

Complaints Procedure

Complaints

SMS Changing Lives School



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Complaints Procedure

Public complaints procedure for parents, carers, pupils and other stakeholders



Policy owner	Headteacher
Approved / reviewed	September 2026
Next review	September 2027
Availability	School website and school office; paper copy free of charge on request

Key requirement	The Stage 3 complaints panel will consist of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters complained about. At least one panel member will be independent of the management and running of the school.
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1. Purpose and principles

SMS Changing Lives School aims to resolve concerns fairly, promptly and at the lowest appropriate level. Complaints are treated seriously and respectfully. The school will not treat a pupil or parent less favourably because they have raised a concern or complaint in good faith.

- Concerns should normally be addressed informally first where this is appropriate.
- Formal complaints will be investigated by a person who is sufficiently independent of the matters complained about.
- Complainants will be given a fair opportunity to explain their concerns and provide relevant information.
- Records will be kept securely and confidentiality maintained, subject to safeguarding, legal and regulatory requirements.

2. Scope

This procedure applies to complaints about the school, its education, welfare arrangements, staff conduct or the implementation of school policies. Safeguarding allegations, staff grievances,

disciplinary matters and examination appeals may need to be considered under separate procedures; where that applies, the school will explain the correct route.

A complaint about the Headteacher will be handled by the Chair of the proprietor body or another suitable person appointed by the proprietor. A complaint about the Chair of the proprietor body will be allocated to another director or a suitably independent person with no prior involvement.

3. Stage 1 - informal resolution

Where appropriate, a concern should first be raised with the member of staff best placed to resolve it, or with a senior leader. Concerns may be raised in person, by telephone or in writing. The school will normally aim to respond within 10 school days.

If the concern is not resolved, or if the matter is sufficiently serious that informal resolution is not appropriate, the complainant may move to Stage 2.

4. Stage 2 - formal written complaint

A formal complaint should be made in writing to the Headteacher. Email is acceptable. The complaint should explain what happened, why the complainant remains dissatisfied and what outcome they are seeking. Reasonable support will be provided where a complainant would have difficulty putting a complaint in writing.

- The school will normally acknowledge the complaint within 5 school days.
- The complaint will be investigated by the Headteacher or another suitable investigating officer. If the complaint concerns the Headteacher, the proprietor will appoint a suitable investigator.
- The investigator may meet or speak with the complainant, relevant staff and other witnesses, and review relevant records.
- A written Stage 2 outcome will normally be issued within 15 school days of acknowledgement. If more time is reasonably required, the complainant will be told why and given a revised date.

5. Stage 3 - complaints panel hearing

If the complainant remains dissatisfied after Stage 2, they may request a panel hearing. The request should normally be made in writing within 10 school days of the Stage 2 outcome, explaining why they remain dissatisfied.

- The school will aim to convene the panel within 20 school days of receiving the request. If this is not practicable, the complainant will be told the reason and the earliest available date.
- The panel will consist of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters complained about.
- At least one panel member will be independent of the management and running of SMS Changing Lives School.
- Where required, SMS may ask Peninsula to identify or supply a suitably independent panel member. Any such person must have had no prior involvement in the complaint and must be

independent of the management and running of the school. A Peninsula representative who has advised on the specific complaint or investigation will not act as the independent panel member.

- The complainant may attend and may be accompanied by a relative, friend or supporter. The school asks for reasonable advance notice if a party intends to be legally represented so that a fair process can be arranged.
- The panel may consider the original complaint, the Stage 2 investigation, relevant evidence and representations from the complainant and the school. It may ask questions where clarification is needed.
- The panel may uphold the complaint in whole or in part, dismiss it, recommend appropriate action, or recommend changes to systems or procedures.

The panel will make findings and recommendations. A written copy will be provided to the complainant and, where relevant, to the person complained about. The findings and recommendations will also be available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and Headteacher. The school will normally issue the written outcome within 5 school days of the hearing.

6. Records, confidentiality and annual reporting

The school will keep a written record of all formal complaints, including whether they were resolved at Stage 2 or proceeded to a panel hearing and the action taken by the school as a result, regardless of whether the complaint was upheld. Records are kept confidential except where access is required by the Secretary of State, Ofsted or another body entitled to inspect them, or where disclosure is otherwise required by law.

The school will publish or otherwise make available the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, as required by the Independent School Standards.

7. Persistent or unreasonable contact

The school will distinguish between a persistent complainant and an unreasonably persistent or abusive pattern of contact. A complainant will not be restricted simply because they disagree with the school. Where contact becomes abusive, threatening, repetitive after the procedure is exhausted, or places an unreasonable demand on school resources, the Headteacher or proprietor may set proportionate communication arrangements while ensuring that any genuinely new complaint can still be considered.

8. External routes

Once the school procedure has been completed, parents and carers may contact the Department for Education where they believe an independent school is not meeting the Independent School Standards or has not followed its published complaints procedure. This does not replace the school complaints procedure.

9. Monitoring and review

The Headteacher and proprietor will review complaint themes, timeliness and actions so that learning from complaints informs school improvement. This procedure will be reviewed at least annually and sooner if legislation, guidance or school arrangements change.

10. Contact

Formal complaints should be sent for the attention of the Headteacher at SMS Changing Lives School, 67 Ayres Road, Old Trafford, Manchester, M16 9NH, or by email to HeadTeacher@smscoaching.co.uk. General enquiries may be sent to admin@smscoaching.co.uk.