

Local Procedure Title	Complaints
Service	Bridge House School
ACS Policy number and title	AOP 03 v13 Complaints
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Local Procedure Author(s)	Jacky Gray
Local Procedure Ratification	Checked and approved by: Clare Hiom (Head Teacher)

1. Aims

- Provide ease of access for all Young Persons and stakeholders to the complaints process.
- Build confidence and goodwill in how complaints are managed.
- Offer transparent information on how to make a complaint and what to expect.
- Ensure investigations are honest, open and proportionate.
- Set clear expectations for complainant and colleague behaviour and communication.
- Address all legitimate concerns raised.
- Maintain fairness and consistency across all investigations.
- Record, audit and cross-reference complaint data to support quality improvement.
- Extract lessons learned to improve services and reduce risks.
- Identify any shortfalls or failings in conduct where relevant.
- Support a culture of excellence in complaint management.
- Signpost complainants to external bodies when appropriate.

2. Overview

This procedure sets out the four-stage complaints process:

- Stage 0 Immediate/next day resolution
- Stage 1 Local Resolution.
- Stage 2 Internal Review.
- Stage 3 Independent Panel (Education & Children's Services).
- Stage 4 Ombudsman Review.

It applies to all complaints received by any service or department and defines the responsibilities of the Head Teacher throughout.

Stage 0 – Immediate/Next-Day Resolution

- Front-line colleagues attempt to resolve concerns immediately or by the next working day.
- Minor concerns are recorded and closed once resolved; unresolved matters progress to Stage 1.

Stage 1 – Local Resolution

- Complaints are passed immediately to the Head Teacher.
- Details are recorded on the organisation's reporting system within required timescales.
- Acknowledgement issued within two working days.
- Investigation includes evidence gathering, meetings, and documenting findings.

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- Holding letter issued within 15 days if response cannot be completed within 20 working days.
- A formal written outcome is issued, explaining findings and next-step options.

Stage 2 – Internal Review

- If dissatisfied, complainants may request a Stage 2 review within six months of the Stage 1 response.
- The review is undertaken by an Independent Review Manager or Regional/Area Director.
- A formal Stage 2 response is issued within the required timeframe.

Stage 3 – Independent Complaint Panel (Education & Children’s Services)

- A Panel may be requested when dissatisfaction remains after Stage 2.
- Panel members are independent of the service.
- Findings and recommendations are provided to the complainant and recorded for inspection.

Stage 4 – Ombudsman

- If still dissatisfied, complainants may refer to the Ombudsman within six months of the Stage 3 decision.

Complaints involving safeguarding concerns, serious injury, potential litigation, MP correspondence, police involvement or significant reputational risk will be escalated immediately in accordance with corporate policy

3. Roles and responsibilities

- Head Teacher oversees the complaint through Stage 1; maintaining records and supports process compliance.
- Investigating Officer: conducts evidence gathering and prepares reports.
- Regional/Area Director and Group Claims & Complaints Coordinator: oversee higher-stage reviews as required.

4. Record keeping and confidentiality

- All complaints are recorded separately from individual care/education records.
- A full case file is maintained, including investigation logs and correspondence.
- Confidentiality and information-sharing protocols must be followed at all times.

5. Monitoring arrangements

This local procedure will be reviewed by the Head Teacher annually.

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Local Procedure Review History:

Date Reviewed	Reviewer	Summary of revisions