

The Cornwall Independent School

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Incorporating arrangements for the Early Years Foundation Stage and for Data Protection Complaints)

This procedure is published on the school website and is available on request from the school office. Parents may ask the Headteacher for the number of complaints received at the Formal (stage 2) and Panel (stage 3) stages during the preceding academic year. This information is also published annually in accordance with the regulatory requirements and is included at the end of this procedure.

This document which applies to the whole school, including the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), is available on request, from the School Office, and can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required, from the School Office.

Whole-school approach to safeguarding: We have a whole school approach to safeguarding, which is the golden thread that runs throughout every aspect of the school. All our school policies support our approach to safeguarding (child protection). Our fundamental priority is our children and their wellbeing; this is first and foremost.

The text of this Procedure is **necessary** and **proportionate** to meet the needs of The Cornwall Independent School, supporting those who work with our pupils and making clear the responsibilities of school staff, volunteers, and the Governance Advisory Board. This Procedure is subject to continuous monitoring, refinement and audit by the Headteacher. The Governance Advisory Board is committed to regularly reviewing and updating this Procedure to ensure it remains relevant and effective, including the efficiency with which the related duties are implemented. Review will be formally documented in writing. Any deficiency or weakness identified in this Procedure, or in its implementation, will be remedied without delay, and all staff will be informed of any updated or reviewed arrangements in writing or electronically. This Procedure is reviewed annually as a minimum, and sooner where required by a material change in statutory or best-practice requirements, such as revisions to the Independent School Standards Guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education, the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework, or data protection legislation.

Scope: This policy is a live document that is sensitive to our working practices and is subject to change according to the needs of The Cornwall Independent School (TCIS). All who work, volunteer or supply services to our school have an equal responsibility to understand and implement this policy and its procedures both within and outside of normal school hours, including activities away from school. All employees and volunteers are required to state that they have read, understood and will abide by this policy and its procedural documents and confirm this by signing the *Policies Register*.

Legal Status: Complies with The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations currently in force and other statutory and best practice documentation cited in this document.

Monitoring, Review and Adaptation: The text of this policy is **necessary** and proportionate to meet the needs of The Cornwall Independent School, supporting those who work with our pupils, **making clearer** the responsibilities of school staff, volunteers, proprietor and the Governing Advisory Body. These arrangements are subject to continuous monitoring, refinement, and audit by the Headteacher. The Governance Advisory Body is committed to regularly reviewing and updating our policies to ensure they remain relevant and effective in supporting our school's mission and values, inclusive of its implementation and the efficiency with which the related duties have been implemented. This review will be formally documented in writing. Any deficiencies or weaknesses recognised in arrangements or procedures will be remedied immediately and without delay. All staff will be informed of the updated/reviewed arrangements, and it will be made available to them in writing or electronically.

The Policy Owner is Miss Louise Adams, supported by the Education and Compliance Officer.

Reviewed: September 2026

Next Review: September 2027 (or sooner, to reflect any material change in statutory or best practice requirements)



Miss Louise Adams
Headteacher

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Oversight of implementation of this policy rests with the Governance Advisory Board

Introduction: The Cornwall Independent School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. The school's aims are concerned with meeting the needs of the pupils, parents' staff and other stakeholders. Constant communication and feedback are crucial in monitoring standards and improving provision. Those who have complaints should feel these can be voiced and that they will be taken seriously. There is no distinction in practice between a concern and a complaint; both terms reflect an expression of dissatisfaction that requires a response from the school - either to explain its position or to put right what may be wrong. We will seek to resolve complaints by informal means wherever possible.

The Cornwall Independent School is a School where:

- we promote an enduring love of learning.
- each child is respected as an individual.
- we engender a clear appreciation of the traditional ethical precepts
- children feel safe and unconditionally valued.
- excellence is identified and where each child may extend themselves.
- staff are our most cherished resource.
- pupils engage with technology as a means of extending systematic enquiry.
- there is a partnership between staff, pupils, parents and proprietor.

What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the school as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff, and any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the school is within the scope of this procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the school has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly.

A complaint is likely to arise when there are issues of physical or emotional well-being and security at stake, or when the

school's stated aims or values are being ignored. A breach of the law will always constitute a complaint. If parents/staff do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school in accordance with this procedure. Investigations will be thorough, fair and completed in a reasonable timeframe. The complainant may not be entitled to all information regarding the investigation but will be kept informed of the process and of the decisions reached. This is a complaints policy for parents/staff of pupils currently attending The Cornwall Independent School. This policy does not apply to prospective parents/staff relating to admissions issues, or to pupils or staff who may wish to complain. The timescales indicated in the procedures below should allow for swift resolution of complaints. There will be some circumstances in which the normal timescales are affected by issues that delay resolution; namely school holidays and other factors. It is intended that all issues will be resolved within 28 days of the first complaint being made.

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 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008](#) requests access to them. There may also be other circumstances in which the school is required to share information relating to a concern or a complaint in order to comply with its legal or regulatory obligations. The school is here for your child, and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you [or your child] raise[s] in good faith.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents/staff have a complaint, as soon as possible they should normally contact the most appropriate member of staff, such as their son or daughter's form teacher or tutor. In most cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents/staff's satisfaction. If the member of staff contacted cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult the Deputy Headteacher for advice.
- Complaints made directly to the Deputy Headteacher will usually be referred back to the relevant form teacher unless the Deputy Headteacher deems it appropriate for her to deal with the matter personally without it going through the normal channels. This will still be deemed to be under Stage 1 (Informal) of this policy.
- The member of staff who is dealing with the matter will keep a written record. Should the matter not be resolved within five working days or in the event that the member of staff and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, parents/staff will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure. A note should be kept of the date a resolution was reached and the agreed nature of this, this helps prevent the process from drifting into a longer timeframe.
- Sometimes, parents/staff will raise a concern informally with the Headteacher directly. As above, she may feel that this should be referred back to the relevant form teacher, tutor. But there will certainly be occasions when the Headteacher feels it is appropriate to resolve the issue informally herself without the need for referral. This will still be under the Stage 1 process of informal resolution. It is only when/if the parents/staff are not satisfied with the outcome that they should proceed to Stage 2 of this Procedure.

Stage 2.1 – Formal Resolution - Headteacher

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents/staff should put their complaint in writing to the Headteacher. The Headteacher will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Headteacher will meet or speak to the parents/staff concerned, normally within five working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. The dialogue may be by email to ensure there is no delay. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Headteacher to carry out further investigations that take more time, and she will inform the complainants of this. These investigations should take no longer than seven days in normal term time. During school holidays the time taken for consultation with other staff is more difficult to predict, but it should be expected that this should not exceed fourteen days.
- The Headteacher will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Headteacher is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made, and parents/staff will be informed of this decision in writing. The Headteacher will also give reasons for the decision. A note will be kept of when a final outcome was reached. This whole process should not take more than 21 days, including investigation.
- If parents/staff are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

Stage 2.2 – Formal Complaints regarding Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) inclusive of the 28-day duty

Parents of pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage (Reception) should follow the three stages of this Complaints Procedure. in the same way as any other parent. Where a written complaint concerns the school's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, the school will investigate it and notify the complainant of the outcome within 28 days of the complaint being received (EYFS Statutory Framework, Section 3). This is an overarching statutory duty, not simply a Stage 2 target: where a Stage 2 investigation into an EYFS matter would otherwise run beyond 28 days, the school will prioritise it to meet this duty and will keep the parent informed throughout.

If, having completed this Procedure, a parent remains dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint about the school's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, they may refer the complaint to Ofsted and/or the Independent Schools Inspectorate. The school will provide Ofsted and ISI, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during a specified period and the action taken because of each. Records of such complaints are kept in accordance with the statutory requirements. Complaints about the school's fulfilment of the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements are investigated under stage 2, but are subject to the statutory EYFS timescale, not the general Stage 2 timescale.

If parents remain dissatisfied and their complaint is about the school's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, then parents may take their complaint to the ISI or Ofsted. The school will notify the parents about the outcome of the investigation into their complaint within 28 days from the date the complaint was received.

The school will provide ISI/Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any such complaints will be kept in accordance with its Privacy Notice and Retention of Records Policy. Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements.

Written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements must be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation normally within 28 working days. EYFS parents have the right to complain directly to Ofsted and/or ISI about the fulfilment of the EYFS curriculum requirements, but this is only the case once the EYFS complaint has gone through the whole of the school's complaints procedure. This procedure applies in full to parents and carers of children in our reception class. In addition, and in accordance with the EYFS statutory framework (currently in force), the school will:

- Keep a written record of any complaint relating to the school's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, and of its outcome.
- Investigate any such complaint and notify the parent of the outcome of that investigation within 28 days of the complaint being received.
- Make that record available to Ofsted and/or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) on request

Parents of children in the EYFS have the right to raise a complaint about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements directly with Ofsted and/or ISI once they have completed the whole of this complaint's procedure

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- If parents/staff seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Convenor, who will be appointed by the Proprietor to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.
- The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. The other two Panel members will usually be members of the Governance Advisory Board. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Proprietor. The Panel Convenor, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 21 days.
- If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than 5 days prior to the hearing.
- The complainant(s) may be accompanied to the panel hearing if they wish.
- The Panel meeting will be a full merit hearing and not only a judicial review of process. If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents/staff' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
- Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all facts, they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make findings and recommendations, within 5 working

days of the Panel meeting.

- A copy of those findings and recommendations will be –
 - (i) sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about;
 - (ii) made available for inspection on the school premises by the Proprietor and the Headteacher. In the event that the complaint is against the Headteacher, the Proprietor will appoint an appropriate person/s, either internally or externally, to investigate and report.

Data Protection Complaints (Section 164A): From 19 June 2026, a parent, pupil, member of staff or other individual who believes that their personal data has been mishandled by the school has a statutory right to complain to the school first, before referring the matter to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). This right is created by section 103 of the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025, which inserts new section 164A into the Data Protection Act 2018.

The school, as data controller, is not required to operate a wholly separate procedure for this purpose: this Complaints Procedure has been adapted, in line with ICO guidance cited at paragraph 7.3 of the Independent School Standards Guidance (April 2026), to meet the new statutory obligations. In particular:

- A data protection complaint should be made in writing, in the first instance, to the Headteacher who acts as the school's named contact for data protection matters.
- The school will acknowledge a data protection complaint within 30 days of receipt.
- The school will take appropriate steps to investigate the complaint, including making such enquiries as are necessary, without undue delay, and will keep the complainant informed of progress.
- The complainant will be informed of the outcome of the investigation, including whether the complaint is upheld and, if so, what action the school proposes to take.
- Depending on its nature, a data protection complaint may be progressed using Stages 1 to 3 of this Procedure, adapted as necessary to meet the timescales in this Section; where the complaint concerns a specific data subject right (for example, a subject access request), it will also be handled in accordance with the School's Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notice.
- The School Office, reception staff and the Senior Leadership Team are briefed on this route so that a data protection complaint is recognised and forwarded to the named contact promptly on first receipt, since mishandling at the point of first contact is the principal compliance risk under section 164A.

If, having completed this Procedure, the complainant remains dissatisfied with the school's handling of a data protection complaint, they may refer the matter to the Information Commissioner's Office: Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF; helpline 0303 123 1113; website ico.org.uk.

Confidentiality: Parents/staff can be assured that all complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. 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 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

Persistent, Vexatious or Unreasonable Correspondence: The school defines persistent or vexatious correspondence as a complaint that is raised repeatedly after it has already been considered through all applicable stages of this Procedure, or correspondence that is abusive, threatening, or designed to harass rather than to resolve a genuine concern. Where the Headteacher determines that correspondence meets this threshold, the school reserves the right to limit or manage future contact in relation to that complaint, for example by nominating a single point of contact, limiting the frequency or format of correspondence, or declining to respond further to matters already fully addressed. The complainant will be informed in writing of this decision and the reasons for it. This provision does not prevent a parent from raising a new and distinct complaint through the normal Procedure, and it will never be used to deter a complainant from raising a genuine safeguarding concern.

Written records and retention: A written record is kept of all complaints that reach the formal stage (Stage 2 above), and of whether they are resolved at that stage or proceed to a panel. A record will also be kept of what action is taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld) and the date on which a final outcome was reached. All records of complaints will be kept for a minimum of three years. The school will provide on request to Ofsted and ISI a

written record of all complaints made during a specified period and the action that was taken as a result of each complaint.

Parents may ask the Headteacher for the number of complaints received at the formal and panel stage during the preceding academic year. In addition to the Complaints Procedure detailed above, parents may also make a complaint to either the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) or, for complaints concerning the Early Years Foundation Stage, to Ofsted. This includes parents appealing against a decision made by the school about their complaint.

Recording Complaints and use of personal data: Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all [formal] complaints, whether they are resolved at [the Stage 1 (informal stage), the formal stage - Headteacher (Stage 2), or proceed to a Panel hearing (Stage 3) and any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld).

The Cornwall Independent School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice. When dealing with complaints the school (including any Panel member appointed under the Stage 3 process) may process a range of information, which is likely to include the following:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name and contact details of member (s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)
- Notes/minutes of the hearing, and
- The Panel's written decision

This may include 'special category personal data' (as further detailed in the School's *Privacy Notice* but potentially including, for instance, information relating to physical or mental health) where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint. This data will be processed in accordance with the School's *Data Protection Policy*.

The school will keep records of formal complaints and Complaints Panel hearings, as required by regulation. It will do so in accordance with its *Privacy Notice [Data Protection Policy]* [and *Retention of Records Policy*]. All records relating to complaints shall be treated as confidential. In addition to where requested by the Secretary of State or an inspector (see above), there may be other circumstances where disclosure of the substance of a complaint or particular confidential records relating to it is required, for example, where there is a legal, regulatory, safeguarding or data protection obligation (e.g., in response to a subject access request) which prevails over the requirement to maintain the records as confidential.

A note on artificial intelligence and drafting complaints: Parents sometimes use AI writing tools to help express a concern. That is understood and does not change how a concern is treated. However, parents should be aware that a written communication which explicitly invokes formal procedures, alleges a safeguarding matter, or uses legal or regulatory terminology may need to be treated as a formal Stage 2 complaint even where an informal conversation might otherwise have resolved the matter more quickly and personally. Where it is not clear

We are aware that many parents now use AI tools (such as ChatGPT) to help draft correspondence. We ask parents to consider the following before doing so in the context of a complaint: AI tools will typically produce a formal written letter. Under this procedure, a written complaint that has not first been raised informally is nonetheless treated as a Stage 2 formal complaint, because the school is obliged to respond to the language and format in which a concern is presented. This means that a parent who intended to raise an informal concern may find themselves in a formal process — with formal timescales, a formal investigation, and a written outcome.

Persistent correspondence: Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this will be regarded by the school as vexatious and outside the scope of this procedure.

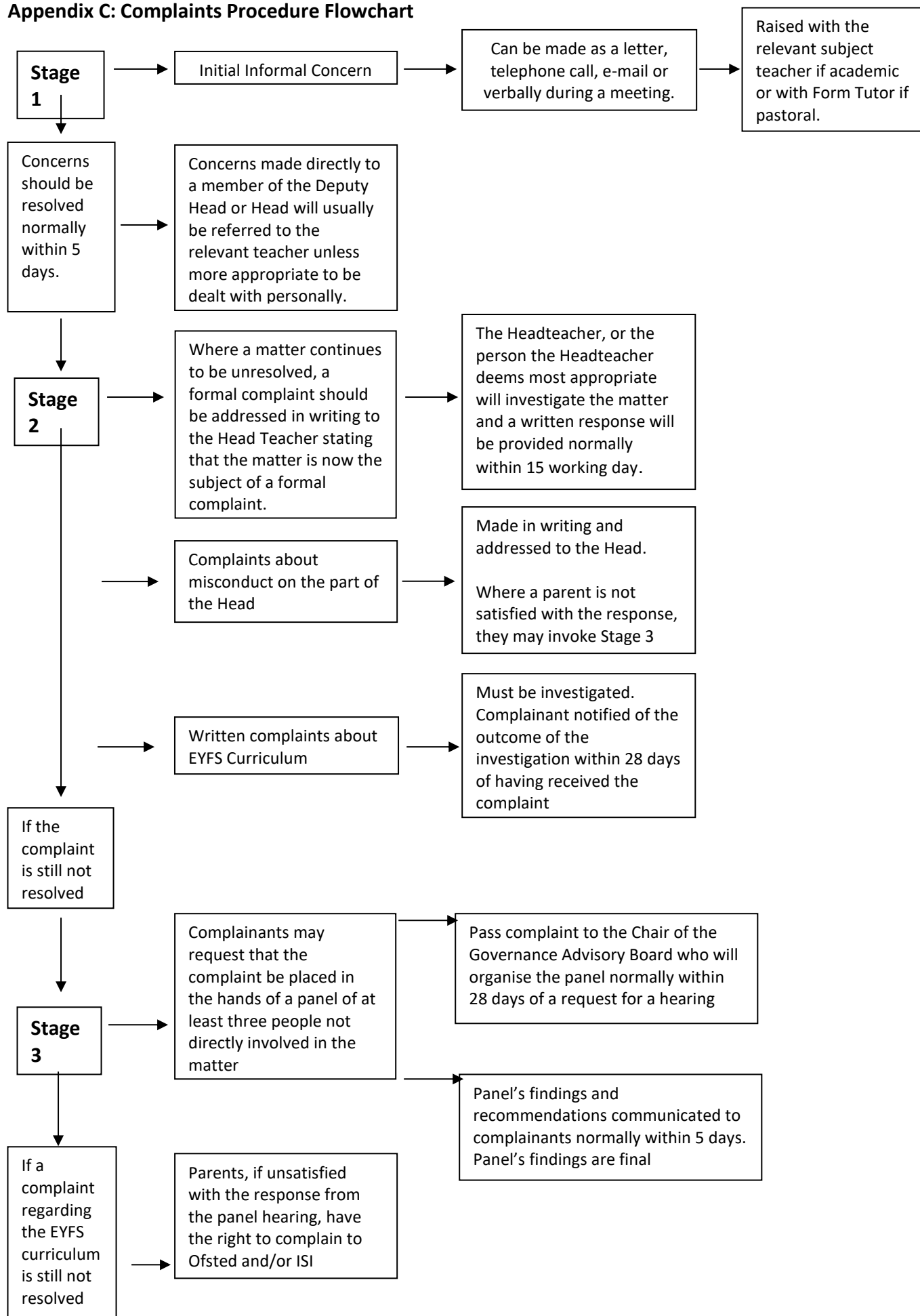
Appendix A: Overview of the Stages

Stage	Who handles it	How to raise it	Typical timescale
Stage 1 – Informal Resolution	Class/form teacher, subject teacher, or relevant member of staff	Letter, phone call, e-mail, in person or at a meeting	Acknowledged promptly; normally resolved within 5 school days
Stage 2 – Formal Complaint	Headteacher (or the Chair of the Governance Board if the complaint concerns the Headteacher)	In writing (letter or e-mail), addressed to the Headteacher	Acknowledged within 3 school days; written outcome normally within 20 school days
Stage 3 – Complaints Panel Hearing	Independent Complaints Panel of at least 3 people, convened by the Proprietor	Written request to the Proprietor/Panel Convenor following the Stage 2 outcome	Panel convened normally within 20 school days of the request; decision normally within 5 school days of the hearing

Appendix B: Contact details

Body	Address	Telephone / Online
Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI)	CAP House, 9–12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA Email: see Website: www.isi.net	020 7600 0100 · isi.net
Ofsted	Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk	0300 123 4666 · complain.ofsted.gov.uk
Department for Education (DfE)	Complaints about independent schools	complain-about-school
Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)	Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF	0303 123 1113 · ico.org.uk

Appendix C: Complaints Procedure Flowchart



The Cornwall Independent School

4 - 16 years Coeducational Independent Day School

Note: This Log satisfies the School's Obligations under Part 7 of the ISSRs Manner in Which Complaints Are Handled and Part 6 Provision of Information for information to be 'made available' under Paragraph 3 (f) to report and 'the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.'

Complaints Log Under Stage 2 and Stage 3 of Complaints Procedure

Academic Year:	Number of complaints received:	Outcome:
2025-2026	3 - Proceeded to stage 2 (Formal resolution by Headteacher) 1 - Proceeded to stage 3 (Formal resolution by advisory board)	Resolved by formal intervention by headteacher and appropriate action taken to resolve issue in one case and 2 nd case not upheld. Formal resolution by advisory board complaints not upheld.

This policy is available on the school website