

The Potteries School

• **ABERMULE NEWTOWN POWYS SY15 6JH** •

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POLICY: Complaints

COMPILED	IMPLEMENTED	COORDINATED	REVIEWED
21/02/19	21/02/19	Andy Joynson	28/07/2025

THE SCHOOL

The Potteries School is an Independent School operating within the Greenfields Company, a subsidiary of CareTech Community Services Ltd., who are the proprietors. The Potteries School is one of the key elements in an integrated, tripartite model of care, education and therapy for learners experiencing social, emotional and mental health difficulties (S.E.M.H.) in mid-Wales. All our learners are Looked After Children and present complex needs with regard to interpersonal, emotional and social issues.

The Potteries School provides a positive, supportive and child-centred educational environment for all its learners. Through a process of creating a safe learning space, building effective teacher-learner relationships and precision identification of individual learning need, the School supports learners to achieve and attain and prepare for the next steps on the educational ladder.

PURPOSE OF THE SCHOOL

The School supports the following mission statement:

We would like our learners to restart their educational experience with confidence and resume a pattern of learning in order to progress, attain and achieve.

And the following associated set of Aims:

- Empower learners to participate in their own education planning
- Support learners to reengage and to rediscover enjoyment in education
- Provide a safe, secure learning environment to encourage engagement
- Help learners to achieve, attain and progress academically
- Assist learners to develop the skills for positive social interaction
- Prepare learners for the next step on their educational pathway
- Provide opportunities that compensate for earlier missed experiences
- Inspire learners to invest in their own future development

CULTURE AND ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL

The Potteries School is one of the key elements in an integrated, tripartite model of care, education and therapy for learners experiencing social, emotional and mental health difficulties (S.E.M.H.) in mid-Wales. All our learners are Looked After Children and present complex needs with regard to interpersonal, emotional and social issues.

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Many of the learners have a history of school exclusion or had limited access to learning prior to admission. Most have been unable to manage in a formal educational setting and often the risks their behaviours present has impacted on their ability to be educated alongside large peer groups.

The education offered at the Potteries School seeks to reengage learners in a creative and meaningful curriculum, assisting them to catch up on missed learning and an assessment programme that identifies their learning needs accurately. All learning is offered in an inclusive environment and delivered by education professionals with an understanding of the needs of the learners, working to build self-esteem and learning confidence, develop peer relationships and progress independent learning skills.

THE RIGHT WAY

The Right Way PRINCIPLE	THIS MEANS:	ORGANISATIONS WILL:
EMBEDDING	Putting Children's Rights (UNCRC) at the core of planning and the delivery of services for children and young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Make links to Children's Rights (UNCRC) in their plans. ○ Agree on a structure of how they make sure children's rights are taken into account at all levels of decision making. ○ Make sure that leaders and staff have a good knowledge of children's rights (UNCRC), and help them understand how it can benefit their work.
Equality and NON-DISCRIMINATION	Ensure that every child has an equal opportunity to be the best they can be and that no child has to ensure poor life chances due to discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Make sure staff have up-to-date knowledge of the Equality Act and receive training to increase their awareness of different groups of children and young people's needs. ○ Give information to children in a language or format appropriate for their age, culture, or ability. ○ Analyse data and consider which groups of children are not accessing your services, and why - can use our a children's rights impact assessment.
EMPOWERING children and young people	Giving children the knowledge and confidence to use their rights and hold organisations and individuals that affect their lives to account	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Give children the information they need to influence decisions that affect them (e.g. simple language reports). ○ Involve children and young people by giving them the opportunities/ training/ information they need to influence decisions that affect them. ○ Build relationships with groups of young people to allow them to regularly give ideas and feedback. E.g. youth groups/forums.
PARTICIPATION	Listening to children and taking their views seriously (as guaranteed by Article 12 — UNCRC).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Develop clear targets to listen to children and young people from marginalised groups. ○ Involve children directly in the design, monitoring and evaluation of services they receive (this can include involving children in recruitment of staff). ○ Adopt Wales' National Participation Standards for Children and Young People, to make sure when children participate, their experience is a quality one.
ACCOUNTABILITY	Organisations and individuals should be accountable to children for the decisions and actions which affect their lives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Publish an accessible annual update showing how they've worked towards making children's rights a reality. ○ Feedback regularly to children in a suitable format. ○ Provide children with accessible information on how to provide feedback about services or to how to make a complaints and hold staff to account.

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK & GUIDANCE

- Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024
- S29; The Education Act 2002

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A CONCERN AND A COMPLAINT

A 'concern' may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'. A complaint may be generally defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'.

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to invoke formal procedures. The School will take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

There are occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally. In those cases, the school's formal procedure will be invoked through the stages outlined within this policy.

WHO CAN RAISE A CONCERN OR MAKE A COMPLAINT?

Any person, including learners or members of the general public, may raise a concern or make a complaint about any provision of facilities or services that a school provides, unless separate statutory procedures apply (such as exclusions or admissions). The School will not limit complaints to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school.

It is important in the Potteries School that learners have a voice and are listened to as valued members of the school community. Central to this concept is the idea that all learners will be supported to raise any concerns they may have about the school, will be listened to, and can be assured that the staff team will act on these concerns to achieve resolution. Learners placed in the school have a variety of options when wanting to raise a concern and these include the following:

- Group meetings
- Tutor time
- 1:1 with a member of teaching staff at any time
- Independent Advocate
- To a member of staff in the residential home who can then bring the concern to the school
- To any other professional involved in the life of the child and who can then advocate on their behalf.

The school will make every effort to initially resolve the concern in an informal and timely manner, and will always give the person raising the concern the opportunity to express how they would resolve the situation, or the outcomes they would require for resolution to be achieved.

Should such resolution not be achieved, or should someone request to make a formal complaint, then the formal complaints process will be initiated and adhered to, to conclusion.

ALL young people coming into the School are informed of their right to make a complaint, shown the Complaints Policy, and given a Learner Handbook which includes information about how to make a complaint. Their tutor will go through the booklet with them in detail to ensure that they are fully aware as to how to raise a concern or complaint in the School.

WHAT DOES NOT CONSTITUTE A COMPLAINT FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS POLICY?

Within statutory procedures and guidance certain matters arising will not be considered under the School's Complaints Policy, and the School should refer to alternate policy sources to consider procedures to be applied. These are as follows:

- **Admissions to the school:** complaints should be raised with either The Potteries School or the Local Authority responsible for placing the child;
- **Statutory Assessments of SEN:** complaints should be raised with the Local Authority holding responsibility for the child;
- **Safeguarding & Child Protection:** The School should refer to the Safeguarding Policy & Procedures;
- **Whistleblowing:** The School should refer to the Whistleblowing Policy and Procedures;
- **Exclusion of a child from school:** The School should refer to the Exclusion Policy;
- **Staff grievances and disciplinary:** The School should refer to the Disciplinary and Grievance Policy and Procedures;
- **Complaints about external service providers:** Complaints should be directed to that service provider and dealt with under the providers own Complaints Policy.

DUTIES OF THE SCHOOL

In order to ensure transparency and to meet the requirements of paragraph 7 of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024, the school will ensure that the Complaints Policy and Procedure:

- Is easily accessible and publicised;

- Available on request;
- Is simple to understand and use;
- Is impartial;
- Is non-adversarial;
- Enables a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary;
- Respects people's desire for confidentiality;
- Addresses all the points at issue and provides an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary;
- Provides information to the School's senior management team so that services can be improved.

RECORDING & REPORTING

The Potteries School will comply with its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 to ensure that all consideration is given to the preferred method of communication by the complainant due to any disability or learning difficulty they may have, and the School will allow alternative methods of contact in order to support a complaint being made and heard.

A complaint may be made in person, by telephone, or in writing (including email, text or other social media communication available to the school). Other than receiving a complaint in writing, for other media, brief notes should be made, clarified with the complainant and agreed as correct. It may be appropriate to send a formal written response to clarify the points raised, and this should be added to the complaint record. Where there are communication difficulties, the School will use a recording device to ensure accuracy of recording, which can be reviewed by the complainant as required.

All learners in the school can record their complaints on the Learner Complaints Form, available to all learners. If the learner has difficulties with literacy skills, a member of staff (not included in the scope of the complaint) can use this as a basis from which to help the young person write a more accurate complaint; and may use other methods of communication and recording as appropriate to the needs of the learner.

All concerns and complaints received by the School will be recorded in the School's Complaints Log; a hard bound book kept in the school room. This will log particular details of the concern or complaint. If the issue arising needs to be investigated as a formal complaint then a formal complaints record will be started (referenced to the Complaints Log). This record will be completed at all stages of the complaint until conclusion and final outcomes, and will contain all information and evidence pertinent to the complaints process.

The Headteacher is responsible for the regular review and maintenance of the Complaints Log and Complaints records, ensuring the process in place for a complaint is followed in a timely manner, and ensuring the investigation process is fair, robust and

thorough. All complaints are to be logged on the Headteacher Monthly Monitoring Report sent to the Head of Education Services each month.

In the event of a complaint being raised against the Headteacher at the School, this should be raised with the Head of Education Services for CareTech. Contact details below:

Andrew Sutherland
Andrew.sutherland@caretech-uk.com
01707 601800

TIMELINESS

The School is duty bound to consider and resolve complaints in a timely manner, without allowing excessive time to pass before a conclusion is reached, yet not processing a complaint so quickly that the speed of investigation impacts on the quality of process, and, by extension, the fairness of any conclusion and outcomes reached.

For this reason, the School gives clear guidance as to expected timescales for each stage of the process in the next section. The School accepts that, at times, extenuating circumstances may prevent these timescales from being adhered to, but that the reasons for any delay should be formally recorded in the complaints record.

The School will communicate timescales, and any changes to these, clearly to the complainant at each stage of the process.

The School expects complaints to be made as soon as possible after the event giving rise to the complaint. In general, the School will not investigate a complaint if it is raised more than three months after the event occurring. The School will consider each individual complaint on the circumstances arising and may make allowances for going beyond these timelines if extenuating reasons exist.

WHO LEADS A COMPLAINT?

It is important to note that as The Potteries School has low levels of staffing, at times, it may not be appropriate for a teacher to investigate or reach a decision about complaints raised in the school, and in order to ensure that all complaints are handled in a fair and unbiased manner. To that end, the Headteacher may refer a complaint to another Headteacher within the group, and referred to below as the 'Supporting Headteacher'. In the instance of a Stage 2 – Formal Consideration arising, the matter MUST go to the 'Supporting Headteacher' in the first instance and may than be referred back to the Branas Isaf Schools Headteacher should that be decided. The Head of Education Services may, at times, be considered the most appropriate 'Supporting Headteacher' to deal with a complaint arising.

FOR A CONCERN OR FOR RESOLUTION AT STAGE 1 – LOCAL / INFORMAL RESOLUTION:

The process should be led by the Headteacher, on receiving the concern or complaint. If this member of staff dealing with the concern or complaint feels that they lack the authority to achieve resolution, or feel that the upon initial investigation, the matter is more complex than first thought, then they must pass responsibility to a Supporting Headteacher or Head of Education Services.

FOR RESOLUTION AT STAGE 2 – FORMAL CONSIDERATION:

The process must be led by a Supporting Headteacher, or delegated by the Supporting Headteacher to the Branas Isaf Schools Headteacher. The Supporting Headteacher may decide that it is more appropriate to request someone external to the school to carry out any investigation into the complaint. This remains the decision of the Supporting Headteacher in coordinating the process. At Stage 2 it may be appropriate for the investigating officer to convene a Formal Hearing in order to explore the circumstances surrounding the complaint.

STAGES OF THE COMPLAINTS PROCESS

Stage 1 – Local/Informal Resolution

Timescale: 14/28 Days

1. The Headteacher receiving the complaint or the Supporting Headteacher will resolve the matter as soon as reasonably practical and in any event within 14 days. This may be extended for a further 14 days with the agreement of the complainant. The Headteacher must reach a decision as to whether it needs to be passed on to the Supporting Headteacher within 48 hours of receiving the complaint.
2. If it is possible to resolve a complaint at Stage 1 of the process then the following processes must take place:
 - a. Record a summary of the complaint and the manner in which it was resolved in the Complaints Log and in the Daily Record of any relevant child/young person;
 - b. The Headteacher must confirm in writing to the complainant the agreed resolution. The person(s) about whom the complaint was made will receive the same information in writing, along with any actions requiring attention.

Stage 2 – Formal Consideration

Timescale: 35 Days (From the initial complaint)

1. Should the complaint not be able to achieve resolution at Stage 1 then the Headteacher must take steps to take the complaint to the Stage 2 formal process, and if not previously done, refer it to the Supporting Headteacher. This is either because the complaint could not be effectively resolved at the Stage 1, or the timescale could not be met, or the matter was too serious to attempt resolution at

Stage 1. Agreement from the complainant is desirable to take the complaint to Stage 2, but not essential. Each case will be decided on the strength of the evidence provided.

2. Before undertaking the Formal Consideration, the Supporting Headteacher will clarify the substance of the complaint with the complainant, put it into writing and give a copy to the complainant.
3. If the complaint relates to another learner in the school then that learner's social worker, and/or parents / corporate parents will be consulted.
4. The Supporting Headteacher, or delegated lead, will seek to resolve the complaint as quickly as possible, but within the maximum 35 days of the request for the Formal Consideration. This may be extended with the agreement of the complainant. Should an extension be required, the extenuating circumstances leading to it must be communicated to the complainant in writing.
5. Should the Supporting Headteacher decide that any investigation required to address the complaint would be best carried out by an external investigator then the Headteacher must:
 - a. Appoint an appropriate external investigator without delay;
 - b. Communicate the decision to use an external investigator to the complainant;
 - c. Continue to maintain oversight and progress of the investigation within the timescales of the process.
6. Following completion of any investigation the Supporting Headteacher will reach his/her conclusions, and decide on outcomes, based on the strength of evidence provided by the investigation.
7. The Supporting Headteacher will notify the complainant of the outcomes of the complaint, preferably verbally, and always followed up in writing. If the complaint was justified, the complainant should be told what, if any, remedial action will be taken and an apology offered. Outcomes of an investigation into a complaint may lead to a decision to begin processes falling within other policies and procedures, but this will not prevent the complaint itself from reaching a timely conclusion.
8. The person(s) about whom the complaint was made will receive the same information in writing, along with any actions requiring attention.
9. Details of the outcomes must be recorded on the complaint record, along with all other recording of the investigation process. Once completed, this record must be signed-off by the Supporting Headteacher and filed in Potteries School Complaints Folder. Outcomes from the complaint will also be recorded in the Complaints Log. If the complaint concerned a learner in the school, a copy of the complaint record will be:
 - a. Sent to the residential home for inclusion in the young person's file;
 - b. Sent to the young person's social worker for inclusion in their records;

- c. Sent to the Registered Manager of the residential home for inclusion in their complaints file.
- d. Notification sent to the proprietor representative responsible for compliance.

Stage 3 – Review Panel

Timescale: 28 Days

1. If dissatisfied with the outcome of a Stage 2 Formal Investigation, a complainant may request a Stage 3: Review Panel to consider their complaint; they may also ask that their complaint be passed to the Placing Authority or Regulatory Authority. To initiate a Stage 3: Review Panel, the complainant should notify the Headteacher, either verbally or in writing; the notification will be confirmed in writing explaining the process and timescales for convening a Stage 3 Review Panel.
2. The Headteacher will ensure that:
 - a. Senior managers and, if the complaint involves a learner at the school, the placing authority, and/or parents / corporate parents, are notified and briefed as necessary until the matter is resolved;
 - b. The complainant is clear about the process and timescales;
 - c. Where the complainant is a young person, they have access to an independent advocate or representative at the panel hearing. Young people may also be accompanied by their parents or a representative of the corporate parent. Where a parent, that they are made aware of their right to be accompanied at the panel hearing;
 - d. Necessary arrangements are made for the Review Panel to be conducted in a fair and thorough manner. The Review Panel has the power to make findings and recommendations on the complaint as suggested by the evidence presented to the panel;
 - e. A Review Panel is established to consider the matter. For complaints arising in the School, the review panel process will, generally, involve the Head of Education Services and 2 other members of the Senior Management Team, independent of the matter under consideration. In addition, the panel must also contain one person who is independent of both the management and running of the school. The Head of Education Services will chair the panel and report back to the Headteacher on any recommendations made by the Review Panel.
 - f. The Review Panel communicate their recommendations to the complainant in writing, and within the timescales for the Stage 3 process;
 - g. The person(s) about whom the complaint was made will receive the same information in writing, along with any actions requiring attention.
 - h. The recommendations of the Review Panel are included in the complaints record and filed in the school's Complaints File;

- i. The process described at Stage 2 (9) (a-d) must also be completed.

COMPLAINTS MADE AGAINST THE HEADTEACHER

Please note that in the event of a complaint being made against the Headteacher for The Potteries School is the exact same process as detailed above will be followed, but responsibility for the process will be passed straight to the Head of Education Services for CareTech.

In the event that a Stage 3 Review Panel is required, this will comprise 3 members of the Senior Management Team for CareTech Children’s Services, exclusive of the Head of Education Services, and independent of the complaint under review. A chairperson will be appointed to fulfil the role as detailed in Stage 3 (2) (e) above.

Recording and reporting for the complaint will NOT be kept in the school, other than the initial entry into the Complaints Log. It will be kept as part of the Head of Education Services own Complaints File, external to the school, and on that Headteacher’s personnel file.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024 requires that:

“provides that, subject to paragraph 6(2)(j) of this Schedule, correspondence, statements and records of complaints are to be kept confidential except where the National Assembly or a body conducting an inspection under section 163 of the 2002 Act requests access to any documents relating to the complaint.”

The School’s Complaints File, containing a complete record and evidence of each individual complaint will be held by the Headteacher, in the Headteacher’s office. This file is confidential and will only be made available to those people stipulated in the Standards, and on request. Findings and recommendations are available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and Headteacher. Records will indicate whether complaints were resolved following a formal procedure or panel hearing. Action taken by the school as a result of the complaints will be evaluated by the proprietor to ensure improvement in practice.

Complaints records involving the Headteacher will be held in a likewise manner by the Head of Education Services.

The Complaints Log, held in the school staff room, contains only the information required to log the complaint and its nature. It will not contain any of the confidential detail of the complaints process being undertaken for that complaint.

REVIEW

This policy and procedures will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis to ensure continued compliance with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024 and relevant guidance issued by the DfE and Welsh Government.

This document will be next reviewed on 28/07/2026.

