisfied with the results, you can still use the school's complaints procedure.

STEP 2: If you have decided to make a complaint, what to do next

- Choose the best person for you to talk to in the first instance. This could be any member of staff or the School Council or someone else associated with the school, such as a peripatetic music teacher or a youth worker. This person should be someone you trust and who is approachable and friendly.
- Arrange an appointment to meet this person (called the First Contact in the rest of this document). If you have time, write down the details of the problem before you meet up. Don't worry if you can't do this, but it will help you to give him/her all the facts and you can always add more things as you remember them in the meeting.
- It is the school's policy that a confidential written record must be kept of this discussion. Your First Contact will ask you to check whether it is correct or if you would like to change or add anything. You will be asked to sign it and will be given a copy of this record.
- Hopefully your First Contact will be able to sort out the problem for you almost straight away. He/she must tell you within one school day of any progress or if more time is required. He/she will then give you an update in writing within the next five school days.
- However, if your First Contact is not in a position to solve your complaint, he/she will explain the next step in the procedure. and ask you if you want to follow that path.

STEP 3: Taking the matter further

Your First Contact will now be able to tell you which route he/she will have to take in order to solve the kind of problem you have described. The route to be followed will depend on which of the following situations applies to you:

3.1 Are you or another child in danger of being hurt?

If so, your contact must tell your Head of Year or the Headteacher immediately in order to safeguard your safety or that of the other pupil(s).

3.2 Your complaint needs to be passed on to a more senior member of staff to be resolved

This will mean that your Head of Year or another senior teacher will have to be told of your complaint. However, your complaint will only be passed on to people who need to know about it so that it can be resolved. They will respect your need for privacy. Your First Contact will at this stage check with you that you want to continue with your complaint.

The Head of Year will decide whether to deal with the matter him/herself or to report it to the Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral Matters) or to the Headteacher.

The people identified in 3.1 and 3.2 will want to talk to you to clarify your complaint and you can bring a friend, parent or another person to that meeting to help you if you wish. If necessary, an investigation will be carried out into your complaint. Depending on the subject of your complaint, the investigation may follow procedures laid out in other specific school policies, such as those on anti-bullying, behaviour management, substance abuse or child protection. If, after the investigation, there is still doubt as to what has happened, a hearing will be arranged with all those concerned in the complaint.

STEP 4: What to expect at the hearing

A hearing is a meeting at which all concerned are able to give their side of the story with the aim of coming to a fair decision. You will be able to bring a parent or friend with you and an impartial adviser to support you. The Headteacher will be the most senior person at this hearing.

STEP 5: What happens if you are still not satisfied?

If the Headteacher is unable to resolve the complaint to your satisfaction at this hearing, you have the right to ask the school governors to hear your case.

A small group of governors will now review your complaint and the reports on all the discussions and any investigation that has taken place. Once again all those involved in the complaint will be asked to give their side of the story to the governors. The governors will make a fair decision based on all the evidence provided. Their decision is final.

Pupil Complaints Policy

The Governing Body is required by the Education Act 2002 to have a policy for dealing with pupil complaints.

AIMS

The school's Pupil Complaints Policy aims to ensure that pupils' complaints are dealt with efficiently and sensitively, at the appropriate level and as far as possible in confidence.

Complaints can cover a wide variety of matters concerning the school and it is important that pupils feel confident that they will be:

- listened to carefully and patiently
- taken seriously and treated with respect
- dealt with fairly, consistently and speedily
- given reassurance and advocacy support, if required.

The policy aims to ensure that clear procedures for making complaints are available to pupils, whether they are involved in a complaint as:

- the complainant
- a witness
- the subject of a complaint or
- an associate governor or member of the School Council involved in supporting the pupil making a complaint.

The pupil should expect a response, even if not the final response, within one school day of having made the complaint.

A pupil should be informed of the procedures for making complaints and appealing against decisions.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Governing Body is responsible for approving the policy, procedures and guidelines, hearing and deciding on appeals, receiving reports and advising the Headteacher. It is also responsible for publishing the policy and procedures and for their general oversight.

The Headteacher is responsible for the efficient running of the policy and procedures, for training staff on how to deal appropriately with complaints, for hearing pupil appeals from decisions taken by other staff, for presenting the school's case where the pupil appeals to the governing body or LEA and for reporting on complaints annually, or as required, to the governing body.

The Deputy Headteacher with responsibility for Pastoral Matters is responsible for deputising for the Headteacher if required.

Heads of Year, Year Managers and the School Council are responsible for explaining the Complaints Procedure to pupils and offering support.

All Staff are responsible for hearing any complaints brought to them by pupils and reassuring them that their complaints will be dealt with according to the Pupil Complaints Procedure and the following guidelines.

PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES

All staff should listen carefully and patiently to a pupil's complaint, treating the pupil with respect and recognising that it is a matter of grave concern for the pupil.

The member of staff receiving the complaint (referred to as 'First Contact' hereafter) should:

- devote sufficient time for the pupil to feel able to communicate their worries in full, or arrange a time when this can be done
- treat pupils calmly and with patience and without expressing an opinion in words or attitude
- ask single questions to clarify the issues and to check that the issue has been understood correctly
- assure the pupil that the matter will be taken seriously but avoid predicting outcomes

- explain the boundaries of confidentiality
- record the complaint on the school's 'Pupil Complaints Form', checking with the pupil that it is accurate. The pupil should sign the form and be given a copy. The form should then be passed to the Headteacher who will investigate the complaint. It may also be advisable to speak to the Headteacher at the earliest opportunity.

The action to be taken by the First Contact depends on the subject of the complaint. In many cases he/she will be able to resolve the matter swiftly him/herself but in specific cases may need to report the matter to others. In such cases, specific policies apply and the complaint will be passed on to other members of staff as specified in those policies:

- If the complaint concerns a child protection issue, the Head of Year or the person responsible for child protection, Mr H.E. Lewis, should be informed immediately and the 'Pupil Complaints Form' should be passed on to him.
- If the complaint concerns an allegation of child abuse by a member of the school staff, Mr H E Lewis or the Headteacher must be informed immediately.
- If the complaint concerns allegations of other criminal activity such as fraud, theft, or damage to property, the school's policy on Behaviour Management applies and in cases of drug taking or drug dealing the Policy on Substance Abuse should be followed.
- If the complaint concerns allegations of bullying, the school's Anti Bullying Policy applies.
- If the complaint is against the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors must be informed.

If the matter does not relate to any of the above and lies beyond the responsibility of the First Contact to resolve quickly, the Head of Year should be informed. Before doing so, the agreement of the pupil must be obtained and recorded on the Pupil Complaints Form. The Head of Year will decide whether to investigate the allegations him/herself or to pass the complaint on to the Headteacher.

In all cases of doubt, members of staff should seek the advice of the Headteacher, who has the responsibility for mentoring colleagues.

Finally, if the Headteacher is unable to resolve the issue it is open to the pupil to make representation to the Governing Body.

REPORTING, RECORDING AND REVIEWING

In all cases it is essential for staff to use the school's 'Pupil Complaints Form' so that records of the complaint and the action taken can be recorded and tracked. The outcome must also be recorded on the form and a letter sent to the pupil within 10 days of receipt of the complaint. Notes taken of oral accounts from a pupil should be checked for accuracy with the pupil or the pupil should be asked to put their complaint in writing. Supporting documents should be attached to the 'Pupil Complaints Form'.

The Headteacher will review the handling of complaints from time to time, and will discuss issues with staff as necessary.

The Headteacher will report to governors annually on the number and type of pupil complaints received.

APPEALS TO THE GOVERNING BODY

Pupils who are not satisfied with the Headteacher's decision regarding the complaint can make representations to the Governing Body. They should be advised by the Headteacher to write to the Clerk in the first instance stating their complaint, and providing any supporting documents. The Clerk will set up a meeting with a panel of the Governing Body at a mutually convenient time within 10 school days from receipt of the pupil's request. The hearing will be as informal as possible. The pupil may be accompanied by a parent, friend, relative or someone else of the pupil's choosing. Where there may be language difficulties, a translator will be in attendance.

Constitution of the panel

The panel will consist of three members to include the Chair or Vice Chair of Governors.

The decision of the panel will be binding on the school.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Headteacher is responsible for monitoring the working of the complaints procedures and for refining the application of them in the light of experience.

The Headteacher will review the system annually, and can propose policy changes to the Governing Body following consultation with staff, governors and the School Council.

The Governing Body will review the policy and procedures according to the schedule for reviewing school policies, or as necessary. The Governing Body is responsible for making changes to the policy and procedures and for publishing the revised documents.